# Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST)
# Advisory Board Meeting Minutes for June 30, 2016

**Date:** June 30, 2016
**Time:** 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.
**Location:** MSDE, 8th Floor, Conference Room #2

**Board Members:**
*Present:* Mr. Matt Gallagher, Ms. Linda Eberhart, Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick, Ms. Elizabeth Green, Ms. Beth Sandbower-Harbinson, Dr. Skipp Sanders
*Absent:* Mr. Michael McLeese

*MSDE Staff Present:* Monica Kearns, Jim Clark, Debbie Lichter, Donna Gunning, James Klarman, Jasmine Brown, Kenya DeCosta
*Attorney General's Staff Present*: Ms. Elizabeth Kameen, Mr. Alan Dunklow

**Proceedings:**
- Meeting called to order at 10:11 am by Chair Matt Gallagher

**Agenda or Discussion Items:**
*Welcome, Introduction, and Opening Remarks*
Speaker: Matt Gallagher

*Housekeeping items for Board members*
Speaker: Monica Kearns
- Board members will need to file financial disclosure information with the State Ethics Commission.
- MSDE staff will ask Board members for bios to post on the web site.

*Review of Budget Bill Language and Joint Chairman's Report Narrative*
Speaker: Monica Kearns
- Review of Senate Bill 190, the Fiscal 2017 Budget Bill, which governs the program.
    - Review of the provisions for potential participating nonpublic schools.
        - Schools must be in the Nonpublic Textbook program for School Year 2015-2016.
    - Review of the role of the BOOST Advisory Board.
    - Review of provisions related to scholarship awards.
- Review of the BOOST Program provisions in the Joint Chairman's Report, including reporting requirements.

**Q:** Page 128 of SB 190 lists the nondiscrimination requirements; will the Board rely on MSDE to certify schools for participation?

**A:** Ms. Kearns said that MSDE will provide schools with a list of assurances that schools must electronically certify in order to participate in the program. The list will include the nondiscrimination requirements.

**Q:** Ms. Eberhart asked what the assessment requirements are. The bill language does not require data on the assessments. Can the Board ask for it?
**A:** Ms. Kameen said that the assessment requirements are under legal review. The Board will be notified once a determination has been made.

**Q:** How will data on certified and non-certified teachers be collected, per pages 131-132 of SB 190?
**A:** Ms. Kearns said that MSDE staff will collect this data from the final list of nonpublic schools that participate. MSDE's Division of Educator Effectiveness may need to be consulted for verification.

*Discussion of timeline constraints*

- The Board recognizes that the timeframe provides only a short time to make decisions. These decisions will impact students and families.
  Action: The intent is for the Board to review aggregated applicant data by late July and send award notifications to families in early August.

**Q:** Ms. Eberhart: How have families been notified of the opportunity to apply? What have been the outreach efforts, particularly to public schools? What assistance has been offered to parents with regard to the electronic application process?
**A:** Ms. Kearns said that MSDE's communication strategy has been based on the web site pages, press releases through the MSDE communications office, and email notifications to potential participating schools. MSDE staff have been providing technical assistance by telephone and email. Additionally, nonpublic schools have been distributing information and organizing help sessions so that applicants can receive assistance in completing the application and scanning and attaching the required documentation.

*Discussion of the Budget Bill Language and the General Assembly*

- There was discussion about how the current compressed timeline is not the ideal way to administer the program.
- The Board may include recommendations for the governing Budget Bill Language in its report to the General Assembly, should the program be continued in future years.
- Action: Develop a list of modifications recommended for the program.

*Overview of current status of applications*
Speakers: Jim Clark and Monica Kearns

- There were 2,139 unduplicated applications received as of June 27.
- An unduplicated application does not mean that the applicant has met all criteria, such as the income limit, to qualify for an award.
- MSDE is receiving approximately 100 applications daily.

- There are some limitations of the software that is being used for the applications. For example, applicants cannot save their work and return to it; the submission must be completed all at once.
- It was agreed that notifications regarding application concerns can be sent via email.
- Board members requested additional data summaries for discussion at the next meeting on July 6.
  Action: Mr. Gallagher requested updates on the status of applications at least weekly.

*Discussion of public comments*

- It was agreed that there should be opportunities for the public to offer comments to the Board.
- Mr. Gallagher suggested that for the July 6 and July 7 meetings, the first 30 minutes can be reserved for public comment. The comment period can allow 2-3 minutes per person depending upon the number of individuals who sign up to speak. The public can also offer written testimony at a Board meeting or via the BOOST email (boost.msde@maryland.gov).
- Action: A sign-up sheet will be provided at the door in advance of the July 6 and July 7 meetings for the public to offer comments. Information about the public comment periods will be posted to the BOOST web site.

*Preliminary consideration of award criteria*

- Dr. Grasmick asked whether awards would be given to multiple applicants in the same household. Also, would there be differentiation for students enrolled in public school versus students already enrolled in nonpublic schools.
- Dr. Grasmick asked whether a family contribution should be required.
- Ms. Eberhart asked whether other financial aid for the student should be considered. Ms. Green said that this may not be a valid criterion because we don't have complete data; applicants were not required to provide this information.
- Ms. Harbinson said that the Board should consider whether to cap award amounts.
- There was discussion of whether there should be tiers or differentiated levels of support based on income/need.
- Mr. Gallagher said that if it turns out that some awards exceed the financial need of the family, it may hurt the credibility of the program. Ms. Green said that nonpublic schools already are supplementing low income families' ability to pay.
- Mr. Gallagher asked what should be considered as far as student continuance in the program, particularly because the program was authorized only for one year.
- Dr. Grasmick asked whether the Board should consider geographic distribution and distribution by selected nonpublic school.
- Mr. Gallagher said that other criteria could include family size, the tuition cost differential of schools, and whether the student is just starting school.
- Dr. Grasmick asked whether the religious affiliation of selected schools should be considered to ensure that awards do not go predominantly to one type of school.

Action: MSDE will provide the Board with a matrix of summary data. The data should include geographic location, school religious affiliation, and data on how 2015-2016 Nonpublic Textbook funds are allocated, excluding preschools.
MSDE also will provide a list of the award criteria under consideration based on today's discussion.

*Discussion about disbursements*

- It needs to be decided whether scholarships will be paid in multiple disbursements. Mr. Clark said it will be difficult for this to be achieved administratively. The State Comptroller's General Accounting Division has the final word on how state payments are handled. Special payment procedures are being developed for this program.

**Q:** Will there be an appeal process for those who do not receive an award?
**A:** Ms. Kameen said that there likely will not be an appeal process. The BOOST Scholarship program is not an entitlement, and appeals processes generally are for entitlement programs.

**Q:** What happens if a student's qualification changes during the school year or the child leaves a school? How will the scholarship be reallocated? Will there be a ranked waiting list?
**A:** Ms. Kearns said that MSDE staff will develop a ranked waiting list based on income and the other criteria that may be applied.

*Discussion of the next meetings*

- There will be two meetings in each of the next two weeks to further discuss award criteria and to receive public input. If any of the four meetings are not needed, they can be canceled.
- It will take at least one week for MSDE to compile the final data set after the July 11 application deadline. The Spanish data set needs to be merged in.
- Allow two hours for each meeting.

Next meeting dates:
July 6, 3:00 pm
July 7, 3:00 pm
July 11, 9:00 am
July 13, 2:00 pm

Tentative meeting dates:
July 21, 1:00 pm
July 25, 9:00 am

- The meeting adjourned at 11:45 am.