



Interagency Commission on School Construction

First Quarter 2019

Welcome to the Interagency Commission (IAC) on School Construction's first quarterly newsletter. As the independent State agency that facilitates Maryland's school construction programs, we want to keep you posted on our activities and progress; this has been one of the busiest periods since our founding in 1971.

Our agency, formerly the Interagency Committee on School Construction, took on new authority over State funding for school construction, renovations, and related work under legislation (**House Bill 1783**) that became law last spring. **The 21st Century School Facilities Act** expanded what had been largely a grant management role into one of oversight and school facilities management support from planning through a school's end-of-life decommissioning.



The IAC is working to bring an unparalleled breadth and depth of expertise to its review of proposed projects, and is authorizing funding that sometimes covers more than half of a project's construction costs.

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The IAC's decisions are consequential – allocating hundreds of millions of dollars a year to support schools as vital community assets for education. The goal is to promote strong local planning, design, and construction to **ensure that every child has a seat** in a school that is in good condition; one that supports teaching and learning in space that is designed, built, and maintained to enable the delivery of good public education.

The IAC invests in schools as public institutions that must also **meet the test of fiscal sustainability**. School facility planning must look beyond the first costs of construction, which typically fall below the **total cost of ownership** over time. It is not enough to build a school that functions well today; we must consider what it will cost to maintain and operate it over 30 – 40 years.

Follow our news at <http://iac.maryland.gov>, with updates on the CIP process and new initiatives such as the [School Safety Grant Program](#). Be sure to check out our **Community Spotlight** as well, which profiles projects statewide. In this edition, we focus on the new Somerset County Technical High School (pictured above and described on page 5.)

We want to engage school and community leaders statewide

in considering how best to achieve a key 21st century priority: to develop a portfolio of school facilities that optimize teaching and learning in buildings that are comfortable, safe, and fiscally sustainable.

IAC Membership

The IAC has been reconstituted as a nine-member body, with a roster that includes the designees of three state agencies – one each from the Departments of Education, Planning, and General Services – and six members of the public: two appointments each by the Governor, Senate President, and Speaker of the House

Dr. Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D., IAC Chair and State Superintendent of Schools, MD State Dept. of Education (MSDE).

Robert S. McCord, Secretary, MD Dept. of Planning (MDP).

Ellington Churchill, Secretary, Dept. of General Services (DGS).

Barbara Hoffman, Member of the public appointed by Senate President.

Gloria Lawlah, Member of the public appointed by Senate President.

Todd Schuler, Member of the public appointed by House Speaker.

Brian Gibbons, Member of the public appointed by House Speaker.

Denise Avara, Member of the public appointed by the Governor.

Dick Lombardo, Member of the public appointed by the Governor.

Message from the IAC Chair and Director



Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.
IAC Chair
State Superintendent of Schools

As the Commission chair, I can attest to the professionalism, integrity, and commitment of our nine members to ensure that school construction in Maryland continues to support our top-tier educational system. Our children and teachers thrive in environments that support teaching and learning with comfortable space designed to meet and adapt to ever-changing demographics and instructional needs. The IAC strives to help every school system in the state build schools that will prepare our youth for leadership and fulfillment in a fast-changing world.



Robert A. Gorrell
IAC Executive Director

On behalf of IAC staff, I want to express our appreciation for our State’s leadership and for communities statewide in our ongoing efforts to adequately fund school construction *and* maximize efficient use of those dollars so that every child can learn in a safe and educationally effective environment. Our team’s roles are evolving as we move from grant management into facility management to achieve shared goals. School facilities have to work well today and far into the future. Please stay engaged as we roll out vital State initiatives and partner with Maryland’s communities to build the next generation of schools.

21st Century Momentum

The IAC is moving rapidly to formalize its new role and carry out its charges under HB 1783. Our evolving “to do” list is driven by a clear strategic mission and message: That it is critical to emphasize educational effectiveness *and* fiscal sustainability in facilities planning and construction.

The State has invested more than \$8.5 billion in school construction since the inception of this program in 1971. As the IAC is charged with one of Maryland’s largest infrastructure programs (second to highways), the Commission has moved to a monthly meeting schedule with a strong commitment to transparency.

We live-stream the IAC’s monthly meetings [here](#) so that all Marylanders can follow the Commission’s deliberations and decision-making in real time. The IAC has marked a number of other milestones as well:

- I. **We have extended the focus on greater transparency to our Capital Improvement Program** by modifying the CIP process to provide more complete information earlier. Instead of only publishing funding amounts in successively higher percentages (past practice), we are publishing projections for the full fiscal year.
- II. **The IAC adopted [Educational Facilities Sufficiency Standards](#)** last May, setting minimum acceptable levels of performance for everything from a facility’s roof and HVAC system to its classrooms.
- III. **We worked with Baltimore City** on a regulation waiver to accommodate much-needed HVAC allocations by streamlining use of the appropriation included in the 2018 capital budget bill, which is now almost entirely allocated.
- IV. **We are fulfilling our role in HB 1783’s call for two Workgroups** to first re-examine the State’s standards for project design, and then to consider how to prioritize – and use in funding decisions – a school’s relative condition. The IAC’s role is to staff both workgroups – convening members, facilitating discussion, and compiling points of consensus as follows:
 - **The Workgroup on Educational Development Specifications** (Ed Specs) has made substantial progress in its first four meetings – Nov. 28, Dec. 17, Jan. 4, and April 10 – with the final two meetings set for May 15 and May 23. Ed Specs provide guidance to school architects and engineers, outlining space requirements and other design-related information.

The Workgroup’s meetings have been live-streamed with video and research documents available [here](#). Members have analyzed everything from funding eligibility and project planning for fiscal sustainability to how innovation can be incentivized. A tool for estimating “**Total Cost of Ownership**,” from the bricks and mortar of construction through decades of use for teaching and learning, has been considered to guide planning decisions. The Workgroup **meets again May 15** to try to wrap up its findings to present to the Governor and General Assembly July 1.

- **The Workgroup on Assessment and Funding of School Facilities** will start meeting after the Ed Specs Workgroup concludes its work. The Funding Workgroup has a deadline of Dec. 1 to report its findings and recommendations, addressing these primary issues:
 1. How to prioritize the relative condition of a facility;
 2. Whether – and how – facilities assessments should be incorporated into school construction funding decisions; and
 3. Whether the State should provide incentives for jurisdictions to reduce the total cost of ownership of school facilities.

- V. **Maryland's Green Building Council (MGBC)** is set to adopt guidelines for new public schools that allow alternatives to LEED and eliminate certification requirements. IAC staff invited Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to comment on the draft guidelines with plans to seek Commission approval of the school construction portion May 9. MGBC will host its own public meeting June 19, and invites feedback on the High Performance Green Building Program [here](#).
- VI. **We are set to roll out the second round of School Safety Grants.** A total of \$20 million was allocated to the School Safety Grant Program in FY 2019. The IAC approved release of applications and funding allocations for the first \$10 million in August of 2018 and for the second \$10 million at its April 11 meeting. The funding will be divided among the state's 24 LEAs and the Maryland School for the Blind for projects providing security improvements. The application deadline is Sept. 30, with additional details available [here](#).
- VII. **The IAC is staffing up** to bring in the experience and skills necessary to fulfill the agency's widening responsibilities. We are currently recruiting a [Lead School Facilities Assessor](#) to work with the Maintenance Group and an [IT Systems Manager](#). Our goal is to fill a combined total of eight new positions in FY 2019 and FY 2020, including a project manager to support specific projects. Find more information on our position openings at <http://iac.maryland.gov/>.

School Safety Grant Program

Last year's mass shooting at a Florida high school, followed by a fatal shooting at Great Mills High School in Southern Maryland only a month later, brought school safety issues front and center for parents, teachers, principals, *and* lawmakers. The State has responded with \$20 million in FY 2019 funding to make schools safer through physical improvements.

With the first round of \$10 million in School Safety grants now fully allocated, the IAC has invited LEAs to apply by Sept. 30 for Round II funding.

- **Eligibility:** All LEA-owned school facilities are eligible for funding.
- **Most requested Round I projects:** Security Vestibules, Door Hardware, Surveillance Systems, and Communications
- **New in Round II:** Removal of the State/local cost share formula in project funding (allowing 100% State funding of a project) and the establishment of a minimum annual State allocation of \$200,000 for each LEA and Maryland School for the Blind. See allocations and program details [here](#).



Dr. Karen Salmon visits Great Mills High School

Maryland is one of many states where legislators have approved millions of dollars in funding for school security improvements. The IAC would like to see State funds used for projects that will provide the greatest benefit. IAC staff conducted research for evidence-based best options for effective school security and found that, while there is an abundance of material, there are not universally agreed upon improvements that have proven to be most effective; therefore, LEAs are in the best position to determine their highest priority security needs.

Community Spotlight Somerset County Technical High School

Somerset County's community roots go as deep as any in Maryland. The state's southernmost county drew its first European settlers in the early 1600s, with the town of Princess Anne and City of Crisfield being founded in 1733 and 1872, respectively. The County's story is one of rural self-reliance, with an economy built around agriculture and seafood.

What stands out in this rustic setting is the new state-of-the-art Career Technical Education (CTE) high school set to open this fall in Westover, halfway between Crisfield and Princess Anne. [Somerset County Technical High School](#) will replace the 43-year-old J.M Tawes CTE Center right across the road, which the Board of Education will continue using for the school district's central offices and its Alternative Learning Center.



Community leaders decided to build new rather than renovate or expand the original school, following a feasibility study that showed it to be more cost-effective and appropriate for the programs they wanted to offer, while increasing the CTE capacity from 250 to 400 students. The new \$42 million school has State participation of \$35,382,000. Students will spend a half-day at one of the county's two general high schools and the other half developing specific career skills at the CTE school.

The expanded program offerings cover everything from IT Networking, Pre-Engineering, and Biomedical Sciences, to Horticulture and Nursing, as well as adult education. "One of the exciting things is that we're

Somerset County Technical High School – the first new school built since 2008 in a county with just ten public schools and 2,930 students – is turning heads in this rural county of about 26,000.

"They're excited," says Daniele Haley, the school district's head of facilities and capital planning.

hoping it becomes a community center," said Daniele Haley, supervisor of facilities and capital planning. The GED and continuing education classes, combined with economically important technology offerings, make it "more a community asset than just a school."

Haley, who also oversees maintenance at Somerset County's ten public schools, noted that the school is designed and built with fiscal sustainability in mind.

She urged the design team and construction manager to identify materials that are easy to maintain. "We were able to celebrate exposed materials," she explained. "It's the type of building that lends itself to that industrial type of feel." Since it will be easier to maintain, she added, the county can hold down the long-term costs of ownership.

With growing demand for more CTE seats, community members watch with keen interest as the project moves toward finishing touches, Haley added. "This is the biggest thing the district's ever done," she said. "They're getting more and more excited as it takes shape. People didn't believe it until they started to see it."