



Mohammed Choudhury
State Superintendent of Schools

December 1, 2021

The Honorable Larry Hogan
State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Bill Ferguson
President
Senate of Maryland
State House, H-107
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker
Maryland House of Delegates
State House, H-101
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Learning in Extended Academic Programs Grant Programs (MSAR #11693)

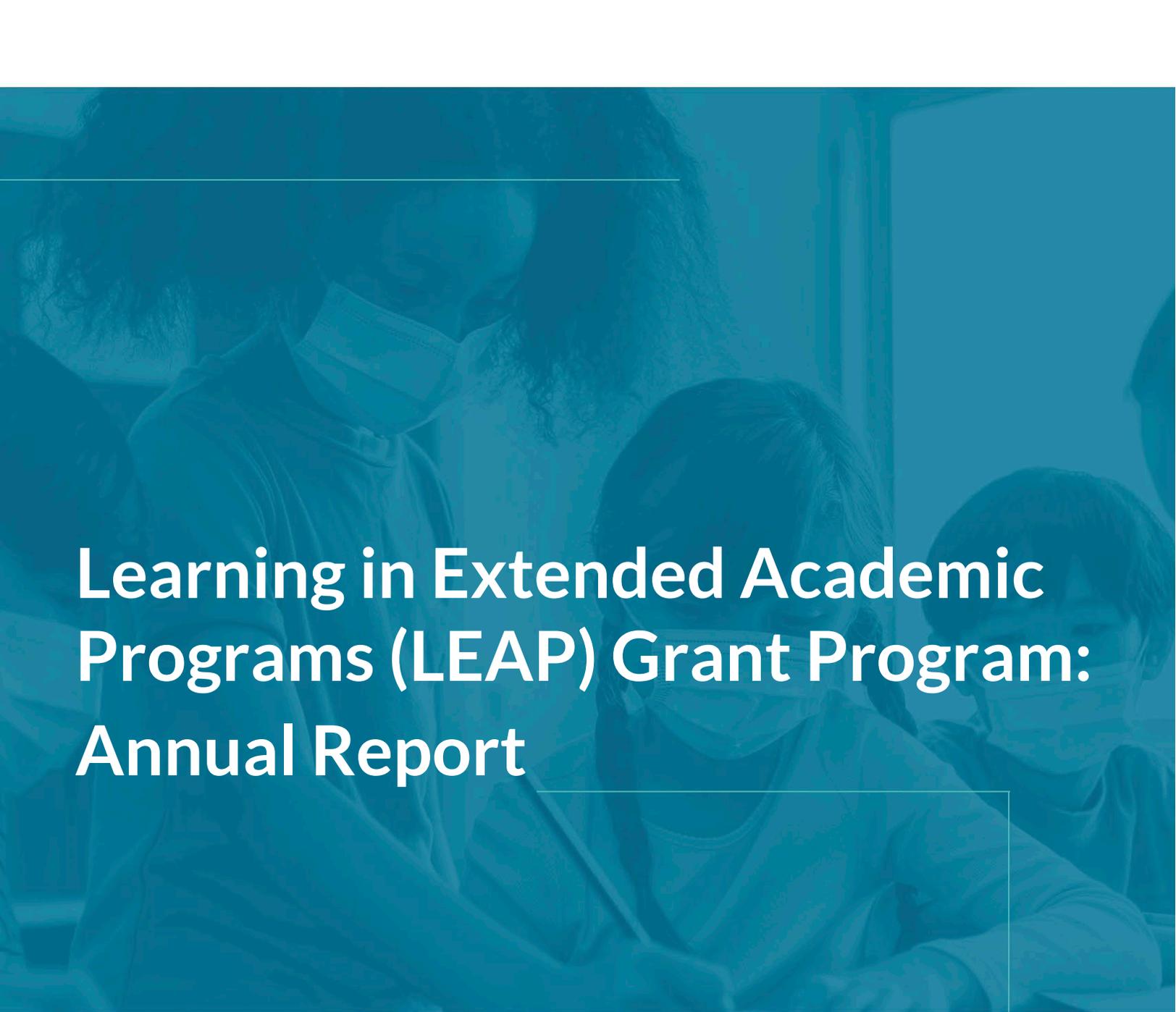
Dear Governor Hogan, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

The Learning in Extended Academic Programs (LEAP) Grant Program is enacted by Section § 7-2001 through 7-2006 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. This legislation requires the Maryland State Department of Education to submit a report on the implementation of the LEAP grant including an evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs and services. In addition, the attached report provides the list of awardees and the corresponding counties with eligible schools.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Ary Amerikaner, Chief of Staff, at ary.amerikaner@maryland.gov or by phone at (410) 767-0090.

Sincerely,

Mohammed Choudhury
State Superintendent of Schools



Learning in Extended Academic Programs (LEAP) Grant Program: Annual Report

**Division of Student Support, Academic
Enrichment, and Educational Policy**

December 2021 Legislative Report



MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Introduction

The Learning in Extended Academic Programs (LEAP) Section § 7-2001 through 7-2006 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland was introduced during the 2018 legislative session of the Maryland General Assembly. This legislation required the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to establish a grant program to provide extended academic enrichment programming that has a positive measurable impact or enriches the academic performance and overall well-being of students who are at risk of falling behind academic requirements.

The initial award for the 2018 – 2019 school year was \$4,500,000, and remained the same for the 2019 - 2020, and 2020 - 2021 school years, and will remain the same for the 2021 – 2022 school year. In the 2020 - 2021 school year, per Section § 7-2005 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the MSDE utilized three percent of the \$4,500,000.00 appropriation to retain an Extended Learning Specialist for the LEAP program. The LEAP specialist monitors and provides technical assistance to LEAP program grantees. A total of \$4,365,000 was awarded to the local school systems to execute grant programs. The MSDE made awards available to eligible entities that propose to serve public schools in which at least 80 percent of the students qualify for the free and reduced price meals program.

The following local school systems continued to receive LEAP funding in the 2020 - 2021 school year:

- Allegany County
- Anne Arundel County
- Baltimore City
- Baltimore County
- Cecil County
- Dorchester County
- Frederick County
- Harford County
- Montgomery County
- Prince George's County
- Somerset County
- Wicomico County

Implementation

Award notifications were made in September 2021, and programming was eligible to begin upon receipt of the Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) from the MSDE. In SY 2021, the LEAP subgrantees focused on the following subject areas: language arts (91 percent), mathematics (82 percent), science (27 percent), social studies (18 percent), art integration (9 percent), and English language acquisition (9 percent). The majority of the programs operated Monday – Thursday for two hours between 3:30 pm and 6:00 pm, and provided both synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.

While the number of LEAP schools served throughout the 2020 - 2021 school year increased from the previous year, the total proposed number of students decreased. Many families were concerned about online fatigue and did not want students in a virtual afterschool program since they attended school virtually the entire day. Another factor that led to decreased enrollment was programs pivoting from virtual to face-to-face operations. The programs that returned to in-person learning had to reduce class sizes to maintain social distancing and were not able to match the enrollment numbers of the virtual environment.

Programs that returned to in-person learning were expected to adhere to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as Maryland Department of Health guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This guidance included: (1) increased student: teacher ratio, (2) enhanced hygiene and cleaning protocols, (3) increased staffing to include nurse and mental health practitioners, and (4) utilization of personnel protective equipment (PPE). For programs returning to in-person learning, the MSDE allowed grant budget modifications for the purchase of supplies to maintain public health protocols to ensure the health and safety of students. These supplies included personal protection equipment, cleaning and sanitizing materials, portable air purifiers, and emergency supplies.

The LEAP programs that sustained virtual operations into the 2020 - 2021 school year were required to submit Program Weekly Closure Forms that described the activities that were being implemented to include: (1) curriculum work, (2) lesson plan development, (3) online/distance learning, (4) staff/professional development, (5) Out of School Time (OST) program data collection, and (6) systems planning work that included summer programs, evaluation, and sustainability efforts. Grant managers in the OST programs worked closely with their partners and service providers to convert lessons and activities to online formats. The MSDE OST team made reasonable and fair accommodations with regards to any reduction in results within OST program goals due to COVID-19. In addition, flexibility was provided to grantees to reallocate dollars in grant budgets to accommodate for programs transitioning to a virtual environment. By the close of the 2020 - 2021 school year, a total of nine programs sustained virtual operations, four successfully transitioned to face-to-face operation, one program implemented face-to-face professional development to teachers as Phase I of the program design (Phase II will be implemented in the 2021 - 2022 school year), and one program operated in a hybrid capacity.

The extended academic programs were required to include before or after school programs targeted to students who are at the risk of falling behind on academic requirements. The data collected through grant monitoring procedures reported that 80 percent of LEAP programs met the number of days specified in the grant application, or as amended for the 2020 - 2021 school year.

Grantees

Every eligible jurisdiction in Maryland received a LEAP award and the total funding for each local school system is detailed below (Table 1).

Table 1: Local School System LEAP Programs and Award Amounts

Program Name	Local School System	Award Amount
Jump Start Program	Allegany County	\$8,232.96
Learning in Extended Academic Programs	Anne Arundel County	\$32,225.28
Young Audiences	Baltimore City	\$905,816.49
Center for Talented Youth's Baltimore City Emerging Scholars Program	Baltimore City	\$399,764.71
Cecil Elementary Extended Academic Program	Baltimore City	\$141,622.76
Summer Arts and Learning	Baltimore City	\$400,000.00
The Learning in Extended Academic Program	Baltimore County	\$341,686.00
Gilpin Manor Summer Enrichment	Cecil County	\$12,441.60
Maces Lane Summer Academy	Dorchester County	\$66,693.12
Fun Academics in the Summer Time PACK (FAST-PACK)	Frederick County	\$360,740.00
Hall's Cross Roads STEM Club and Magnolia Mustang Summer Reading Club	Harford County	\$41,687.04

Program Name	Local School System	Award Amount
Enrichment Extended Learning Opportunities	Montgomery County	\$300,743.00
PGCPS Rising Scholars Summer Program	Prince George's County	\$725,975.04
Somerset Summer Extended Academic Programs	Somerset County	\$261,212.00
STARS: LEAP After School and Summer Learning Center	Wicomico County	\$366,160.00

Total Award Amount:

\$4,365,000.00

Table 2 indicates the eligible schools and students served in the third year of implementation of the LEAP grant.

Table 2: Local School System Total Number of Schools Served and Proposed Number of Students Served

Local School System	Number of Schools Served	Proposed Number of Students Served
Allegany County Public Schools	1	45
Anne Arundel County Public Schools	2	30
Baltimore City Public Schools	54	844
Baltimore County Public Schools	4	400
Cecil County Public Schools	1	60
Dorchester County Public Schools	1	90
Frederick County Public Schools	1	100

Local School System	Number of Schools Served	Proposed Number of Students Served
Harford County Public Schools	2	173
Montgomery County Public Schools	8	250
Prince George's County Public Schools	3	450
Somerset County Public Schools	4	252
Wicomico County Public Schools	3	140
Total	84	2834

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance included providing support and training to grantees through webinars and in-person trainings that meet quality standards and content-specific topic areas such as: national OST programming and online professional learning resources, asynchronous and synchronous learning practices, additional guidance in support of virtual programming as a result of school building closures related to COVID 19, STEM, contracted services documentation and accountability practices, grants fiscal management protocols, and budgetary amendment trainings. The MSDE also utilized the Out-of-School Time Reflection survey to identify future technical assistance needs.

An assigned Extended Learning Specialist administers ongoing technical assistance. Targeted specialized technical assistance was provided to grantees that required additional guidance based upon the MSDE risk indicators. The risk indicators include: (1) Open Grant Lines, (2) Total Funding, (3) Complexity, (4) Documentation, (5) Implementation, (6) Un/Allowable Actions, (7) Late Reporting, (8) Low Spend-Down, (9) Reimbursement Invoices, (10) External Complaints, (11) Audit Findings, (12) The MSDE Monitoring, (13) Programmatic Change Requests, (14) Program Deliverables, (15) Grant Management Amendments, (16) Contractors, (17) Illegal Activity, and (18) Student Enrollment.

The MSDE provided and will continue to provide ongoing technical assistance to grantees to ensure that programs address the following eight State Education Agency (SEA) Performance Goals:

- Assist every student to realize his or her potential
- Develop and support a strong accountability system to increase academic success for all students

- Promote a safe, healthy, and orderly environment for teaching and learning
- Ensure educator and administrative effectiveness
- Promote students' physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being
- Expand high-quality educational opportunities for students and parents
- Work with districts to strengthen program effectiveness
- Increase communication and partnerships with stakeholders statewide

Evaluation and Effectiveness

Each LEAP grantee was required to submit a plan for an evaluation of the program. The plan enabled project leaders to assess progress toward objectives, indicators, and performance measures, and enable project managers to determine which strategies and activities have been successful, and those that need to be revised. This evaluation must be conducted annually, culminating in a summative evaluation reflecting the entire three-year project. Grantees were required to identify the individual and/or organization that was selected to serve as the evaluator for the program and describe his/her qualifications. In selecting the evaluator, grantees considered the candidate's:

- Experience evaluating educational initiatives
- Capacity to collect, manage, analyze, and interpret program and individual student data
- Time availability (evaluation and reporting for this program may take a considerable amount of time); and
- Knowledge of and compliance with data confidentiality requirements.

In the 2020 – 2021 school year, the MSDE monitored implementation of programs utilizing a Critical Elements Monitoring Tool that listed program indicators and the evidence needed to support each indicator. Additional program monitoring elements included the Continuation of Funds and End-of-Year Reports that were submitted in July 2021. All of the LEAP programs were scheduled to end the three-year grant period in June 2021. However, the MSDE was informed in spring 2021, that there was LEAP funding for one additional year which would end programs in June 2022. Two LEAP programs declined the extension and successfully ended the grant in June 2021, and the remaining programs requested extensions to provide services through the 2021 - 2022 school year. In July 2021, the grantees that ended programs in June 2021, submitted an End-of-Year report, and the grantees that extended services to June 2022, provided a Continuation of Funds Report. The review of both reports determined that the majority of grantees effectively addressed all eight of the SEA performance goals identified earlier in this report.

Additionally, subgrantees were required to identify three additional self-defined performance objectives. The self-defined performance objectives varied by program and focused on areas such as measuring progress on local benchmark assessments and improvement in core subject grades. The findings demonstrated that overall grantees met or demonstrated progress towards the three objectives. The data reported that 80 percent of grantees had met or were progressing towards their first self-defined objective, 73 percent of grantees had met or were progressing towards their second self-defined objective, and 47 percent of grantees had met or were progressing towards their third self-defined objective. 27 percent of subgrantees reported that one or two of their self-defined performance objectives were unable to be measured due to the inability to effectively assess student performance and/or evaluation results not yet being available.

The MSDE will validate the self-defined performance objectives and outstanding performance data upon review of the external evaluator report. The data identified that eight grantees will implement a fiscal year 2022 fall or spring school year LEAP program.

Summary

The MSDE is implementing the LEAP grant that was enacted under Sections § 7-2001 through 7-2006 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. This legislation requires the MSDE to submit an annual report on the effectiveness of the LEAP program, as well as an evaluation of LEAP programs. The MSDE is submitting this report in order to provide the Governor and the Maryland General Assembly the required information in § 7-2006 of the Education Article.

The grant award for the 2020-2021 school year was \$4,365,000 which excludes the three percent administrative appropriation for the hiring of the MSDE Extended Learning Specialist.

The MSDE will continue to assist grantees during implementation of extended day enhancement programs for Maryland students. The MSDE understands the importance of offering quality extended day programs to assist students with academic and social skills to avoid regression in learning.