Maryland's Annual Review of Local School System Master Plan Annual Updates

Report to the State Board of Education

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Student, Family, and School Support
Division of Business Services

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1.0 <u>Introduction</u>

This is an annual report on the State Superintendent's review of the Annual Updates submitted by local school systems in Maryland. This annual review focuses on local school systems' progress toward meeting their Master Plan goals, the plans that they have for improving student achievement and eliminating achievement gaps, and the alignment of local school system priorities with their annual budgets as reported in the Master Plans and Annual Updates. In addition to informing the Maryland State Board of Education of the results of this year's review, the report is also intended to satisfy the statutory reporting requirement included in the *Education Fiscal Accountability and Oversight Act of 2004.*

This report is not intended to present LSS performance data that illustrate the progress that each LSS is making toward meeting the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Goals.   While these data are critical to local school systems when they assess their programs, and to reviewers as they review the Annual Updates, the data are not included in this report, since these data can be found on the MSDE Website and have been reported by MSDE staff to the State Board of Education in previous reports.

This year's annual review disclosed that all 24 local school system Annual Updates were substantially in compliance with the requirements contained in State and federal law, and, as applicable, additional requirements established by MSDE.   MSDE continues to work with Baltimore City Schools on some school-level concerns in Title II, Part A: Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers.

> **Recommendation:**
> **All 24 Local School System Annual Updates are recommended as approvable.**

2.0 <u>Background</u>

2.1 *The Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002*

In 2002, the General Assembly enacted the *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act,* restructuring Maryland's public school finance system and increasing State Aid to public schools by an estimated $1.3 billion over six fiscal years (FY 2003-2008). As a result of this landmark legislation, Maryland embraced a standards-based approach to public school financing based on the premise that when students have access to rigorous curriculum, highly qualified teachers, and programs that employ proven strategies and methods for student learning, all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, or socioeconomic background, can achieve.

Under this approach, and consistent with the federal *No Child Left Behind Act,* the State established benchmark academic content and student achievement standards, ensures that schools and students have sufficient resources to meet those standards, and holds schools and school systems accountable for student performance.

In 2003, local school systems were required under BTE to develop a 5-year Master Plan that outlined strategies for improving student achievement and eliminating achievement gaps. Each year, an update to the plans is submitted to the Maryland State Department of Education and reviewed for sufficiency and to determine if progress is being made by individual school systems and by the State.

Senate Bill 907, which amended BTE, requires that local boards of education continue submitting updates to their comprehensive master plans in October 2008 and 2009 and to submit new 5-year comprehensive plans by October 15, 2010.

2.2 *The Education Fiscal Accountability and Oversight Act of 2004*

The unrestricted nature of increased financial support to local school systems creates the need for unique accountability measures. In addition to the academic accountability standards, the State must ensure that school systems have the mechanisms in place to guarantee that funds are being spent appropriately. As such, the General Assembly enacted the *Education Fiscal Accountability and Oversight Act of 2004*, that prohibits local school systems from carrying a deficit, provides specific remedial actions for systems that carry a deficit, affirms recourse should a school system not comply with the Act, and provides for an audit of each local school system by the Office of Legislative Audits.

Local school systems must illustrate alignment between their annual budget and their plans for improving student achievement. Additionally, the State Superintendent is required to file a biannual report on the fiscal stability of school systems and an annual

report on the alignment of school system master plan and budget priorities.[1] Within the Master Plans and Annual Updates, school systems illustrate the connection between resources and priorities in several ways.

- The Executive Summary includes a budget narrative that is intended to convey overview-level information on the current status and the changes occurring in school system demographics, student performance, and fiscal resources.

- School systems submit budget-level data for the current and prior years in variance tables detailing revenue by source and planned expenditures by local master plan goals. In these documents, school systems discuss the budgetary changes in addition to the use of new funds.

- In separate attachments, school systems provide revenue, expenditure and FTE data based on revenue source and State expenditure categories.

- Finally, school systems are asked to discuss resource allocations within the content portion of the Annual Updates.

2.3 Bridge to Excellence Website

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has prepared several public documents to assist local school systems in preparing the Master Plans and Annual Updates, to guide reviewers in reviewing Master Plans and Annual Updates, and to inform the public on the process for the preparation, review, and approval of local Master Plans and Annual Updates. The following items are available at http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/Bridge_to_Excellence/:

- Maryland's Framework for the Preparation, Review, and Approval of Local Master Plans and Annual Updates;

- Master Plan Review Process Video; and

- Bridge to Excellence Toolbox: Guidance to Local School Systems on Preparing the Master Plan Annual Updates, Reviewers Guide, Facilitators Guide, and links to the Master Plans and Annual Updates.

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[1] Section 5-401 (h) (1) and (2), Comprehensive Master Plans, of the Education Article of the Annotated Code.

3.0 <u>Annual Review Process</u>

Each Annual Update contains two sections – the Content Section and Attachment Section – which are subjected to separate reviews.   The Content Section is reviewed through a peer review process.   The Attachment Section, and specific Program Area Sections (within the Content Section), are reviewed by MSDE managers for compliance with federal or State requirements.

3.1 Content Review

In 2008, a total of 97 reviewers served on eight panels that evaluated the Annual Updates. Panelists and panel facilitators received training on the tools that were used in the review process.

The review involved an examination of school system analyses of and responses to performance data for each of the NCLB Goal Areas. The analyses and the LSS narrative were intended to address the following prompts:

1. Describe where progress is evident. In your response, please identify progress in terms of grade bands and subgroups.

2. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies and the related resource allocations that appear related to the progress.

3. Describe where challenges are evident. In your response, please identify challenges in terms of grade bands and subgroups.

4. Describe the changes or adjustments that will be made along with the related resource allocations to ensure progress. Include timelines where appropriate.

The Content Review was completed in three phases – the Initial Review, the Clarification Review, and the Meeting Review. During the Initial Review, facilitators work with panel members to reach consensus on the approvability of the Annual Update. The panels had the option of recommending approval, or deferring a recommendation, pending their assessment of the sufficiency of the local school system's responses to the clarifying questions asked by panel members.

3.2 Program Review

MSDE program managers review the components of school system Annual Updates related to specific student groups (i.e., early learning, gifted and talented students) and cross-program themes (i.e., multicultural education,[2] educational technology) for compliance and for sufficiency of the plans toward meeting the program goals. MSDE program managers work with their counterparts to resolve any issues of concern that emerge during the Program Review.   In certain cases, the program reviewer (e.g., Special Education, Highly Qualified Staff and Career and Technology Education) provides a report to the panel to inform their discussion.

3.3 Technical Review

The Technical Review involves the examination of State and federal grant applications and supporting budget documents to ensure compliance with State and federal requirements. MSDE program managers work closely with their counterparts in the Local School Systems to resolve any issues that arise throughout the Technical Review.

3.4 Budget Review

Financial specialists conduct a technical compliance review of the Budget Documents (e.g., current and prior year variance tables). While the Panel Review examines the alignment between local school system priorities and the budget, the Budget Review focuses on the accuracy of the individual budget documents. Financial specialists work with their local school system counterparts to resolve any compliance issues. A summary report is provided to the Panel Facilitators and the Office of Comprehensive Planning and School Support. The summary report is included in the Final Review.

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[2] Code of Maryland Regulations 13A.04.05.06 requires that each school system report in their master plans and annual updates the district's progress toward meeting the goals of Education that is Multicultural (ETM) programs. The Equity and Assurances Branch at the Maryland State Department of Education conducted a program review of each Annual Update and found that all 24 local school systems have reported on the progress toward meeting the goals and objectives in this area.

4.0 <u>Finance Section</u>

4.1 Resources

Local school systems illustrate the connection between annual budgets and master plan priorities through the budget narrative in the executive summary, a current year variance table (how new funds are being allocated to local goals), and a prior year variance table (a comparative analysis of the prior year plan). Additionally, school systems submit three attachments in support of the budget; a total revenue statement, a total expenditures statement; and, a total FTE statement. Local school systems incorporate a discussion of their use of resources throughout the annual update – particularly where they are allocating new funds. Including the narrative throughout the document provides the reader with a complete picture of a school system's plan for the current year. A budget summary for each school system is included as an attachment.

In fiscal year 2008, with the exception of the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI), the State finance structure was fully phased-in, effectively starting the funding level envisioned by the Thornton Commission. Therefore, unlike the large incremental changes in State Aid seen over the previous five fiscal years, fiscal year 2009 reflects a much more limited State Aid increase. For the 2008 annual update, local school systems were asked to focus on budgetary changes in addition to new funds. The following is an analysis of available revenue.

4.2 Changes in Revenue

Revenue Description	FY 2008 Original Budget (in millions)	FY 2009 Original Budget (in millions)	FY 2009 New Funds (in millions)
Local Appropriation	$5,160	$5,393	$232
State Revenue	4,556	4,672	116
Federal Revenue	545	528	(17)
Other Resources/Transfers	72	95	23
Other Local Revenue	63	91	28
Total	**$10,397**	**$10,778**	**$381**

	FY 2007 Original Budget (in millions)	FY 2008 Original Budget (in millions)	FY 2008 New Funds (in millions)
Total	**$9,564**	**$10,397**	**$833**

- A comparison of the new funds available in FY 08 and in FY 09 illustrates the fully phased-in funding levels envisioned by the Thornton Commission.

- Local school systems allocated $381 million in total new funds in FY 2009, less than half that available as new funds in FY 2008 ($833 million).

- FY 2009 State Education Aid increased 2.5% ($116 million) over FY 2008, representing 30.3% of available new funds in FY 2009.

- Local funds increased 4.3% ($232 million) between FY 2008 and FY 2009, representing 60.9% of the available new funds in FY 2009.

- Federal funds continue to decrease statewide, by $17 million between FY 2008 and FY 2009. Of the 24 school systems in Maryland, 19 experienced a decrease in federal funds.

4.3 Changes in Expenditures

While fund sources are standard, each school system has its own set of goals and objectives. Requiring local school systems to allocate planned expenditures to their own local goals and attributing each to one of the five *No Child Left Behind* goals, other local goals, or a mandatory cost of doing business category allows for a standardized analysis of planned expenditures across all school systems.

In fiscal year 2009, local school systems are struggling with the same economic issues facing the nation. Within the annual updates, local school systems retargeted resources (changed the functions of current personnel), redistributed resources to more effective programs, and contained costs wherever possible. The following is an analysis of planned expenditures.

No Child Left Behind Goals	FY 2008 (in millions)	FY 2009 (in millions)
1. By 2013-2014, all students will reach high standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency in reading/language arts and mathematics.	$120	$45
2. All limited English proficient students will become proficient in English and reach high academic standards at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.	3	1
3. By 2005-2006, all students will be taught by highly qualified teachers.	180	59
4. All students will be educated in learning environments that are safe, drug free, and conducive to learning.	33	3
5. All students will graduate from high school.	52	9
Local Goals and Indicators	29	9
Mandatory Cost of Doing Business	583	408
Other (items not reported in above categories, including reductions)	(118)	(152)
Total	**$884**	**$381**

1. *No Child Left Behind* Goal 1 was established to ensure that all students are proficient in reading and mathematics. Examples of planned expenditures school systems include in this goal area consist of funds for intervention programs for lower performing students, inclusion programs for special education students, and content and/or grade band-specific professional development activities. Local school systems attributed $45 million to this goal area.

2. In FY 2009, local school systems allocated $.08 million in new funds to reading and math programs at the elementary and middle school levels. Additionally, $27.9 million and 162.75 additional FTEs can be attributed to the needs of special education students.

3. Local school systems allocated $5.88 million and an additional 20 FTEs to finalize the implementation of all day kindergarten programs and pre-K programs for economically disadvantaged students.

4. Funds for programs designed to meet the unique challenges facing limited English proficient students can be included in either Goal 1 or Goal 2. In FY 2009, over $1 million is attributed to Goal 2. In total, $1.35 million in new funds and 24.1 FTEs are allocated to programs for English Language Learners.

5. Goal 3 addresses the requirement that all teachers be highly qualified. Systems included $2.42 million in funds for professional development and recruitment and retention of highly qualified staff within the $59 million in new funds attributed to this goal. Some local school systems included increases in expenditures for teacher salaries and benefits within this goal area.

6. Goal 4 encompasses programs aimed at providing students with safe learning environments. Local school systems included funding for character education programs, positive behavioral interventions and supports programs, health-related services, and extra-curricular activities within the $3 million in new funds attributed to this goal area.

7. Within the $9 million in new funds attributed to Goal 5 (all students will graduate from high school) are professional development opportunities, interscholastic athletic programs, career and technology education programs, and drop-out prevention programs.

8. Beginning with the graduating class of 2009, students must pass the four high school assessments in order to receive a Maryland diploma.   A total of $4.6 million in new resources are allocated to interventions planned to assist all students in passing the high school assessments.

9. Many local school systems have goals associated with improved service delivery and parent involvement. Funds included in these goal areas are collapsed into one category – local goals and indicators. For FY 2008, local school systems have attributed $9 million in new funds to this area.

10. The Mandatory cost of doing business category includes increases in expenditures for transportation, nonpublic special education placements and negotiated agreements. Of the $408 million in new funds attributed to this category, $348.3 million can be tied to increases in negotiated agreements (salary and benefits), $20.2 million for transportation costs, and $26.5 million for utilities.

11. Additional resources (approximately $109 million) are allocated to 1,107.2 new staff (teachers, paraprofessionals, school administrators, central office-level program managers, etc.). A total of $9.5 million is allocated (146.7) FTEs for class-size reduction initiatives.

12. In FY 2009, technology continues to be a critical driver of education reform. Local school systems allocated $4.3 million in new resources and 22.7 FTEs to upgrade and enhance technology programs. An additional $9.8 million and 10 FTEs is allocated to improve service delivery at the system level. Included in this figure are funds to improve strategic planning, data management systems, and parent and community involvement initiatives.

13. To fund current year priorities, local school systems made $249.4 million in reductions to other programs and services. Local school systems cut central office positions, redirected responsibilities, re-allocated funds for critical programs, cut ineffective programs, and engaged in cost containment operations in preparation for future fiscal challenges.

5.0 Maryland's Annual Review of LSS Master Plan Annual Updates

5.1 Statewide Progress, Consistent with Performance Targets Established by MSDE for Each NCLB Goal Area

The ultimate goal of the Master Plan and Annual Updates, according to the Bridge to Excellence Master Plan Guidelines (March 25, 2003, page 17), is to create a school system master plan that focuses on student achievement and is consistent with the performance targets established by the Maryland State Department of Education for each NCLB Goal Area.

In light of this articulated goal, a summary of statewide progress, in relation to a performance target (Annual Measurable Objective, or AMO) established by MSDE, reveals the following:

1. **86.2%** of the All Student group is at or above the proficient level in reading/language arts at the elementary school level(**2008 AMO = 71.8%**); additionally, all subgroups met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), including the subgroup of students receiving special education services, who met AYP with Safe Harbor.

2. **84.1%** of the All Student group is at or above the proficient level in mathematics at the elementary school level (**2008 AMO = 69.1%**); additionally, all subgroups met AYP, including the subgroup of students receiving special education services, who met AYP with Safe Harbor.

3. At the middle school level, **78.7%** of the All Student group is at or above the proficient level in reading/language arts (**2008 AMO = 71.1%)**; in addition, all subgroups met AYP, with African American, Hispanic, Free/Reduced Meals, Special Education, and LEP subgroups that met AYP with Safe Harbor.

4. Also, at the middle school level, **69%** of the All Student group is at or above the proficient level in mathematics (**2008 AMO =57.2%**); in addition, all subgroups, except students receiving special education services, met AYP. Among these subgroups, the African American, Hispanic, Free/Reduced Meals, and LEP subgroups met AYP with Safe Harbor.

5. Nearly **84%** percent of Maryland elementary and middle schools met **Adequate Yearly Progress** (AYP), according to data being released by the Maryland State Department of Education. Additionally, **76%** of Title I schools[3] met AYP.

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[3] As of school year 2007-2008, there are 366 Title I schools. Of these, 279 schools made AYP.

6. All LSSs that have ELL students enrolled met the **Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives** (AMAO) for progress toward attaining English proficiency, and attaining English proficiency. Further, the LEP subgroup met AYP for reading and mathematics at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

7. The percentage of Core Academic Subject Classes (CAS) taught by Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) improved from **66.8%** in 2003-2004 to **84.6%** in 2007-2008, but still falls short of the **HQT target of 100%**.

8. Only **one school system** (Baltimore City Schools) had any schools identified by the State as **persistently dangerous**, and there were 5 of them.[4]

9. The graduation rate of **85.09%** for the State of Maryland fell just short of the **2008 AMO of 85.5%;** additionally, the dropout rate of **3.40%** exceeds the State **satisfactory standard of 3.00% or less**.

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[4] Although one of the five schools is now closed, it still counts as "persistently dangerous" for school year 2008-2009.

Maryland's Annual Review of LSS Master Plan Annual Updates

5.2 Panel Reviews

Maryland's Annual Review of local school system Annual Updates involves a peer review process.   Using this process, educators from MSDE and the local school systems are assigned to review panels.

In 2008, members of each of eight panels evaluated the Annual Updates individually (e.g., **Initial Review**).   Then panel members participated in caucuses to arrive at a consensus decision on the approvable status of the Annual Updates.   During the panel discussion, panelists identified areas of the Annual Update that needed further work, as well as areas of commendable achievements that the school system demonstrated in meeting or exceeding State standards.   Each panel forwarded the commendations and, if necessary, requests that they had for additional information from the local school system. In turn, local school system staff responded in writing to the requests (e.g., **Clarification Review**) that they received for additional information.

Certain school systems are invited to a face-to-face meeting review (e.g., **Meeting Review**). This meeting review is a requirement for any local school system that has been designated with the status of School System in Improvement or Corrective Action. Representatives from school systems may also be invited to a Meeting Review to provide additional information on their plans for improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps.

5.2.1 Results of Initial Review, Clarification Review, and Meeting Review

The results of the Initial Review, Clarification Review, and Meeting Review are listed below:

- **Initial Review (October 15- 31)**

    – Each of the eight Review Panels held caucus sessions to discuss the 24 LSS Annual Updates.

    – As a result of this year's caucuses, all 24 LSSs received requests to provide responses to clarifying questions.

- **Clarification Review (November 10 & 12)**

  - 21 LSSs submitted responses to clarifying questions that panels then deemed sufficient.

- **Meeting Review (November 12- 13)**

  - Two (2) LSSs, that had designations as School Systems in Corrective Action (Baltimore City Schools and Prince George's County), were required to attend a Meeting Review.

  - One (1) LSS (Dorchester) was required to participate in a Meeting Review to provide additional information to the panel on their plans for improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps.

As part of the **Final Review**, each local school system was required to submit a final Annual Update to MSDE no later than November 19, 2008.   The reviewers (panel reviewers and MSDE program managers) then reviewed the final submissions to ensure that all corrections and additions were included in the annual update submissions.

Maryland's Annual Review of LSS Master Plan Annual Updates

5.2.2.A   Strategies that Underpin Panel Commendations by NCLB Goal Area 1

NCLB Goal 1: By 2013-2014, all students will reach high standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency in reading/language arts and mathematics.

Many school systems were commended for the improvements that they had in student achievement in reading and mathematics at the elementary school and middle school levels, as measured by the Maryland School Assessment.

Strategies that underpin the panel commendations were categorized and are listed below as common themes. In addition, examples of LSS strategies can be found on page 16.

Common Themes

1) **Implement a district curriculum aligned with State standards and assessments.**

   Several school systems received commendations relating to their efforts in implementing a curriculum PK – 12 that is aligned with Maryland's Voluntary State Curriculum and the Core Learning Goals (CLGs).   Among these school systems receiving commendations, several are also working to ensure that the curriculum taught in the classroom corresponds with the standards and assessments set by the State for specific grade levels.

2) **Take a system-wide approach to improving classroom instruction.**

   The panels' commendations suggest that local school systems recognize that their system-level improvement initiatives must affect what happens in the classroom, and that the success of each child relies on a well-designed, coordinated, and monitored systems approach to continuous improvement.

   These approaches concentrate on student learning and supports that are reflected in specific actions that can be implemented. They also include collaboration with instructional experts (specialists), resource allocations, and targeted professional development.

3) **Make decisions based on assessment data.**

   Another commendable strategy is the use of data in informing decisions about instruction.   Many local school systems were commended for their use of data management systems in making student data easily accessible to teachers and administrators for instructional decision-making purposes. The use of data offers a

structure to assist staff in keeping the focus of collaborative discussions on efforts to improve teaching and learning.

4) Expand accountability practices to include classroom monitoring techniques.

A few school systems were commended for holding their schools and classrooms accountable for improving classroom instruction. These school systems included instructional "walk-throughs" and school quality reviews in their classroom monitoring techniques.

5) Employ research-based practices and differentiated instruction to teach reading and mathematics to students at all grade levels.

A number of school systems were commended for employing research-based practices and differentiated instruction to teach reading and mathematics to students at all grade levels. This includes the strategies that are designed to help students with different learning needs master the same challenging academic content.

These practices can be combined in ways to strengthen reading and mathematics instruction, and might include the selection of materials for use in the classroom and the ways that students interact with them, or a variety of strategies that can be used within one classroom, at a variety of levels.

Common Themes	Strategies that Underpin Panel Commendations by NCLB 1
1. **Implement a district curriculum aligned with State standards and assessments.**	Using Maryland's Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC) and the Core Learning Goals (CLG), **Baltimore City Schools** revised its curricula or obtained curricula from other successful school districts in Maryland in reading/language arts (PK-8), mathematics (6- 8), English II, government, and biology to provide teachers and students with high quality courses.
2. **Take a system-wide approach to improving classroom instruction.**	**Washington County** has developed the Classroom Focused Improvement Process. All twenty-four elementary schools have adopted this process as a method to support grade-level team meetings and to guide discussion concerning the individual needs of students within their classrooms. Their grade level teams meet at least bi-weekly with support staff including special education teachers, intervention teachers, Student Achievement Specialists, and building administration to review and analyze data, discuss instructional techniques, and adjust or recommend intervention or enrichment for students who need extra support. Decisions are collaborative, supported, and implemented by the team and are reviewed and modified as needed.
3. **Make decisions based on assessment data.**	In **Caroline County**, data-driven instructional decisions are being utilized to form flexible groups and to differentiate instruction. Re-teaching leads to differentiated instruction based on this data. In order to address the challenges faced with special needs students, special education students are placed in co-taught classes where the special education teacher is available to re-teach skills to small groups. In addition, an ELL teacher is available to provide additional instruction to LEP students who are showing language deficiencies. Since all students take the same benchmark assessments, teachers are able to group and re-group based on common indicators across all students.
4. **Expand accountability practices to include classroom monitoring techniques.**	Cambridge Education conducted a school quality review in all 32 **Prince George's County** middle schools from January through May, 2008. The purposes of the review were to provide an independent and reliable view of each school, and help schools establish a clear view of their strengths, areas for development, challenges, and successes, among others. The review consisted of 2 day site visits to each school and the data-gathering process included interviews and focus groups with teachers, students, parents, and school leaders; data analysis; classroom observations, and dialog with principals. Twenty-two schools were reviewed in January 2008, and the remaining 10 schools were reviewed in May 2008.
5. **Employ research-based practices and differentiated instruction to teach reading and mathematics to students at all grade levels.**	▪ **Calvert County** has established vocabulary/word study as a pre-K to 12 system-wide focus in order to broaden students' background knowledge and language skills to make deeper meaning (comprehension) with encountered text across content areas. ▪ **Frederick County** has developed curricular unit plans that align the curriculum, available materials, common assessments, suggestions for pacing, and differentiation strategies; ▪ **Somerset County** uses the new reading series, Holt Elements of Literature, which provides leveled readers for students of different reading ability; ▪ Flexible grouping strategies were used during the reading block to address the differentiated needs of students in **Allegany County**.

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5.2.2.B Strategies that Underpin Panel Commendations by NCLB Goal Area 2

NCLB Goal 2:
All limited English proficient students will become proficient in English and reach high academic standards at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.

Some school systems were commended for the assistance they are providing to English Language Learners in attaining English proficiency and academic proficiency in reading and mathematics.

Once again, the strategies that underpin the panel commendations were categorized and are listed below as common themes. In addition, specific examples of LSS strategies can be found on page 19.

Common Themes

1) **Develop an ESOL curriculum aligned with State standards and assessments.**

    Local school systems statewide are developing an ESOL curriculum that is designed to address the unique learning needs of English Language Learners (ELLs). Some of these LSS efforts at curriculum development were commendable in terms of offering a framework for monitoring progress, focusing instructional time, and giving teachers additional strategies and methods for teaching ELLS.

2) **Take a system-wide approach (e.g., the use a push-in/pull-out model of instruction) for the delivery of classroom instruction.**

    Panel Reviewers commended several school systems for ELL performance. Those LSSs appear to have developed a system-wide model of instruction. They focus on defining models of instruction; encourage cooperation and idea-sharing among ESOL staff and general educators; and include intervention supports. In these LSSs, pull-out support may by used for interventions, small group instruction, pre-teaching and post-teaching benchmarks, administering benchmark assessments with accommodations during the schedule time. Pull-out is often used for students with little or no skills in English. However, students are moved into the push-in model quickly. In this model, ELL instructors go into mainstream classes to work with ELLs. LSSs indicate that cooperation among ELL staff and classroom teachers is the key element in this model.

3) **Make decisions based on data.**

Local school systems were commended for their use of data that they collect on the performance of ELLs that allows teachers to readily assess strengths and weaknesses of ELLs. In these LSS, progress and attainment are perceived as the responsibility of all teachers who work with English Language Learners, including grade level classroom and content-area teachers, as well as administrators.

4) **Establish cooperative relationships between ESOL staff and regular education teachers.**

Panels commended LSSs in their efforts to establish cooperative relationships between content area and/or grade level teachers. This was seen as essential when trying to promote achievement in ELLs, especially in those trying to attain English language proficiency and ones taking statewide assessments.

5) **Implement interventions and support services.**

Across the State, ELLs are receiving additional support services. In several of local school systems, these support services are aligned with the school system's intervention approach for reading.   Particular LSSs were commended for employing this strategy.

6) **Involve parents.**

LSSs also received commendations for parent involvement. In recognition of the importance of parent involvement, some LSSs set out to establish partnerships with parents and families. They provide translations of school documents (including assessment information and assessment reports) in reaching out to families and their students. Families are also being invited to participate as part of the Title I Parent Advisory Boards, family nights at the schools, and multicultural programs. Interpreters are being provided for these activities as well.

Common Themes	Strategies that Underpin Panel Commendations by NCLB 2
1. **Develop an ESOL curriculum aligned with State standards and assessments.**	**Calvert County Public Schools'** ESOL Curriculum is still in the process of being completed, but it has provided a clear and focused framework for monitoring progress throughout a school year, across multiple school years, through progress through proficiency levels, and to attainment of English language proficiency and exiting from ELL services.
2. **Take a system-wide approach (e.g., the use a push-in/pull-out model of instruction) for the delivery of classroom instruction.**	In **Frederick County**, services are delivered at the elementary level as pull-out instruction on the first through fifth grade levels and to the extent possible as push-in in Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten. ELL instruction in the middle schools is a balance of pullout and push-in support. Pullout is referred to as targeted reading or math intervention. ELL staff provide small group or individual support to ELLs who score below proficiency on MSAs, benchmarks, or who will take a reading MSA for the first time. At the secondary level, students receive their ELL instruction in scheduled class periods. At the High school level, ELLs who successfully complete the course receive elective credit toward graduation.
3. **Make decisions based on data.**	In **Washington County**, ELL support is provided for ELLs who speak little or no English, and students struggling academically based on Performance Matters data (PM2). ELL staff has access to PM2, and it is expected that they plan instruction based on the data and the specific needs of students. ELL staff review and plan instruction based on PM2 ELA, science, and/or math benchmark objectives. ELL staff target deficient objectives by reviewing benchmarks, using MSA coaches, and incorporating other instructional resources. Rewriting BCRs is an important component of the pullout intervention.
4. **Establish cooperative relationships between ESOL staff and regular education teachers.**	In **Queen Anne's County**, each school has an ELL Committee which meets at least once and sometimes up to four times yearly to review each ELL's progress - LAS Links scores, classroom grades, MSA/HSA scores and narrative reviews by the ELL instructor – and select and update accommodations. There are also ESOL-specific professional development sessions offered at faculty meetings developed from information gleaned from professional development conferences attended by the ESOL staff and county-based in-services to explain the stages of second language acquisition, teaching techniques for teachers of ELL and materials available for teachers' use.
5. **Implement interventions and support services.**	**Carroll County Public Schools** continues to support ELLs in achieving proficiency in reading and mathematics. Identified ELLs continue to receive a variety of support services. These include, but are not limited to: intensive content and language based ESOL services/instruction, school-based reading and math interventions such as Read 180, Wilson, Title I and SuccessMaker.
6. **Involve parents.**	In **Calvert County**, a parent component to summer school has been added to provide support to families in order to help them know how to enhance the instruction the student is receiving, as well as to bring parents into the school setting and encourage them to become involved in the education of their students. This component includes activities such as having a specifically designed brochure for parents produced in multiple languages to be given to families who speak languages other than English to explain to them the ESOL program and the support their students are receiving.

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5.2.2.C Strategies that Underpin Panel Commendations by NCLB Goal Area 3

<u>NCLB Goal 3</u>:
By 2005-2006, all students will be taught by highly qualified teachers.

Many local school systems are making great strides toward attaining the 100% Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) target. Despite this progress, some school systems still have a long way to go in terms of attaining the HQT target of 100% (Attachment A), or in the equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers in high-poverty and low-poverty schools.

In 2008, MSDE specialists in the Division of Certification & Accreditation conducted a review of HQT data and the strategies that LSSs have put in place to attain this NCLB Goal, and provided a report to each panel for their review.

Strategies that underpin the panel (report) commendations were categorized and listed below. In addition, a specific example is provided on how Baltimore County Public Schools is addressing the equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers in high-poverty and low-poverty schools.

Common Themes

1) **Support teachers in obtaining certification.**

   Several local school systems received commendations related to the support that they provide teachers in obtaining certification. Some support is provided in the following ways:

   - A thorough analysis of transcripts and records is performed by staff in the Office of Human Resources.

   - MSDE/CPD classes are provided, which enable both new and incumbent teachers to obtain necessary credits.

   - LSSs continue to offer an assortment of content/education continuing professional development (CPD) course offerings that are applicable toward the special education and ESOL HOUSSE rubrics.

   - Tuition reimbursement is provided for incumbent teachers who are not highly qualified and for highly qualified teachers renewing certificates. Reimbursement is also offered for graduate course work that results in the HQ designation.

- Study guides are provided for Praxis tests preparation or reimbursement is made for the purchase of study guides.   Reimbursement for Praxis tests is provided for the successful completion of each test. Praxis I tutorials and tests are offered at no charge.

2) **Emphasize "Highly Qualified" status in recruitment and hiring practices.**

- LSSs analyze data from past recruiting trips and revise their recruiting calendar accordingly.   Some recruiters have attended new recruiting events to increase overall exposure with prospective teacher candidates.

- LSSs give preference to those applicants determined to have "highly qualified" status. Interviews are held with qualified applicants at specific schools.

- Early contracts are offered to the top applicants based on the average openings in critical shortage areas over the past five years. Signing bonuses were offered to all properly certificated and highly qualified teachers in 2007-2008.   In some LSSs, moving expenses were provided for those who live 200 miles from the area.

- Partnerships have been established with higher education institutions to expand the candidate pool in critical shortage areas.

- LSSs participated in first annual Maryland Educators Recruiting Consortium.

3) **Monitor and provide individual communication.**

The communication aspect of Human Resources efforts is essential in informing teachers of Praxis test dates and deadlines, courses needed to be completed, CPD courses available, deadlines and consequences of not meeting deadlines. The following additional practices were highlighted as commendable:

- Human Resources specialists monitor the certification status of all teachers, and maintain and update their status changes. Administrators are provided copies of this information for their staff on a regular basis.

- Teachers at each school are monitored for their certification status. Principals are able to use the information in discussions with individual staff members to review certification needs and encourage those not highly qualified to complete their requirements.

- Training programs are offered for principals to increase their understanding of HQ and how class scheduling effects HQ.

- In several LSSs, technology has been enhanced to assist principals and master schedulers in making well informed decisions about the assignment of teachers to core academic subject (CAS) classes. For example, special education staff is often implementing more inclusion models, which results in shared teaching assignments with a special education teacher and regular educator who is HQ in the CAS classes.

4) **Provide contract benefits.**

- LSSs are providing competitive salary and fringe benefit packages.

- Contract benefits might include tuition reimbursement, competitive health insurance, term life insurance, sick leave, illness in the family and business leave.

LSS Highlight:
Equitable Distribution of Highly Qualified Teachers in
High-Poverty and Low-Poverty Schools

Under NCLB, LSSs must also address the equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers in high-poverty and low-poverty schools.

In **Baltimore County Public Schools**, the percentage of classes taught by highly qualified elementary teachers in high poverty schools is 97.4% compared to 94.9% in low poverty schools. Also, the percentage of classes in high poverty high schools, 88.9%, is within 1.9 percentage points of the 90.8 % of classes taught by highly qualified teachers in low poverty schools. Strategies that Baltimore County has put in place to support the equitable distribution of Highly Qualified Teachers in high-poverty and low-poverty schools include the following:

- Provide relocation stipends from grant funds to highly qualified teachers in critical shortage areas who accept assignments at high poverty schools.

- Allow teacher transfers in critical shortage areas from priority schools only when highly qualified replacements are available to fill the resulting vacancy.

- Develop action plans that include recruitment and retention strategies for any school or area with a percentage of non-tenured or conditionally certified teachers more than twice the school system's average.

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5.2.2.D Strategies that Underpin Panel Commendations by NCLB Goal Area 4

NCLB Goal 4:
All students will be educated in learning environments that are safe, drug free, and conducive to learning.

Several LSSs received commendations from Panel Reviewers for: a) establishing a long term vision to help ensure that safe schools continue to be the norm; b) utilizing multiple programs to promote safe schools, including PBIS, and specific programs for bullying prevention, and c) addressing Cybersafety.

The strategies that underpin the panel commendations are listed below as common themes. This section also highlights the **Frederick County Public Schools** approach to school safety.

Common Themes

1) **Offer programs and support.**

   - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS), Why Try, and Second Step programs are in place in many schools across the state.

   - Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence, a research based curriculum for adolescence, is in place in some middle schools.

   - Character Education programs are common in elementary schools. The Character Counts curriculum, combined with Second Step, is often used in elementary schools and sometimes expanded to middle schools.

2) **Focus on school safety.**

   As a result of the LSSs Panel Review, **Frederick County Public Schools** (FCPS) was commended for its approach to school safety. The LSS employs strategies such as the following:

   - A summary of the Safe Schools Action Plan was distributed to all administrative staff and a brochure titled "What You Can Do to Prevent Bullying: A Guide for Parents and Students" is distributed annually to 3rd, 6th and 9th grade students and is available on the FCPS website.

- A MSDE reporting form is made widely available to students, parents and staff. A DVD "Working Together to End Harassment: Bullying Information for all Employees" is available for staff training.

- Information regarding harassment prevention is located in the FCPS Calendar Handbook, school student handbooks, the harassment brochure provided to students and the Harassment or Intimidation (Bullying) report form.

- Harassment prevention has been featured on FCPS Channel 18's Inside Look and Health Matters programs.

- Curriculum goals and indicators on bullying and harassment have been added to the guidance curriculum and goals and indicators for sexual assault/harassment prevention have been added to the Health Curriculum.

- FCPS has an active committee of staff working on Digital Citizenship: Cyberethics, Cybersafety and Cybersecurity.

- FCPS has had a system-wide Character Counts! program since 1997. Results of the 2008 Family and Community Involvement Survey indicate that 74% of families and 74% of certificated staff were satisfied with the Character Counts! program in their school.

- In the Collaborative School Climate Section of the 2008 Survey of School Performance Indicators, 92% of staff and 81% of students responded that they felt safe in school.

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4.2.2.E Strategies that Underpin Panel Commendations by NCLB Goal Area 5

<u>**NCLB Goal 5**</u>:
All students will graduate from high school.

Panel Reviewers commended several LSSs for increased attention toward improving graduation rates and dropout prevention.

Strategies in this NCLB Goal area tend to focus on provisions for individual attention and support; integrating dropout prevention strategies in school improvement plans; providing positive interventions; offering case management services; and structuring dropout prevention services.

This section highlights specific strategies associated with the panel commendations.

<div align="center">

Common Themes

</div>

1) **Provide individual attention and support.**

   <u>**Carroll County**</u> reports that it remains among the highest performing school systems in terms of graduation rate, dropout rate, and attendance. The school system attributes its success to the use of specific strategies such as the following:

   - Student services teams and dropout prevention specialists review attendance data in an effort to provide *individual attention* to struggling or disenfranchised students.

   - Incentive programs and recognitions provide positive motivation for good attendance. Privileges such as work release, concurrent enrollment, internships, and parking privileges are tied to good attendance standards.

   - Schools focus on transition to the high school and conduct planning meetings with middle school administrators in an effort to be proactive in working with students with chronic truancy patterns.

   - All high schools provide support for students in danger of not meeting graduation requirements and of dropping out. Carroll County Public Schools continues to allocate resources for extended day programs, learning labs, distance learning options, evening high school, and flexible support programs.

2) **Integrate dropout prevention strategies in school improvement plans.**

   Garrett County requires that schools address dropout prevention needs in all school improvement plans, and offer academic intervention programs at elementary, middle school, and high school levels.

3) **Provide positive interventions.**

   In order to address the needs for all students, but in particular, target subgroups of FARMS, special education and African-American students, the following programs and strategies will be implemented in **Queen Anne's County** (QAC) Public Schools:

   - QAC has increased work-based learning opportunities for students who are also at risk of dropping out of high school (Local Funds).

   - The Saturday School program will be continued to assist in reducing the number of students suspended out of school and to offer an opportunity to recover some withheld credits. By not being suspended from school during the school day, the time students were available for instruction increased, and students were kept engaged with the school.

   - A Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Intervention Grant was awarded to provide truancy reduction.

   - QAC addressed the problem of teen parenting by providing each high school with Teen Parenting Coordinators (Local Funds). They provide counseling for girls who became pregnant and potentially might drop out of school. The coordinator also provides the additional information about community services that are available. These coordinators have been critical for this population to continue in school, and reduced the number of female drop outs.

   Washington County Public Schools (WCPS) made progress in the areas of attendance, graduation, and dropout rates for 2008. Attendance for all students is 95%; and for virtually all subgroups, attendance was over 93%. In addition, WCPS had the highest graduation rate in eight years, 91.41%. WCPS also had the lowest dropout rate in eight years, 1.67%.   Factors that contributed to these successes included:

   - Development of a student services manual for all schools and professional development in the use of the manual.

   - Establishment of the Link Crew and WEB programs that support transitioning 6th and 9th grade students.

- Other initiatives included a multi-agency truancy program; the assignment of student intervention specialists and dropout prevention specialists to each middle and high school; implementation of the PBIS program; interventions for academic and behavioral difficulties; and attendance incentive plans.

- Initiatives focused specifically on dropout prevention included the assignment of a "graduation coach" for each high school to provide case management services to at-risk students. Student support teams work with students experiencing difficulty in school to ensure success. Site-based summer school options, the alternative learning center, evening high school, the WC Family Center for pregnant students, and computer-based instructional programs expanded the opportunities for earning credits toward graduation.

4) **Involve parents.**

   Worcester County is encouraging parents to become involved in improving their child's attendance. These measures include the following:

   - An attendance contract will be utilized as a mutual agreement between the student, parent and school. A new attendance contract form has been developed to document four levels of parental contact regarding student absence (fall 2008). The teachers, guidance counselor, administrators and the Student Service Specialist will work together with the parent and student to improve school attendance. This is an intervention strategy to help reduce the number of students referred to the Truancy Court.

   - As a proactive measure, during the summer, letters will be sent to parents of students who have been identified as having ten or more unexcused absences during the previous school year. This is being done to inform and encourage parents to become involved in improving their child's attendance.

   - In collaboration with the Worcester County Health Department, services will be offered/ provided to assist families in identifying social, behavioral, emotional and physiological challenges.

   - During January 2008, the state adopted legislation to improve high school attendance. The new legislation requires students to obtain an attendance certification form from the Department of Motor Vehicles which must be completed by their high school indicating satisfactory attendance (not more than 10 unexcused days). Worcester County is hopeful that this will help make a difference in the high school attendance rates because most teenagers want to obtain their driver's license.

5) **Facilitate engagement with school life.**

In **Baltimore City Schools**, the Special Education Department is developing and implementing an Improvement Plan to decrease the percentage of students with IEPs who drop out of school.

- Attendance and suspensions will be monitored on a monthly basis, and PPWs and special education chairpersons will be contracted to provide support and intervention for students identified as at-risk of dropping out of school.

- A transition and dropout grant will be utilized to launch a Check and Connect pilot program at one of the high school transition programs for students diagnosed with emotional disturbance. This research-based intervention is intended to facilitate high levels of individual attention and engagement with school life, thereby decreasing the probability of dropping out of school. The grant will provide training, a Check and Connect mentor, programming for families, and materials for students.

6) **Structure dropout prevention services.**

Worcester County employs a variety of Dropout Prevention services, such as the following:

		Worcester County's Dropout Prevention Strategies
1.	**Graduation completion plans**	Expand the drop-out recovery program. The Dropout Prevention and Recovery Program has impacted both the graduation and dropout rates through developing **graduation completion plans** for students at-risk of not graduating from high school.
2.	**Smaller Learning Communities**	Implement **Smaller Learning Communities** strategies in 9th grade programs to promote student attendance, participation, and achievement in rigorous instructional programs including all CTE offerings.
3.	**Expanded school year**	**Expand the school year** and summer work study program; expand an internship program; increase summer work experience for disadvantaged and disabled students.
4.	**Juvenile Drug Court and Truancy Reduction Program**	**Juvenile Drug Court and Truancy Reduction Program** have been initiated to address these issues and provide students and their families with additional support to become more successful in school.
5.	**Expanded partnerships**	**Expand partnerships** with businesses, community colleges, four year colleges, universities, and adult education programs to increase student achievement and to increase enrollment and completion in nontraditional pathways to college and employment.
6.	**College/university visitations.**	Increase opportunities for students to participate in **college/university visitations.**
7.	**Promoting participation in career and technology**	Implement a comprehensive plan that informs students, **promotes participation**, and increases program course offerings in a state of the art career and technology center.
8.	**CTE program offerings**	Inform all middle and high school students and parents of the **CTE program offerings and opportunities**.
9.	**Behavioral problem prevention**	Design, implement and evaluate a continuum of effective **behavioral problem prevention**, intervention and remediation programs.
10.	**Hire pupil personnel officers**	Hire pupil personnel officers for designated school areas.
11.	**Enhanced use of Pupil Services Teams**	**Enhance the use and effectiveness of Pupil Services Teams, Student Services** Specialists/Pupil Personnel Workers in all three areas of the county have made significant efforts to improve attendance and work with families to access needed services. Pupil services teams and Maryland Student Assistance Programs were successful in identifying and accessing needed services for students who were experiencing difficulties and needed such services. A Family/School Connections Coordinator works in the Pocomoke area to assist those students and their families who demonstrated the greatest need.
12.	**Active involvement of all stakeholders**	Design and implement an effective and comprehensive plan to ensure the **active involvement of all stakeholders** (parents, community, businesses) in school activities, improvement of schools, meaningful decision making, and expanding student services.
13.	**Parent outreach**	Continue to implement **parent outreach** to increase/improve two way communication and involvement of parents, community, business members.
14.	**Spanish interpreters**	**Spanish interpreters** have been trained and are available to assist Spanish speaking students and parents navigate the school system, participate in parent conferences and other school activities, and improve communication between school and home.

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5.2.3 Strategies Supporting Maryland's Standards-based Reforms

This section includes the results of a content analysis of LSS responses to the analyzing prompt:

Describe the changes or adjustments that will be made along with the related resource allocations to ensure progress. Include timelines where appropriate.

What's New

A content analysis of the Annual Updates revealed that a collaborative has been established to develop an Early Warning Indicator System for identifying students who are at risk of dropping out of school; a focus on integrating Maryland's Teacher Professional Development Standards; and an emphasis on applying Maryland's Technology Standards.

1) **Develop an Early Warning Indicator System.**

   Leaders in the **Baltimore City Schools**, District of Columbia Public Schools, and **Prince George's County Public Schools** are in the process of forming the Greater Beltway District Learning Collaborative. This partnership provides a forum for these school districts to learn together and share knowledge and resources in approaching common challenges in *district reform*. Within this framework, PGCPS will take the lead in developing an *early warning indicator system through which schools* can identify students who are at risk of dropping out of school as early as sixth grade. This work would include identifying the indicators that tend to predict potential non-graduates, developing a set of structures and practices within schools that would enable staff to review data and pinpoint those students for whom the indicators exist, and determining the support students need based on the particular indicators.

2) **Apply Maryland's Teacher Professional Development Standards.**

   In **Allegany County**, the newly developed Professional Development Standards will be incorporated into School Improvement Plans utilizing the Maryland Professional Development Planning Guide.

   The Leadership Team in **Garrett County** will revise the guidance for the development of the school improvement plan to include the six components of the planning framework and/or the planning guide. The Coordinator of School Improvement will be the lead on this endeavor to be completed by the end of January, 2009. Principals will be provided an overview during the February/March A&S meeting with more in-

depth training during the individual level meetings because of the slight differences at the instructional levels.

3) **Integrate Maryland's Technology Standards.**

To support Maryland's Technology Standards, computer/equipment ($100,000) will be purchased in **Allegany County Public Schools**. This funding will provide for the purchase of new desk top computers to replace D and E rated computers on teachers' desks. In addition, laptop carts are being purchased for middle and high school programs in lieu of putting in permanent hard-wired labs, allowing for flexibility.

Baltimore County continued to infuse and integrate Maryland Technology Standards for Students in curriculum design, teaching, learning, and assessment. The school system:

▪ Continued to provide online AP and General Education courses for students as part of the e-Learning initiative as outlined in the *BCPS Guidelines and Procedures Manual for Online Courses.*

▪ Continued to provide an online database of Curriculum-Based Technology Integration Activities as models of "Best Practices" in integrating technology into existing and new BCPS curriculum.

▪ Continued to support the use of e-Communities through Desire2Learn so that curriculum offices and schools have access to a collaborative communication tools and electronic resources with access to an e-Learner system.

▪ Continued to facilitate the BCPS Instructional Software and Web-based Resources Evaluation Process to provide quality resources for improving both student achievement and instruction while providing equity and standardization of resources.

▪ Piloted and assessed supplemental technology programs that support mathematics instruction and academic preparation for local, state, and national assessments.

In **Somerset County Public Schools**, the computer assisted math instructional program *SuccessMaker,* delivers individualized programming and tracking, assessment reporting, and classroom coordination and this appears to be transcending subgroup barriers.

Technology continues to be a critical focus that underlies all aspects of **Calvert County's** school system operation. Instructional technology has proven to be a

valuable tool for teachers to enhance student learning. The district updates the student assessment system on a regular basis so staff can analyze and identify individual student achievement profiles and identify achievement trends. These data inform instructional and curricular practice. The school system has established several processes (e.g. Technology Workgroup, E-Team) to involve a wide variety of staff and support the research, acquisition and implementation of these new technological resources.

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5.2.4 How LSSs Support Students in Passing the High School Assessments

Successful performance on the High School Assessment (HSA) is a requirement for students in the State of Maryland in order to graduate.

Each year, Maryland's Annual Review of Local School System Master Plan Annual Updates provides the State with a snapshot of school system efforts to address students' needs as identified by assessment performance. A summary of these snapshots of the Annual Updates (2005- 2007) is offered below. While these snapshots are not exhaustive of school system efforts, they do help in illustrating the common strategies that are in place to address student and teacher needs.

1) **Develop or revise district curriculum.**

Local school systems are developing new curriculum that shows more explicit connections between the concepts that students learn in elementary and middle schools to the success that they have on the High School Assessments. New strategies and assessments are also more closely matched to the content and language of the High School Assessments.   Certain school systems are also organizing and sequencing curriculum content so that students have ample opportunity to learn it.

By conducting curriculum and program reviews, local school systems are giving feedback to school staff on teaching and learning. Senior managers and school administrators are conducting "walk-throughs" as a way of monitoring curriculum implementation and identifying possible inconsistencies in how teachers of the same subject and at the same grade level address the designated standards in the district's curriculum.

2) **Provide targeted professional development.**

School systems are intervening to improve student performance on the High School Assessments by providing targeted professional development to staff members at all levels on how to use the new and revised curriculum materials. School systems are training teacher leaders and coaches to work closely with beginning teachers and struggling teachers to ensure that they are using appropriate instructional practices to support *all students'* mastery of the standards.

High quality professional development is clearly aligned with these needs and focused on topics such as disciplinary literacy, employing reading strategies in content areas, and differentiated instruction. Increasingly often, there is a clear and articulated connection between site-based staff needs and the training strategies.

3) Offer literacy, math and science intervention programs and support.

Local school systems are intervening to improve student performance by providing opportunities for teachers to identify research based materials for middle and high schools. Middle school students with below grade level skills in reading and mathematics and students at risk of failing the High School Assessments are being identified as target populations for individual support and academic interventions.

For several years, school systems have been using "pull out" programs to provide interventions for students who did not pass the High School Assessments.   Recently, more school systems have begun offering developmental reading and remedial math courses. Other school systems offer important prerequisite courses in assessed content areas.   Additionally, most school systems report that they provide remediation courses.

4) Implement Individual Student Learning or Monitoring Plans.

Every Maryland school system requires close monitoring of assessment data and the use of data to inform instructional decisions.   Several school systems closely monitor individuals who make D's and E's, and all systems now monitor any student who has failed any of the High School Assessments.   In doing so, school systems rely on data warehouses to better analyze data and plan for instruction.

5) Use technology in the delivery of instruction and assessment of learning.

Most school systems now offer credit recovery on-line. Every school system combines offerings such as: computer-aided instruction, computer-based reading programs, on-line instructional delivery through Evening School, and technology-based reading interventions. Certain school systems also employ special computer software for independent learning and student self-examination.

6) Encourage close articulation between and among grade levels.

In every school system, teachers are encouraged to work with their colleagues. Articulation between and among grade levels is focusing on new curriculum documents, detailed Pacing Guides, restructured content for English and math courses, and student assessment results.

7) Improve preparation/incentive offerings for rigorous coursework.

The majority of Maryland school systems have seen an increase in participation in AP and SAT, pre-AP and PSAT as a result of improving AP recruitment and offering incentives for participation in rigorous courses. One school system has developed a partnership with the College Board to provide student workshops and conferences on

PSAT, SAT, and AP in an effort to increase the inclusion of students historically underrepresented in rigorous courses.

Additionally, based on a review of the Annual Updates, four school systems offer Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID), a skill-building course designed to help underachieving students succeed in college preparatory, accelerated and advanced placement courses.

8) Offer extended day, week, and year learning opportunities.

In the 2005 Master Plan Annual Updates, eighteen school systems reported that they had continued or expanded their extended day, week and year learning programs. All LSSs now offer some extended learning opportunities. These programs aim to enrich learning opportunities beyond the school day or school year. The nature of extended learning opportunities varies across the State and includes alternative programs and non-traditional school opportunities, Saturday School, Evening School, Middle School Summer School and traditional Summer School.

9) Provide support at transition points and in completing the requirements for graduation.

Several LSSs are providing extra assistance to students in transition years (e.g., the 9th grade) and in completing the requirements for graduation.

10) Involve parents.

School systems are making parent-community outreach and ongoing parent communication a school system priority. Using their school system's web site, educators are communicating important information to families and students about the High School Assessments. Many systems are exploring the use of electronic tools that will allow immediate access for parents to learn about their child's progress.

2008 Highlights

The review of this year's Annual Updates revealed the following highlights:

1) Develop systems of support to assist students in passing the High School Assessments.

Local school systems are creating well-designed, coordinated, and monitored systems of support to assist students in passing the High School Assessments. They often include collaboration with instructional experts (specialists), resource allocations, extended learning opportunities, and on-line resources. In some school systems, extra staff has been hired to provide students with needed assistance.

2) Initiate the implementation of the <u>Bridge Plan for Academic Validation</u>.

As stated previously, local school systems began reporting strategies to support students in passing the High School Assessments starting in 2005. This occurred after the State Board of Education made the passage of the High School Assessments (HSAs) mandatory for high school graduation beginning with the class of 2009.

The Maryland High School Assessments are end-of-course tests taken in four assessed areas: algebra, biology, English, and government. Students must pass each HSA or achieve a combined total passing score on all of the HSAs in order to receive a Maryland high school diploma. In October 2007, the State Board of Education approved the optional measure of a **senior project** for those students for whom passing the HSAs has proven difficult even after remediation.

The table below displays the plans that local school systems have to initiate the projects.

Bridge Plan for Academic Validation
1. In 2008-2009 in **Somerset County**, there will be a variety of opportunities for remediation and retesting for secondary students for each HSA areas. All secondary schools are beginning the Focused Improvement Process, a structured way for all teachers to identify students who need intervention and strategies which they will use to remediate them within the regular classroom. When the HSA Bridge process began, a three week summer Bridge program was offered. All secondary English teachers were oriented to the Bridge Program and have been trained to score projects. One teacher at each high school has been assigned a period to work with students to complete Bridge Projects.
2. After the October testing, **Kent County** will evaluate what Cohort 09 students need to be successful with the next testing period or begin the Bridge Process.
3. **Baltimore County** works with high schools to monitor the progress and success of students involved in the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation.
4. **Prince George's County** has a pilot of just under 100 students that undertook Academic Validation projects as part of their efforts to complete the requirements for high school graduation. Each high school is offering two semesterized courses for students who have taken the biology HSA but not passed. These are the AVP (Academic Validation Program) and the CEP (Credit Enrichment Program). MSDE's AVP (Academic Validation Program) is for students who will complete state developed project– based modules to allow students the possibility of receiving a passing HSA score to receive a diploma. The CEP is a semesterized remediation course. Students review all the biology HSA concepts in one semester and sit for the biology HSA in January.
5. In **Frederick County**, High School Assessment Intervention Teachers at each high school to monitor student progress, tutor students and organize/mentor student's engaged in the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation process. ($437,528)
6. **Harford County** offers the Bridge Plan for those students who meet all criteria as outlined by MSDE.

Bridge Plan for Academic Validation
7. In **Garrett County**, the Bridge Plan process will be implemented this school year for students to complete English projects to successfully meet graduation requirements Bridge Plan projects are assigned to students as an alternative way of passing the English II HSA, if failed twice. A project monitor is assigned to a student to review the choices and the process of completing an English project in lieu of passing the written assessment. Time is made available during the school day for the student to work on the project as well as during after-school sessions in the media center. The project monitor will guide the student and set timelines for completion.
8. In **Worcester County**, for the summer of 2008, the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation for English is in place in all high schools for eligible students. Students were identified by the administration and school testing coordinator at the individual schools. Students whose parents signed the appropriate forms were placed in the Bridge Plan (2008 Update).   Implementing the new Bridge Plan for Academic Validation with students who have met requirements for this alternative way to meet the Algebra graduation requirement will be undertaken. Based on a pilot in English using the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation, the math program will be organized at each school, where students will be identified, staff trained, and the first Algebra projects carried out.
9. In **Calvert County**, Core Leads are working with their school-based teams and special educators to determine which students will participate in Bridge Plans to complete graduation requirements.
10. In **Calvert County**, students who receive a failing score on the Government HSA and did not take advantage of HSA summer school or were not available for this opportunity are assigned to HSA Government Remediation. This semester long course operates in the same vein as Essentials of Government (described above) and emphasizes reading, writing and thinking skills, as well as Government Goal One content (60% of the test). Students enrolled in HSA Government Remediation may test in October and/or January and will also have the opportunity to begin Bridge Plan projects under the guidance of a Government content expert. As with the intervention options described above, remediation opportunities are available to regular education and special needs students. However, these interventions are designed to be individualized and address the specific barriers that often prevent students from acquiring mastering of Government course content or demonstrating the knowledge that they possess.
11. In **Wicomico County**, highly qualified teachers who provide direct support for students accessing a parallel path utilizing Bridge while continuing to take the HSA Structured Bridge classes during the school day at some high schools.
12. **Montgomery County** offers High School Plus, an extended-day program at all local high schools where students can retake a course, participate in classes for credit-recovery, or take a class that will allow them to work on a Bridge Plan project.
13. For summer 2008, four high schools were involved in the Baltimore **City Schools** Bridge Plan pilot. Preliminary planning for the "Bridge" program was begun, and a trial project period during summer school was outlined. Coach visits to pilot schools were designed to support and observe the work of students.
14. As of September 6, 2008, a total of 2194 **City Schools'** students must complete 3,643 High School Bridge Plan Projects. The rate of completion for these projects may be impacted by the high rate of students' absenteeism.
15. In **Charles County**, the Bridge Plan process was also implemented as part of the summer school program during the summer of 2008. This program will also be utilized for those students who qualify to participate during the 2008-09SY.

Bridge Plan for Academic Validation
16. In **Caroline County**, after two unsuccessful attempts at passing the Government High School Assessment, eligible students are given the option of continuing with the remediation model mentioned above or to enter into the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation parallel path sequence where they must complete the necessary number of projects in the Bridge Plan to satisfy the assessment requirements for the Maryland High School Diploma. Students are encouraged to continue to participate in the county's remediation model and to take the High School Assessment at every opportunity to achieve a passing score on the assessment or gain the combined-score option of 1602. To date, we have had one student choose the Bridge Plan option and they successfully completed the Bridge Plan project and had it accepted on the first attempt this summer.
17. In **Dorchester County** Public Schools, Bridge Projects were piloted during summer school with district-wide scoring teams for three of the HSA subjects (Algebra, English, Government) and will further this initiative to include Biology during 08-09. Each high school has a Bridge Plan Monitor who is responsible for tracking student progress.
18. In **Queen Anne's County**, students who have previously failed HSA Algebra re-take a semester Algebra course, or are involved in after-school or in-school intervention programs. Students who have passed the HSA algebra course but not the state assessment are enrolled in an appropriate intervention: seminar class, in-school or after school program or Bridge plan.
19. To get its students over the last bar, **St. Mary's County** has allocated four additional instructional positions at the high school level to coordinate the High School Assessment Bridge Plan for students who find themselves unable to pass the tests individually or through a combined score option. These teachers have mutually convenient schedules with co-planning time built in to share data and work with students. They will work closely with the building level HSA remediation teachers as well as the content supervisors and instructors from other schools. The SMCPS school calendar has built in early dismissal days each marking period to allow teachers to meet with colleagues beyond their home school.
20. In **Howard County**, those who have completed the course and earned a passing grade but have failed the assessment more than once may be eligible to participate in the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation as an alternative way to earn a diploma.
21. In **Allegany County**, the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation will be initiated for identified students who have failed the HSA in one or more content areas two or more times, who have passed the class, and who have met the established attendance requirements. School-based personnel will serve as Bridge Plan coordinators and identified content area teachers will serve as monitors to ensure the identified students have the needed resources and guidance to successfully complete the HSA Bridge Plan projects.
22. In **Washington County**, staff has developed both a pre-teaching course focusing on academic skills and vocabulary, and a remediation course focusing on identified student weaknesses in biology. Bridge planning and implementation is taking place in this latter course in many of our high schools. WCPS staff also closely monitors the developing plan for the MSDE Bridge Plan.
23. **Cecil County** reported that it has invested heavily in intervention services at middle and high school. This support includes after school programs in the middle schools and a special Appropriate Assistance class in the high schools. This assistance occurs through online instruction helping students prepare for HSA retests. This same structure and class time will support students engaged in Bridge Projects. (One seventh of 5 salaries during the day, approximately $70,000 and another $100,000 for after school tutors and online instructors).

Maryland's Annual Review of LSS Master Plan Annual Updates

4.3 Program Reviews, Technical Reviews, and Budget Reviews

This section reports on the results of the Program Reviews and the Technical Reviews.

Program Reviews

The Program Reviews focused on progress that local school systems were making toward meeting program goals. As a result of the Program Reviews, all program areas (e.g., early learning, gifted and talented students, education technology, and multicultural education) were found to be in compliance with requirements contained in State law, and, as applicable, additional requirements established by MSDE.

Technical Reviews

As a result of the Technical Review, the NCLB grant programs (Title I-A, Title I-D, Title II-A, Title II-D, Title III-A, Title IV-A), the State Fine Arts Grant, facilities plans for kindergarten and pre-kindergarten for disadvantaged students, and other State reporting areas, were found to be in compliance with requirements contained in State and federal law, and, as applicable, additional requirements established by MSDE.

MSDE continues to work with Baltimore City Schools on some school-level concerns in Title II, Part A: Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers.

Budget Reviews

All Budget Documents were found to be in compliance with requirements established by MSDE.

6.0 Conclusion

This annual review revealed that all 24 local school system Annual Updates were substantially in compliance with the requirements contained in State and federal law, and, as applicable, additional requirements established by MSDE.   MSDE continues to work with Baltimore City Schools on some school-level concerns in Title II, Part A: Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers.

<u>Attachments</u>

Attachment A

Annual Update Percentages Of Core Academic Subject Classes Taught by HQT					
Local School System	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Allegany	85.0%	93.6%	97.2%	97.5%	97.8%
Anne Arundel	82.2%	84.0%	84.5%	84.1%	87.4%
Baltimore City	34.3%	42.1%	46.8%	53.0%	51%
Baltimore	62.5%	77.7%	83.3%	87.5%	88.7%
Calvert	77.7%	85.6%	86.5%	87.3%	86.3%
Caroline	74.5%	87.0%	89.5%	95%	96%
Carroll	NA	87.9%	89.8%	90.2%	91.7%
Cecil	77.7%	86.9%	89.5%	90.2%	93.1%
Charles	51.0%	60.0%	73.0%	82.0%	91%
Dorchester	67.3%	56.5%	66.9%	61.7%	79.8%
Frederick	79.4%	86.4%	89.0%	90.4%	91.9%
Garrett	85.0%	90.1%	93.3%	94.8%	95%
Harford	80.1%	88.9%	89.3%	88.2%	88.7%
Howard	81.7%	84.2%	89.0%	88.4%	90%
Kent	73.0%	75.1%	82.9%	82.7%	90%
Montgomery	74.5%	80.3%	85.5%	90.5%	92.5%
Prince George's	48.6%	62.0%	62.1%	66.3%	78%
Queen Anne's	62.1%	72.1%	81.1%	83.7%	82.6%
St. Mary's	70.9%	89.6%	93.3%	94.2%	92.9%
Somerset	53.4%	75.8%	69.0%	71.4%	83.3%
Talbot	NA	87.8%	91.9%	91.2%	96.4%
Washington	69.7%	84.4%	89.2%	90.2%	90.1%
Wicomico	78.2%	80.5%	74.5%	86.9%	88%
Worcester	79.3%	86.2%	89.2%	91.6%	95%
Statewide % HQT	66.8%	75.4%	79.5%	82.2%	84.6%