# Maximizing Implementation
# of
# *No Child Left Behind*

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# *DIAGNOSTIC REPORT*

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## Prepared for:

**MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**
**Achievement Matters Most**

## Prepared by:

**CCSSO**

**The Council of Chief State School Officers**

**and**

**MGT of America**

# June 1, 2005

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# SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

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In 2005, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) contracted with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and MGT of America, Inc., to conduct *An Organizational, Operational, and Resource Assessment Related to Maximizing Implementation of No Child Left Behind.* The project addressed Maryland's *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) implementation process and activities. The purpose was to take an in-depth look at practices, organizational structure, and responses to the legislation in order to identify agency strengths and improvement opportunities in responding to this federal legislation. In addition, the project's intent was to identify strengths upon which the organization can build as implementation progresses and recommendations that should stimulate more effective implementation of NCLB requirements.

The review process required the collection, analysis, and synthesis of MSDE data regarding NCLB-related policies and practices. Data were gathered through personnel interviews with agency administrators and other relevant staff, and analyses of documentation from the state and program levels. This process contributed to a comprehensive understanding of issues surrounding the implementation of NCLB in Maryland, as well as processes currently in place to manage NCLB implementation and those needed to continue to manage ongoing implementation guidelines from the federal government and provide support to schools and school districts with NCLB implementation issues.

## 1.1    Review Methodology

This section of the report describes the methodology CCSSO/MGT used to prepare for and conduct the assessment. The methodology primarily involved a focused use of indicators and rubrics in conjunction with the analysis of both existing data and new information obtained through various means of employee input. Each practice used is described in further detail below.

### Existing Reports and Data Sources

Subsequent to project initiation and before conducting the on-site review, many activities occurred concurrently. Among them were the identification and collection of existing reports and data sources that could provide the reviewers background information and a deeper understanding of the MSDE's responses to NCLB requirements and processes that had been created to enable the Department to meet them. Data requested also included documents that described the various functions and operations within divisions of the agency that were associated with aspects of NCLB implementation.

Examples of materials requested include, but are not limited to the following:

- Maryland's Accountability Plan;
- additional state accountability initiatives;
- assessment data and background information;
- state content standards;

- organizational structure;
- NCLB budget information;
- professional development information;
- teacher training, evaluation, and certification data;
- state report cards;
- student reports; and
- information on support for low-performing schools.

### *Self-Assessment Survey*

In order to understand the perspectives of managers in the Maryland State Department of Education, the *State Agency Self-Assessment on Implementing The No Child Left Behind Act* was disseminated to MSDE staff. Responses included short responses and ratings from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* and include opportunities for *neither agree/disagree* and for *don't know/not applicable.* The responses to the survey were used to focus the assessment and are cited throughout the report. Summarized survey results are included in the Appendix.

### *Conducting the On-Site Diagnostic Review*

During the week of March 8-11, 2005 the CCSSO/MGT team conducted the on-site diagnostic review. As part of the on-site visit, we used a set of quality indicators for 17 components of the *No Child Left Behind* Act as interview guidelines. However, because of the time that has elapsed since initial enactment of NCLB and the level of implementation in the Maryland State Department of Education, interview content went beyond the indicators. The on-site review included both interviews with relevant MSDE staff and an examination of documents that were provided.

## 1.2 *Overview of Diagnostic Report*

The Diagnostic Report is organized into four major sections:

- Section 1 – Introduction
- Section 2 – Agency Strengths and Improvement Opportunities
- Section 3 – Findings, Commendations, and Recommendations
- Section 4 – Summary and Conclusions
- Appendix

# SECTION 2 – AGENCY STRENGTHS AND IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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This section outlines key strengths upon which the Maryland State Department of Education can build as it continues to implement NCLB and improvement opportunities that, if not executed, may impose barriers to overall implementation success for the Department.  Major elements are summarized to provide an overview of conditions impinging on NCLB implementation in Maryland. Issues relative to NCLB implementation continue to surface, however, as the federal government promulgates implementing rules and as new issues arise within the state and the MSDE.  As a consequence, the following summary should serve largely as a discussion catalyst for NCLB issues in Maryland and should preface a more thorough examination of the content of the entire report.

Since the requirements of the federal *No Child Left Behind* law are sweeping and touch essentially all aspects of the operations of a state education agency (SEA), practices and procedures that the MSDE is currently using are temporal, at best, evolving as situations and needs develop that necessitate new iterations of responses.  All aspects of NCLB have not yet been addressed with guidelines for states and other implementation strategies continuing to be negotiated between the United States Department of Education (USDE) and individual states.   While this provides implementation challenges, it also provides opportunities to create innovative solutions in response to stipulations of the Act as is encouraged with flexibility provisions. Due to the continuing succession of implementation clarifications from the USDOE, it is important to filter discussion of Maryland's NCLB implementation through that lens to accurately assess the status of current efforts.

## 2.1   *Agency Strengths*

The Maryland State Department of Education has both embraced and been subjected to significant changes in the past five years.  Concomitant with enactment of NCLB, Maryland faced budget shortfalls that have led to decreased staff in MSDE available to address increased mandates.  Nonetheless, the Department had laid a sound base for many NCLB requirements with its proactive creation of an assessment, accountability, improvement, and reporting system a decade before NCLB enactment, so the agency was well-poised to respond to this federal legislation.  Within 14 months after NCLB enactment, Maryland had created a Voluntary State Curriculum, and aligned it with its revised accountability and assessment systems. That foundation equipped the MSDE to be well-ahead of other states in the nation, including an identification and improvement system for schools in need.  Accountability in Maryland schools, even before NCLB, was expected for all schools, not just Title I schools.   Three comprehensive Web sites provide extensive public reporting and tools for educators to use.

Overall, the MSDE has developed exemplary processes and procedures that undergird a cohesive approach to NCLB issues at the state level and provide high levels of support for schools and districts across the state.  The small size of the state with only 24

districts lends itself to collaboration among the state department, district leadership, and school personnel. This organizational structure has created a united front in addressing implementation challenges and in merging state and local processes into a seamless system in many respects. The senior staff in the Maryland State Department of Education is also unified in its commitment and creativity in working cross-divisionally to ensure that all students have access to challenging instruction and curricula, and are well-prepared to reach their potential. Meeting that goal in Maryland involves stakeholders on many task forces who join state education leaders in identifying and addressing many NCLB-related and other educational issues.

The state's strategic plan, *Achievement Matters Most,* guides all those activities and serves as the framework for improvement and funding within the state. District five-year Master Plans are the frameworks used to document the related planning and implementation. Additional documents and grants provide support for reaching goals and carefully guide district and school staff in weaving proven strategies and programs into their improvement efforts. They also incorporate evaluative and monitoring processes into grant documents to ensure that plans are, in fact, carried out. Subsequent funding is discontinued for those not making progress. Also, to underpin improvement efforts, Maryland has led other states in meeting highly qualified teacher reporting requirements and in collecting data from teachers themselves on engagement in high quality professional development. The MSDE has created professional development standards by which all training is judged, assuring continuous improvement of professional development across the state.

Other exceptional practices were also found by the CCSSO/MGT review team throughout the Maryland State Department of Education. Descriptions of effective practices and policies in response to NCLB requirements are more extensively provided in Section 3 of this report. Commendations based on exemplary policies and practices are also included to underscore Maryland's strengths and successes in implementation of NCLB mandates.

## 2.2   *Agency Improvement Opportunities*

Funding issues related to MSDE capacity and the continuation of programs and practices that have proven effective in meeting the challenges of NCLB implementation are the overarching concerns identified in the study. In almost every division of the MSDE, specific instances and evidence of staff reduction since NCLB enactment were provided. In response to the escalation of responsibilities associated with NCLB implementation, the MSDE has re-allocated existing personnel, created a collaborative organizational structure, and individuals have taken on additional responsibilities beyond those for which they were hired. Thus far, the state has managed to stay ahead of the NCLB curve. However, mandates continue to grow, assessment and reporting requirements increase, and low-performing schools continue to need state assistance and support without which they will fall further and further behind. With existing staff levels, the state will likely also lag in meeting its lofty goals and those of the federal government reflected in NCLB legislation.

Several issues relative to accountability in the state bear amplification. The MSDE has not yet defined its role related to technical assistance and monitoring. While it has carefully considered the needs of low-performing schools in the state with respect to its own capacity to provide support and assistance, and developed a draft plan prioritizing and targeting assistance, it must continue and expand that discussion. Towards that end, although it has identified schools for improvement assistance, since 1994, it has not delineated timelines or consequences for school systems beyond corrective action. Additionally, the MSDE has identified a related need in terms of expanding its educational data warehouse's taxed ability to support NCLB requirements for harvesting and reporting more data by grade levels and subgroupings in a timely manner. Thus far, this request has not been funded by the state.

While the MSDE has done an outstanding job of meeting NCLB requirements and created a relatively cohesive approach to addressing them, additional opportunities remain to improve the effective implementation and maximize the benefits of the implementation process. Recommendations for improvement and strategies to enhance the benefits of NCLB in Maryland are described in Section 3 of this report.

# *SECTION 3 – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS*

# SECTION 3 – FINDINGS, COMMENDATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the CCSSO/MGT report examines the 17 components of NCLB we reviewed. Utilizing the diagnostic review guidelines developed for this study, the review team collected information from multiple sources on each component and conducted on-site interviews to assess organizational structure, relevant practices, and overall policy implementation. Each of the following subsections detail the results of data collection activities, interviews, and analyses conducted by the review team for the 17 components, including:

- Academic Standards
- Accountability/Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)
- Reporting
- Low-Performing Schools
- School Support and Recognition
- Student Assessment
- Teacher Qualifications
- Paraprofessional Qualifications
- Reading First/Early Reading First Programs
- Transferability
- Data Management
- Public School Choice
- Professional Development
- Supplemental Educational Services
- Educational Technology
- Student Safety & Health
- Overall Organization of the SEA

The first part of each subsection contains NCLB requirements. Findings of the implementation of the 17 components are presented next so that each component of NCLB can be detailed in isolation, providing a clear understanding of the issues affecting the implementation of the component. Implementation strengths and improvement opportunities are included, and commentary and analysis are provided to support the findings.

Each of the NCLB components are given an overall rating using the following rubric levels:

**1** – Little or no development and implementation
**2** – Limited development or partial implementation
**3** – Fully functioning and operational level of development and implementation
**4** – Exemplary level of development and implementation

The final part of each subsection contains commendations and recommendations for the individual components based on information previously detailed. A listing of the most successful aspects of each component as well as recommended strategies and actions to address needed improvements are included. Recommendations offered for each

component should serve as the basis for systemic change and can guide the Maryland State Department of Education in developing future implementation activities.

## COMPONENT 1:   CHALLENGING ACADEMIC STANDARDS

**Definition:** Federal law requires the development of academic content and achievement standards in reading, language arts, math and science that apply to all schools and students uniformly.  Reading, language arts, and math standards were mandated to be in place at the beginning of the 1997-98 school year under the 1994 reauthorization of ESEA.  Rigorous standards in science must be developed by the 2005-06 school year. The state may adopt standards in other subjects as they determine necessary.  **(Title I, Part A, Section 1111)**

In July 2003, the Maryland State Board of Education approved model content standards for curriculum.

### Rubric Score: 3.8

**FINDINGS**

Standards serve as the beacon of an educational program that drives improvement in teaching and learning.  They provide the structure undergirding high expectations for teachers and students that lead to continuous school improvement and growth in student achievement.  Thus, NCLB requires states to develop rigorous standards that will drive ongoing improvement and build, year after year, upon prior successes.   Strong accountability, assessment and reporting systems must be aligned with each state's standards to form a firm foundation for continuous improvement and for meeting the NCLB expectation that, by 2013-14, 100 percent of students will perform at the proficient level.

In the CCSSO/MGT surveys, 100 percent of respondents *agree* or *strongly agree* that the MSDE had quality academic standards.   In fact, 64 percent *strongly agree*. Furthermore, 96 percent of respondents reported that they *strongly agree* or *agree* that NCLB's Academic Standards would benefit students with four percent responding that they *did not know*.  Of 15 responses noting aspects of NCLB that would provide the greatest benefit to students, eight cited academic standards. The survey results show that many in the MSDE are convinced that the "state standards, voluntary state curriculum and assessments are in place and aligned."

In 2002, the Visionary Panel for Better Schools, assembled by the State Superintendent, reported on its examination of the previous decade of the state's educational accountability and assessment systems and recommended future actions to improve learning and teaching.  In a January 2002 report, *Achievement Matters Most: The Final Report of the Visionary Panel for Better Schools,* the Panel laid out a blueprint for upgrading the state's accountability system and aligning all aspects of the educational enterprise in the state from funding, curriculum, instruction, and assessment to professional development and other activities that contribute to a high quality

educational system. One key recommendation the Visionary Panel made that stimulated changes in Maryland's public education system almost simultaneously with NCLB enactment was the development of a state curriculum. The outcome of that action was the creation of the Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC) which serves as the state's standards document and the foundation for its instructional program.

Achieve, Inc. is an independent, non-profit, bipartisan organization created by the nation's governors and business leaders to help states raise academic standards and improve schools. The State of Maryland has contracted with Achieve to work on a series of analyses beginning with a comprehensive policy review with findings reported in January 2002 in *Aiming Higher: The Next Decade of Education Reform in Maryland*. One outcome of that analysis was a recommendation for the state to strengthen its academic standards and assessments, and to consider developing a voluntary curriculum to strengthen guidance to school districts beyond that provided in content standards. The report further recommended aligning K-8 assessments with high school assessments.

The development of the VSC began in the Summer of 2002 with alignment of Maryland content standards with the 2003 Maryland School Assessment. The development of indicators and objectives as a part of the VSC provided a greater degree of specificity to previous content standards regarding what students should know and be able to do as a result of instruction. Although it is voluntary, the VSC serves as a model to assist educators at the school and district levels. Each school district, to some extent, has adopted or broadened and enriched its use in Maryland schools. CCSSO/MGT survey observations noted that the VSC is being implemented by most local school systems as a result of high stakes testing, thus helping to standardize rigorous content. Many survey comments reflect a unified belief that NCLB has helped to create uniform high standards for all Maryland students. Since it is voluntary, MSDE personnel are not monitoring districts' alignment of the curriculum being used with state standards. In essence, schools' and districts' AYP is the check for that alignment.

Subsequent to the 2002 Achieve Report, Maryland made the decision to overhaul its entire assessment, while building the VSC and articulating content standards for grades PreKindergarten (PreK) through 8. That standards articulation process involved the extension and augmentation of standards already in place in grades 3, 5, and 8 to create a tightly aligned system of standards and tests. The state contracted with Achieve to analyze the desired alignment of curriculum standards and assessment.

The process of VSC development entailed a thorough, purposeful multi-step approach using both internal and external content expert reviews of draft curriculum documents. Phase I involved district curriculum writers identified by assistant superintendents in drafting a voluntary curriculum prototype for grade three. This model then served as the prototype for other grades. The initial draft was examined by Achieve with revisions then incorporated. In order to assure articulation across the grades, after the third grade prototype was completed, other teams were gathered at the second and fourth grade levels to write those curricula. Intermittent reviews were conducted by teams of three, including beginning teachers and reading experts, to bring those perspectives to the development process.

Phase Two engaged writing teams delineating specific standards, indicators, objectives and assessment limits in reading, language arts, and mathematics for grades PreK-8 and grade 10 in reading, building on the grade 3 prototype. For clarity, consistency and user-friendliness, MSDE created a cycle of review and revision that rotated from departmental review to one by local district representatives to an external review by Achieve. Each step included incorporation of recommendations into the documents. This process is ongoing as VSC refinement continues. An estimated 800 teachers were engaged in writing in the areas of the reading, math, science, and social studies.

Throughout the process, Achieve content specialists reviewed documents using guiding questions considered central to high quality standards and made comparisons between Maryland's emerging standards and Achieve's benchmarks that were developed using exemplary national and international standards. English/language arts benchmark standards used were from California and Massachusetts and early literacy were from New Standards, North Carolina, and Texas. Math benchmark standards included those from Indiana, Massachusetts, and Singapore as well as Achieve's standards for middle grades *Foundations for Success.* Results of the analyses were shared systematically with MSDE staff for further clarification and revision.

Conclusions in a Summer 2003 Achieve report noted that all subject areas had "a clear, logical structure that organizes each subject area into major strands that reflect the structure of the subject area" and are "user-friendly" allowing teachers "to readily reference standards preceding and following their particular grade level." The content difficulty was deemed appropriate across grades and the standards, indicators, and objective statements had a "logical progression of knowledge and skills across the grades."

With respect to reading and English/language arts, the report noted that there was a "sufficient degree of specificity to guide classroom instruction" balanced between broad and detailed standards. It further stated that the "fine-grained objectives" should be helpful to teachers in curriculum planning. The evaluation found that Maryland's standards are reflective of current research and best practices as encouraged in NCLB and focus on core knowledge and skills students need for the subjects. An accolade observed that the assessment limits for reading bridges a potential chasm between instruction and assessment making the assessment system "more transparent."

All recommendations made in the report relative to reading and English/language arts were incorporated into the VSC prior to its posting on MSDE's Web site in September 2003. Recommendations related to mathematics were more extensive in nature, so were not incorporated prior to posting. They were approved by the State Board in July 2004 and posted soon thereafter, including "many of the suggestions to improve clarity, specificity, and cohesiveness made in the Achievement Report."

Additionally, Maryland has chosen to participate in Achieve's Mathematics Achievement Partnership (MAP) which is a coalition of states working to raise math achievement to international standards. Participation in that group is anticipated to facilitate making the additional changes in the math standards. In contrast to remarks concerning reading assessment limits, the report concludes that those in math are "quite narrow and prescriptive," which may, inadvertently, force teachers to narrow instruction rather than teaching to the broader expectations contained in the indicators and objectives.

In *Education Week's* report titled *Quality Counts, 2005,* Maryland was one of a dozen states earning an A with respect to Standards and Accountability, due to its implementation of a strong system of accountability. Strengths noted were that the tests that had been developed relied on a variety of items including multiple-choice, short-answer, and extended-response. The report noted that its standards for English, mathematics and science were clear and specific at all grade levels and that social studies/history were clear at the middle and high school levels. The state was lauded for the existence of standards-based exams in all grades in English and math. However, the report stated that tests in history and science that are aligned with content standards are only given at the high school level.

Prior to NCLB, Maryland had begun setting standards for science with Core Learning Goals for biology and adding indicator statements and expectations to further specify expectations. Objectives further define clear skills for teachers. Assessment limits were also developed for demonstration of knowledge and skills on the High School Assessment. Passing the test is a graduation requirement for the freshman class of 2005. Additionally, the VSC defines science expectations for students in grades prek-8. More than 90 representatives of local school systems were involved in this process as in reading and math. The draft document was posted on the Web on September 2, 2003. Since posting, a national expert review has been completed. Once changes have been incorporated, assessment limits will be developed to assure alignment of curriculum and assessment. NCLB achievement standards will be set in 2006-07 on the biology end-of-course assessment which is based on the Core Learning Goals content standards. The date set in Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) by which science performance levels will be set is September 1, 2008.

For grades prek-12, Maryland has developed a draft of English/language proficiency standards. They have been linked to reading/language arts, mathematics, and science, and address four of the five domains stipulated in NCLB requirements: listening, speaking, reading and writing, but comprehension is not specifically assessed with the assessment currently used in Maryland. The MSDE interprets that it is implicit in administration of the IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) and student responses that, if their responses are appropriate, then they have comprehended. A decision has been made that the IPT does not align well with Maryland ELL standards, so the state has joined an assessment consortium of five states to collaborate with Accountability Works, a nonprofit assessment developer, and the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to develop and field test the English Proficiency for All Students (EPAS) test. Based on its administration to 4,500 students in Maryland in October and November, an evaluation of ELP assessments for identification of one that meets Title lll requirements and aligns with Maryland standards will be conducted for use in the 2005-06 school year. The MSDE will take that evaluation into consideration as it selects what it considers to be the best English language proficiency test for Maryland students.

One of the primary means of communicating with the public in the state is the MSDE's multiple Web sites for Maryland schools. Maryland's content standards are available on the Web site http://mdk12/org/mspp/vsc/. The MSDE has developed a document entitled *Maryland Education on the Web* that describes how to navigate all aspects of state educational Web pages, descriptions of what each contains, and other critical MSDE links. To facilitate parental understanding of issues, a unique, parent-friendly feature of the state's educational Web sites contains audios of MSDE personnel

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explaining answers to frequently asked questions. Additionally, many links exist for parent communications regarding various aspects of education.

Beyond Web-based communications, the Maryland State Department of Education has developed several written parent communications. A brochure entitled *A Parent's Guide to Achievement Matters Most: Maryland's Plan for PreK-12 Education*, a comprehensive 29-page document explaining:

- the five Achievement Matters Most state educational goals;

- the role of the VSC in student education, what it is, why it was developed, and where it can be accessed on the Web;

- high expectations for all students;

- the school improvement process including AYP and its implications for schools;

- how progress is measured in the MSA and the Maryland High School Assessments (MHSA), including sample test questions and student responses at all grade levels as well as where more questions can be viewed on the Web;

- the differences between the former Maryland Functional Tests for earning a diploma and the newer MHSA;

- details regarding provisions for testing students with special needs and/or limited English proficiency and how those mirror their instructional accommodations (These also clearly reinforce Maryland's commitment to inclusion of all students to the fullest extent possible in instruction and testing);

- an explanation of the Alternative MSA (ALT-MSA) and plans for development of an alternative assessment for the High School Assessment by 2007;

- a thorough explanation of accountability with details of NCLB, AYP, report cards, a sample chart to demonstrate proficiency achievement among disaggregated student groups, and recognition and school improvement steps when schools do not make AYP;

- in the accountability section, it also clearly details that the state's school improvement process is an opportunity for improvement and that a school's identification for improvement does not mean that it is not a "good school," but that perhaps only one subgroup performed below expectations;

- again, parents are directed to lists of schools in improvement on the Maryland school improvement Web site;

- a family involvement section describes the state's commitment to parental involvement and its assembly of 140 parents and advocates as an advisory group that was established in the fall of 2003 as Maryland's Parent Advisory Council (M-PAC) with a Web reference;

- characteristics of family-friendly schools and 12 specific steps parents can help their children's achievement;

- a final reference to the state's three Web sites (the MSDE homepage, the School Improvement in Maryland site, and the on-line version of the Maryland School Performance Report) for additional information; and

- throughout the document, parents are encouraged to consult with teachers, guidance counselors, and other school personnel for answers to questions they may have.

A Parent's Folder on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) resulted from suggestions from "a group of parents" as a means of helping parents better understand the assessment. Those parents also drafted information they felt was important for all parents to know. The folder is provided both as a communication tool with parents about the assessment and as a vehicle for their keeping MSA reports together. A letter from the State Superintendent on the cover describes the need for testing as a basis for student success upon graduation and further explains the importance of testing in this way, "if we don't know achievement, we can't applaud it, and if we don't know failure, we can't correct it." It closes, as most state parental communications tools do, with encouragement to discuss student performance with their child's teacher and reminds parents that MSA scores are only one measure of student performance.

Periodically, MSDE publishes *Maryland Classroom* for dissemination primarily to educators. One such publication created in Fall 2004 provides an explanation of the State Board of Education decision to have all students pass a High School Assessment test for graduation beginning with the class of 2009. The document, *Maryland High School Assessments & Your Child,* explains what the testing program is and means for students. Answers to questions about when it takes effect and the variety of ways in which students may pass the test, as well as opportunities for re-taking it, are addressed. Parent and student suggestions for success on the test are offered. The document identifies courses included in the HSA assessment and passing scores for each, as well as specifically stating that all students taking those courses, whether in middle or high school, must take and pass the tests. The document opens up into a full sized poster that describes all graduation requirements for the class of 2009 that can be displayed in classes.

Home reports, described in Component 2: Accountability, are another communication tool that the state utilizes with the public. The State Superintendent also used parent letters sent from her through local districts during the transition from the former assessment system to the new one resulting from NCLB. Those dispatches informed parents of changes in processes, the purposes behind the changes, and differences in scoring and test administration. They also related the changes to both NCLB requirements and the recommendations by the Visionary Panel for Better Schools,

composed of parents, legislators, educators, and business and community leaders. One sent in October 2002 includes "Frequently Asked Questions" and refers parents to the MSDE home page for more information as well as suggesting that parents watch the Web site for news releases that will keep them abreast of additional progress and information.  The Department also has a toll-free Parent Line to respond to additional questions.

Beyond providing explicit information to parents and the general public, MSDE disseminated explanatory information to teachers and administrators in the state's schools as the transition progressed.  Specific information relative to reading and math assessments explained testing administration details, the companies involved in test development, and parameters for test administration and student accommodations. They described the differences between response types required in the test (selected response, brief constructed response, and augmented items) and the relationship of the augmented items to standards and Core Learning Goals (CLGs). A final element in communications to state educators is an explanation of measurement of AYP with the criterion-referenced tests, when to expect results, and the components of the NRTs. This explanation helped educators to understand how standards and proficiency levels would be set and the tools that will be used in those determinations.  In mathematics, expectations are set forth for what local school systems should provide students during the test administration.

The Thornton Commission on Education, Finance, Equity, and Excellence conducted a two-year study of the state's education financing and accountability systems to ensure equitable and adequate funding for public schools. This Commission recommended a funding formula that provides equity and adequacy in Maryland schools. Along with the Bridge to Excellence in Public Education Act of 2002, it prompted increased funding to districts and schools.  However, no additional funding was provided for the MSDE to address essential time-sensitive and substantive state requirements or for the MSDE to provide the increased support to schools needed as they contend with the challenges of implementing NCLB.  Personnel in many divisions of MSDE cited concern regarding a loss of personnel taking place concurrently with increased re-tooling requirements associated with NCLB implementation.

Many survey observations reflect a concern regarding sufficient state staff to provide the level of support necessary to effectively assist local districts and schools in reaching positive outcomes relative to standards, noting that "most of the instructional staff with expertise in reading and mathematics are developing assessments."  A further concern expressed is the lack of availability of state staff for assistance in content area professional development and assistance in developing formative and summative measures that inform instruction throughout the year.  Another related issue expressed in the survey and in a general meeting of CCSSO/MGT staff is the paucity of information on properly researched programs that have proven effective, especially in accelerating achievement for specific subgroups.

The Division of Accountability and Assessment, deeply involved in standards-setting and also responsible for reporting, has lost personnel since the NCLB enactment. The instructional division of MSDE has lost one permanent position in the last three years, the Director of Professional Development.  The position was lost essentially at the same time as the Visionary Panel's recommendation to merge professional development with

curriculum, instruction and assessment. To attempt to address the critical need for professional development at the MSDE, the Department has contracted for a loaned local system employee to serve that need for a fixed period of time. That individual has provided strength as a liaison to local districts in the area of professional development as a short-term employee and will leave a void when the contract ends and her experience is lost to the MSDE. Despite that loss, the division has integrated professional development with other aspects of school support and state leadership. The division has re-deployed staff to increase reading support positions from one three years ago to six now, and math from four to six in order to keep up with the demands of NCLB specifically related to:

- accountability for increased student achievement in reading and math;

- creation of the VSC; and

- redesigning and aligning the state's assessment system with the VSC.

Currently, 60 percent of the Instructional Division's salaries are paid from federal funds. It is further anticipated that 35 percent of Title V funds and 28 percent of Title ll D funds (technology and innovative programs) will be cut in the next fiscal year. These are the funds that the division uses to pay district teachers to write curriculum. MSDE staff reductions and redeployments have an impact on continued progress towards standards development and on support for schools and districts in the state as they endeavor to successfully move all children toward 100 percent proficiency by 2013-14, as well as on the ability of MSDE staff to research and disseminate best practices to assist in that undertaking.

**COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**COMMENDATIONS**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education involved a broad spectrum of content area specialists in developing the state's voluntary state curriculum.**

- **Within one year after enactment of NCLB, the Maryland State Department of Education had developed a new standards-based curriculum and aligned it with the state's new accountability system.**

- **The State Superintendent of Education models outreach to districts and the public in continuously working collaboratively to improve Maryland's educational system.**

- **Personnel in the Maryland State Department of Education recognize the merits of NCLB for the education of all children and are committed to using it to ensure equal opportunities for all Maryland students.**

- The MSDE staff has met the logistical challenges associated with reorganizing its way of work, developing more extensive standards and realigning its accountability system, while losing staff, but maintaining a unified, positive and committed attitude.

- Throughout the transition from the state's former accountability system to new standards, tests and accountability, the Maryland State Department of Education has created multiple, clear communication tools to keep educators and the public apprised of changes.

- Units of the MSDE have created an effective collaborative approach to working cross-divisionally on initiatives that span multiple areas of responsibility such as curriculum, testing, and professional development.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1-1:**

Work diligently to broaden assessment limits in math to the level of those in reading and English/language arts to enable students to master broad mathematical skills and concepts.

**Recommendation 1-2:**

Develop an action plan for full implementation of the recommendations relating to math standards made by Achieve, Inc. in 2003. The plan should include timelines, individuals responsible, and provide for monitoring of progress on a regular basis. Having a process that ensures full implementation of recommendations solicited is critical for extending lessons learned in one subject area to all subject areas to improve the standards-based education offered Maryland's students. This is especially important with science also in development.

**Recommendation 1-3:**

Include in the examination of the standards for accountability, evaluative information such as that provided in the American Federation of Teachers' document *The State of the State Standards.* This documentation will provide as broad and varied an opportunity for objective improvement as possible.

**Recommendation 1-4:**

Develop a process and schedule for formally collecting and updating information for the MSDE Web site to reflect the most current information on the state's strides toward ensuring high levels of achievement for all students. The Web site is a wealth of information for educators and the public, and there is evidence that much information is updated. Excellent, informative documents are produced frequently within the Department. A means of collecting, regularly evaluating

documents for currency, and revising information on the Web would benefit the public with the most current data from the MSDE.

**Recommendation 1-5:**

**Replace the vacancy for the position of Director of Professional Development in the MSDE Instructional Division with a permanent position as existed previously, and continue plans for the examination of personnel skills to provide the support that districts and schools themselves need to meet NCLB requirements. Maryland has identified building teacher capacity as the core of improving schools and raising student achievement, yet this critical position remains vacant. The Maryland State Department of Education does not have sufficient personnel to meet the continuing demands of NCLB implementation. At the same time NCLB was enacted, a freeze in hiring reduced the force available to keep Maryland in the forefront of meeting federal requirements and state expectations reflected in the Visionary Panel recommendations and Bridge to Excellence legislation. This challenges the ability of the Department to meet state and federal expectations for student achievement and support for low-performing schools.**

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## COMPONENT 2: ACCOUNTABILITY/ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS (AYP)

**Definition:** Under NCLB, states must develop a statewide accountability system to monitor each school district's achievement of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and to hold school districts accountable. Schools and school districts that do not meet AYP will be subject to sanctions designed to bring about meaningful change in student instruction and achievement. **(Title I, Part A, Section 1111 and 1116)**

All states must develop a definition of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) to promote continuous and substantial improvement for students in all schools and all school districts. States must establish separate measurable annual objectives to measure progress of schools and school districts to ensure all subgroups of students reach proficiency within 12 years. Annual intermediate performance targets must be established to measure progress, with the first increase occurring no later than the 2004-05 school year. **(Title I, Part A, Section 1111)**

### Rubric Score: 3.6

### FINDINGS

The requirement for measuring and reporting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) has placed many districts and states across the nation in the position of rethinking and revising their approach to school improvement processes and accountability, as well as focusing educational thought and discussion on how to improve the achievement of all students. The AYP requirement for Title I schools in America that originated with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1994 and was reinforced and strengthened with its reauthorization (NCLB) in 2001, has created a philosophical divide among educators. Many resent the related requirements and view them as too prescriptive and narrow while others applaud them for their inclusive nature as a turning point in American education.

The senior staff at MSDE who responded to the CCSSO/MGT surveys was remarkable in their unanimity of opinion that NCLB has extremely beneficial promise for students despite the challenges it offers states in responding to implementation regulations. Seventy-nine (79) percent responded that they *agree* or *strongly agree* that its implementation would be beneficial to students in the country and 85 percent stated the same for Maryland. Numbers were similar in the belief that it would increase student achievement. Seventy (70) percent believe that it would close achievement gaps in both the nation and the state.

Since 1991, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has reported annually state, school system, and school-level information to the public. Maryland had enacted two improvement processes for low-performing schools in 1994, one making schools not meeting standards or progressing toward them eligible for reconstitution and another for Title I schools to be identified for school improvement. With NCLB, the two systems were merged into one that included all schools.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is the measure used to hold Title I schools and school districts responsible for raising student achievement in the areas of English/language arts and mathematics. In Maryland, AYP replaces a School Performance Index as the method by which it tracks academic progress and makes accountability decisions. As is typical in Maryland, when plans were finalized for the state's definitions and standards for AYP, MSDE produced a *Maryland Classroom* in October 2003 to inform educators about the process including information about standards-setting, baselines, Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs), a description of the new school improvement process and the home report. In Maryland, state leaders have chosen to extend AYP beyond only Title I schools and districts to all of the schools and districts in the state. AYP is determined by student scores on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) which is annually administered in March and measures student achievement growth from one March to the next.

The Alternate MSA (ALT-MSA) is administered to students who are not able to take the MSA because of severe cognitive disabilities. The test is specially designed to measure their progress. In 2003-04, students in grades 3-8 and 10 took the MSA in reading and those in grades 3-8 took it in math. Students in high school took an end-of-course test in geometry to measure mathematical knowledge. Additionally, the state has chosen to use, as additional indicators of success and measures of AYP, the attendance rate for elementary and middle schools, and the graduation rate for high schools. All measures are considered in determining district and state AYP. Achievement data are posted on the Web as they arrive at MSDE with MSA posted in June and HSA in August.

Federal NCLB states that a school or district is deemed to have made AYP each year based on percentages of students meeting or exceeding standards set by the state, and having at least 95 percent of its students participating in the assessments, and the school or district having met other indicators set by the state. In addition to students having to meet achievement targets in the aggregate, AYP must also be met among four subgroups of students:

- race and ethnicity;
- English language learners;
- students with disabilities; and
- economically disadvantaged students.

For reporting purposes, two more subgroups must be included: gender and migrant status. These are addressed on the state's Web site, www.mdreportcard.org.

It is clear in state policy, and in the comments of senior staff interviewed during the visit, that state leadership is unified in the expectation that all students will be held to the same standards and have access to the same state curriculum and learning opportunities. One comment reiterated in many survey responses was that NCLB would benefit students because it will "focus accountability on those students who have most often received the weakest instruction."

When NCLB was first enacted, Maryland chose to develop completely new assessments rather than transition from its old assessment and accountability system to a new one over a period of years. While this made the transition smoother, it placed enormous burdens on state department personnel to complete that task along with development of a Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC) within a 14-month time period.

In July 2003, the Maryland State Board of Education set performance standards as required by NCLB for three levels: basic, proficient, and advanced, as well as the performance standard for graduation. The 2002-03 student performance data were used as the baseline for those proficiency determinations. In 2003-04, tests were also administered to students in grades 4, 6, and 7. Those scores first count toward AYP calculations for 2004-05. The state set annual performance targets (Annual Measurable Objectives—AMOs) that are designed to have all students at 100 percent proficiency by 2013-14. Every school and district is held to the same AMOs but they are adjusted for the grade-level enrollment of each school. Processes are in place to hold schools that do not have students in tested grades accountable for their students' performance at another school (e.g. third graders' performance is counted at both a 3-5 school and the K-2 school from which they matriculated).

NCLB allows states to determine the size of a subgroup whose performance will not be counted because it is too small to be considered for AYP in either the academic or other indicator. For reading and math performance, Maryland has chosen a number (n) of 5. This is especially noteworthy as it means that the state is essentially holding schools and districts and itself responsible for high achievement levels for all students in the state. What this means in terms of meeting annual measurable objectives is that they must be met both for students in the aggregate and for each subgroup, if at least 5 in a subgroup took the test. According to a September 2003 *Education Commission for the States,* report *Minimum Size of Subgroups for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP),* Maryland is the only state with an n of 5. For participation, n=30 students for schools with one grade tested and 60 for those with more grades tested. Sixty (60) is also the n for school systems.

To encourage 100 percent participation, however, Maryland has decided that students who do not take either the test or a retake will be assigned a proficiency level of basic. This encourages schools to ensure that all students do, in fact, take the test. This practice demonstrates the state's strong commitment to include all students to the fullest extent possible. The resulting extremely high participation rates reflect the success of this policy. Attendance rates are set at 94 percent and graduation at 90 percent. All students with disabilities are tested. However, accommodations are provided for students depending on their IEPs and for students who have limited or no English proficiency and need instructional accommodations.

Exhibit 2-1 shows the numbers and percentages of Maryland schools and districts that made AYP based on 2003-04 data. Exhibit 2-2 shows the success of the assignment of a proficiency level of Basic to students who do not take the tests.

Grade-level scores are reported and disaggregated for all students taking the test. For purposes of AYP determination, however, the grade-level scores of students counting for AYP are combined to create one math and one reading score for the school. Those averages are then weighted according to the number of students in each grade (e.g. if a school has 25 third graders and 50 fifth graders, the reading score would count 1/3 for third graders and 2/3 for fifth). This weighting process for combined school scores helps contribute to a likelihood of making AYP. At the high school level, since the geometry course is an end-of-course exam, scores are reported and disaggregated for all students taking the test, regardless of the grade in which they take geometry.

**EXHIBIT 2-1**
**ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS OF MARYLAND SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS**
**2003-04 SCHOOL YEAR**

| ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY** | **TOTAL PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS INCLUDING TITLE I SCHOOLS** | **TOTAL SCHOOLS THAT MADE AYP** | **PERCENT OF SCHOOLS IN THE STATE THAT MADE AYP** |
| Based on 2003-04 School Year Data | 1346 | 1069 | 79.4% |
| **DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY** | **TOTAL PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY DISTRICTS INCLUDING TITLE I** | **TOTAL DISTRICTS THAT MADE AYP** | **PERCENT OF PUBLIC DISTRICTS THAT MADE AYP** |
| Based on 2003-04 School Year Data | 24 | 15 | 62.5% |
| ALL TITLE I SCHOOLS | | | |
| **TITLE I SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY** | **TOTAL NUMBER OF TITLE I SCHOOLS** | **TOTAL NUMBER OF TITLE I SCHOOLS THAT MADE AYP** | **PERCENT OF TITLE I SCHOOLS THAT MADE AYP** |
| Based on 2003-04 School Year Data | 380 | 292 | 77% |
| TITLE I SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS | | | |
| **TITLE I DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY** | **TOTAL NUMBER OF TITLE I DISTRICTS** | **TOTAL NUMBER OF TITLE I DISTRICTS THAT MADE AYP** | **PERCENT OF TITLE I DISTRICTS THAT MADE AYP** |
| Based on 2003-04 School Year Data | 24 | 15 | 62.5% |

Source: Maryland State Department of Education, 2005.

**EXHIBIT 2-2**
**STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN TEST ADMINISTRATION**
**2003-04 SCHOOL YEAR**

| 2003-04 MATHEMATICS ASSESSMENT | TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS TESTED | PERCENT OF STUDENT TESTED* |
|---|---|---|
| All Students | 469,565 | 100% |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 1,700 | 100% |
| Asian | 22,365 | 100% |
| Black or African American | 179,378 | 100% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 28,480 | 100% |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | | 100% |
| White | 237,628 | 100% |
| Students with Disabilities | 59,901 | 100% |
| Limited English Proficient | 10,899 | 100% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 155,566 | 100% |
| Migrant | 108 | 100% |
| Male | 240,541 | 100% |
| Female | 229,024 | 100% |
| **2003-04 READING/LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT** | **TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS TESTED** | ***PERCENT OF STUDENT TESTED** |
| All Students | 473,465 | 100% |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 1,718 | 100% |
| Asian | 22,187 | 100% |
| Black or African American | 182,673 | 100% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 28,770 | 100% |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | | 100% |
| White | 238,119 | 100% |
| Students with Disabilities | 62,333 | 100% |
| Limited English Proficient | 10,886 | 100% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 158,365 | 100% |
| Migrant | 106 | 100% |
| Male | 243,393 | 100% |
| Female | 230,072 | 100% |

Source:  Maryland State Department of Education, 2005.
* Based on the denominator of all test-takers rather than all enrolled students as a practice used in MSPAP/MSPP.

To ensure the reliability of its accountability system, Maryland combines its use of minimum group sizes with confidence intervals.  Minimum group sizes protect schools from the absence or poor performance of a few students in small groups.  Confidence intervals protect them from the small margin of error that is inherent in any measurement system.  This is done by widening the target around annual AMOs. This varies inversely according to group size. When a group performs within a confidence interval, it is considered to have made AYP.  Additionally, when one performs at the extreme of an interval, it serves as an "early warning system" to schools to examine and adjust strategies for those students.

In their first year of enrollment in U.S. schools, students who have been identified for participation in a language instruction educational program can use the IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) rather than the MSA reading assessment to meet AYP participation requirements and will not be included in AYP calculations for reading.  All other Limited English Proficient (LEP) students must take the MSA with their scores included in AYP

calculations for reading. All LEP students, regardless of enrollment date, must take the math MSA, but the scores of those enrolled for less than one full calendar year are not included in that AYP calculation. They are eligible to receive appropriate accommodations. Students who have exited LEP services have their scores on MSA reading and math included in LEP AYP calculations for the two years following their exit from active services.

Safe Harbor provisions in Maryland allow a school to make AYP if it does not meet AMOs for each subgroup, but does meet all participation requirements, all annual measurable objectives in the aggregate, and if the percentage of students achieving below the proficient level in that particular subgroup decreases by 10 percent.

The 2004 Maryland Report Card shows two schools first identified for improvement as long ago as 1994-95, the first year of the state's original accountability system, and three in 1995-96. Those schools are in Baltimore City as well as 27 others that were first identified in the 1996-97 school year. This is over 11 years for some schools to have been in some stage of improvement with little apparent progress. This situation raises a question about the efficacy of the state's accountability system for school districts, although some interviewees reported having some schools beginning to progress through the continuum with NCLB implementation.

Some interviewees expressed a concern about there being no foreseeable conclusion to school improvement and consequently no final accountability. Determining factors contributing to school failure, the kind of support that is most beneficial, and actually stimulating reform are all complex issues. However, during the interim, in some cases over a decade, students' lives are being impacted.

Three elementary schools in Baltimore City were identified for restructuring five years ago and a national search for firms to take over the schools under the direction of the MSDE was conducted. Edison received the contract which has recently been extended for a sixth and seventh year. Although improvements were notable and rapid, with one indicator being an enormous increase in parents requesting that their children attend those schools, it has not been extended to other schools.

More information about MSDE improvement processes is contained in Component 5. Exhibit 2-2 shows a flow chart depicting the progression of schools in and out of school improvement, corrective action and restructuring.

Once schools are identified for improvement, they must develop school improvement plans targeted at improving the performance in subgroups that contributed to the school not making AYP. Technical assistance is provided by the state. State strategies to support low-performing schools are discussed in detail in Component 4. Excellent school improvement tools are on the MSDE Web site for assistance with plan development, leadership issues, and the state's ten-step process for school improvement. Required by NCLB, Title I schools must offer public school choice and inform parents of their options. If schools do not make AYP after an initial year in school improvement, they remain in it a second year and continue implementation of their plans. At that point, Title I schools must also offer supplemental services to economically disadvantaged students (discussed further in Component 14), as well as continue offering choice.
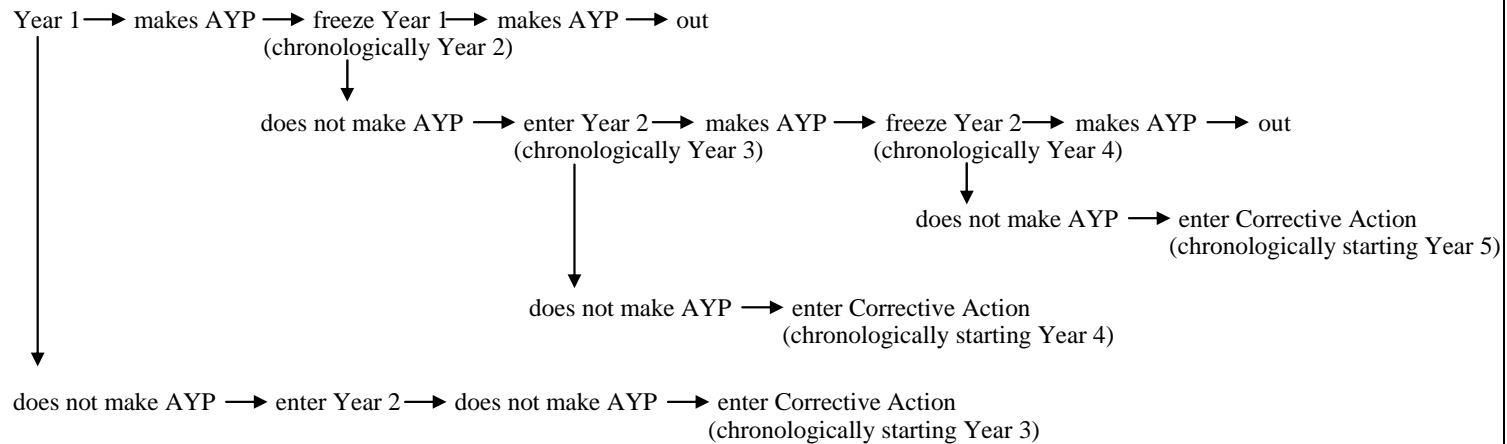
**EXHIBIT 2-3**
**STAGES OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN MARYLAND**
**2004-05**

**ENTERING**
   A school not making AYP for 2 consecutive years, is a school in need of improvement.

**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**
   Upon entering School Improvement, the school must develop a 2-year improvement plan..

Year 1 ⟶ makes AYP ⟶ freeze Year 1 ⟶ makes AYP ⟶ out
                              (chronologically Year 2)

                    does not make AYP ⟶ enter Year 2 ⟶ makes AYP ⟶ freeze Year 2 ⟶ makes AYP ⟶ out
                                       (chronologically Year 3)      (chronologically Year 4)

                                                                      does not make AYP ⟶ enter Corrective Action
                                                                                          (chronologically starting Year 5)

                              does not make AYP ⟶ enter Corrective Action
                                                  (chronologically starting Year 4)

does not make AYP ⟶ enter Year 2 ⟶ does not make AYP ⟶ enter Corrective Action
                                                        (chronologically starting Year 3)

**CORRECTIVE ACTION**
   At this point, the local school system will implement any necessary corrective actions for the school.
   Schools could enter Corrective Action after 2, 3, or 4 Years in School Improvement.
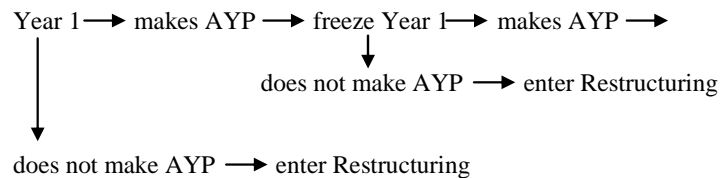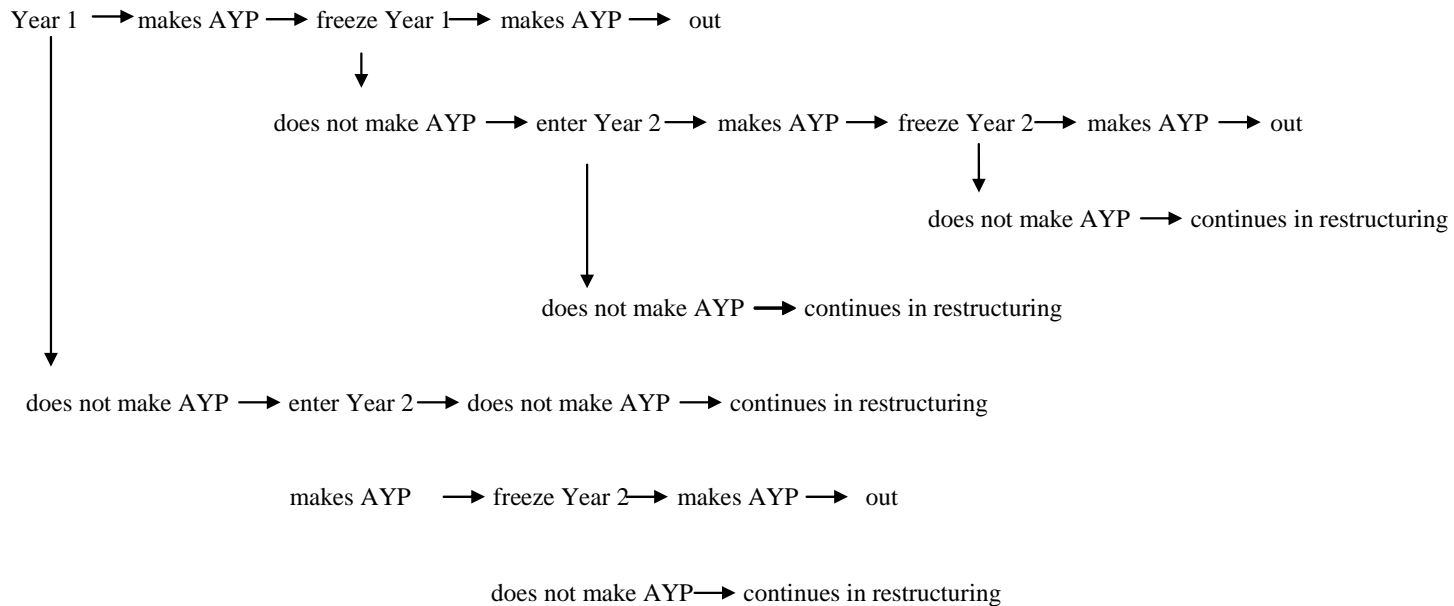
Year 1 ⟶ makes AYP ⟶ freeze Year 1 ⟶ makes AYP ⟶
                              does not make AYP ⟶ enter Restructuring

does not make AYP ⟶ enter Restructuring

**EXHIBIT 2-3 (Continued)**
**STAGES OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN MARYLAND**
**2004-05**

**RESTRUCTURING**

Fundamental changes are made to the school by the local school system, with the approval of MSDE.
Schools could enter Restructuring 4 to 7 years after entering School Improvement.
Year 1: Planning
Year 2: Restructuring and Implementation

Year 1 ⟶ makes AYP ⟶ freeze Year 1 ⟶ makes AYP ⟶ out

does not make AYP ⟶ enter Year 2 ⟶ makes AYP ⟶ freeze Year 2 ⟶ makes AYP ⟶ out

does not make AYP ⟶ continues in restructuring

does not make AYP ⟶ continues in restructuring

does not make AYP ⟶ enter Year 2 ⟶ does not make AYP ⟶ continues in restructuring

makes AYP ⟶ freeze Year 2 ⟶ makes AYP ⟶ out

does not make AYP ⟶ continues in restructuring

**EXITING**

After entering school improvement, a school must make AYP for 2 consecutive years before it is no longer considered a school in need of improvement.
The total process could last from five years to an indefinite period of time.

Source: Maryland State Department of Education, 2005.

After two years of failure to make AYP in improvement, schools are then identified for corrective action. At that time, local school systems take leadership in directing improvement efforts. Possible actions include staff replacement, adoption of a new curriculum, decreasing school-level management authority, and/or extending the school day or year. Again, Title I schools must offer choice and supplemental educational services. Plans are approved by a cross-divisional team before referral to the State Board of Education.

If, after one year in corrective action, schools do not make AYP, they are identified for restructuring. This involves at least one of the following changes:

- change of staff who are relevant to failure to make AYP;

- contracting with a management company for operating the school; or

- additional major changes to staffing and governance.

Schools exit at any point in the improvement process when, after making AYP one year subsequent to identification, they make AYP a second consecutive year. If, after holding its status due to making AYP after identification for improvement, a school does not make AYP a second year, it moves to the next level of improvement. Once having exited, if the school does not make AYP for two years again, it re-enters the improvement process.

Because the state already had an accountability system in place, it has developed processes for transitioning from pre-NCLB improvement measures to post-NCLB. The 2002-03 school year was established as a baseline year:

- A school which was not identified for improvement or reconstitution as of January 2002 had a "clean slate." Schools not meeting the baseline were considered not to have made AYP. When schools did not make it a second year in 2003-04, they were identified for school improvement.

- Schools under local or state reconstitution for one or two years effective January 2002 were considered to have been in school improvement for the corresponding number of years for the 2002-03 school year. Those that did not meet the baseline for 2002-03 were considered not to have made AYP and advanced to the next level (a second year in improvement or advancement to corrective action).

- Schools under local or state reconstitution for three or more years effective January 2002 were considered to have been in corrective action during the 2002-03 school year. At that point, they advanced to identification for restructuring.

- Title I schools under either school improvement or corrective action as of January 2002 remained at that status for the 2002-03 school year. If, at that point, they did not meet the baseline, they were

considered not to have made AYP and advanced to the next level of improvement.

When school systems do not make AYP for two years, they are identified for system improvement and required to revise their Master Plans and notify parents of their improvement status.  At that point, the MSDE provides technical assistance.  If, after identification for system improvement, they do not make AYP for a second consecutive year, they are subject to corrective action by the state.  This requires that the state take at least one of the following actions:

- defer, reduce, or redirect state funds;

- order the school district to adopt a new curriculum aligned with the voluntary state curriculum;

- remove schools from local school board control;

- order a reorganization that clusters specified schools under an executive officer approved by the state; or

- abolish or restructure the school district (requires legislative authorization).

A transitional plan for local school systems provided that those that had 25 percent or more schools under local or state reconstitution for more than three years as of January 2002 were identified for corrective action in 2003-04.  Those that have 25 percent or more of their schools newly identified for either Improvement or corrective action as of September 2003 were identified for improvement for the 2003-04 school year. According to a news release dated October 25, 2004, when NCLB results were first compiled in 2003, no school system was making AYP toward their annual achievement targets.

Nine of the state's 24 school districts, were identified this year, 2004-05.  One, Baltimore City, has 55 percent of its schools in improvement and has those identified for the longest period of time.  It is the only system in corrective action. Provisions are addressed for system improvement and corrective action, but not for restructuring at the district level.

NCLB indicators for which state agencies are responsible dictate, "a state plan exists to implement restructuring in school districts that fail to make AYP for a fourth year." A March 2005 document *Identifying Schools and School Systems in Need of Improvement* contains a chart showing the "progression of accountability expectations and the placement of local school systems in the systems in need of improvement continuum when they do not meet the expectations."  The document shows the following system progression:

- failure to make AYP for the first time=A system in "alert" status;

- failure to make AYP two years in a row=A system in "improvement" (Year 1);

- failure to make AYP in the year following identification for improvement=A system in "improvement" (Year 2); and

- failure to make AYP for two consecutive years after identification as a system in improvement=A system in "corrective action."

It further provides for earning a reprieve with achievement of AYP at any point as well as exiting with AYP attainment two years in a row. Although it describes identification, it does not detail actions for addressing and supporting systems throughout the continuum. Currently, MSDE personnel and the State Board of Education are tackling Baltimore City's response to corrective actions they have been taking and next steps to take based on those actions and relevant data.

Processes have been developed in Maryland that align school improvement, Title I, and NCLB requirements, as well as local and state funds, and guide schools and districts readily through the accountability maze. The 2002 Bridge to Excellence Act required that school districts develop five-year Master Plans that result from a "reflective analysis of their student assessment data to determine the effectiveness of the strategies outlined." The required analysis includes policies and practices relative to resource allocation, the use of strategies with the highest likelihood of successful goal implementation, identification of significant changes that would impact success, consideration of reasons underlying students/groups' failure to meet performance standards along with planned actions to address the causes, professional development, and examination of fidelity to programs adopted to address needs.

To assist districts in comprehensively and thoughtfully reflecting on those issues relative to school, district and student performance, the MSDE has developed an outstanding plan template that moves report writers through a reflective analysis of those factors impinging on success. Review instruments have been developed and are available on the MSDE Web site that are used to ensure consistency among plans and their addressing all relevant issues as they plan for each academic year. This user-friendly planning instrument stimulates introspective planning from year to year.

Interviews with senior administrators in MSDE pointed out that creation of this Bridge to Excellence (BTE) Master Plan by external and internal educators in the state has helped districts realize the vast array of support that is available to increase student proficiency through academics and school climate issues such as school safety. It has also helped them understand how state and federal funds were linked and could be leveraged for that purpose. A cross-matrix was created so that ESEA performance indicators were an integral part of state and district accountability systems. The process forces districts to look at all students as well as subgroups in order to focus resources where they can best contribute to closing the achievement gap.

An independent evaluation of Bridge to Excellence is planned with the first report due in December 2006. The evaluation will examine programs that are aligned with Maryland standards and curriculum, and are successful with specific groups of students. Bridge to Excellence Master Plans force districts to examine progress toward targets, underlying factors that contributed to that progress, and to consider mid-course corrections rather than waiting until a year has passed.

Another extremely useful tool for district use to heighten accountability that integrates Title I and NCLB requirements is a Title I local program review document which describes Title I and NCLB components, their requirements, provides a box for marking whether they are met or not, and suggests evidence of implementation and possible sources for that evidence. The documents provide spreadsheets with expenditure limits that prevent overallocation in certain areas. Such instruments and reviewer rubrics are common in the Division of Student and School Services and contribute to heightened levels of accountability in school systems for compliance with state and national laws. A memo provided the CCSSO/MGT team also evidenced the existence of procedures to ensure uniform accountability for grants management regarding issues such as justification for amendments, the necessity of having similar requirements for competitive and non-competitive grants, and determination of when programmatic changes are needed.

*Education Week* annually conducts an assessment of states' progress toward educational improvement. Relative to Maryland's Accountability system, *Education Week's Quality Counts 2005* noted:

> *A strength of Maryland's accountability system is that the tests themselves rely on a variety of items, including multiple-choice, short-answer, and extended-response questions. Maryland uses test data as part of its system for holding schools accountable for results. The state publishes test scores on school report cards and assigns ratings to schools based in part on those scores. Maryland then uses the ratings to target schools that are rated low-performing or failing for help or sanctions. The state rewards high-performing and improving schools.*

In response to challenges Maryland has experienced relative to accountability, the State Superintendent submitted a request to the State Board of Education for changes in the state's NCLB Accountability Plan in February 2005. The requested changes are summarized below:

- Replace the Reading MSA for grade 10 with the new English grade 10 HSA as the high school reading measure. This merge would reduce the number of tests administered at the high school level and increase student performance by holding them individually accountable on the test.

- Revise identification rules for systems in improvement to place one in improvement only when it does not meet AYP in the same subject and across all three grade spans (elementary, middle, high) for two or more consecutive years. This mirrors rules that have been approved for other states by the USDOE. This should also help the MSDE focus support more accurately where it is needed most.

- Revise rules governing inclusion of special services subgroups so that students are counted in only one subgroup for AYP purposes. This should prevent the over-identification of schools and school

districts as the result of the performance of the same students being counted more than once for AYP.

Although the third bullet was requested at that time, it was not formally pursued in subsequent revisions submitted in August, after it became obvious that it would not be supported at the federal level. The complexities of moving from one accountability system are typically fraught with challenges that erect barriers to successful transitioning. Maryland has made exemplary strides in undertaking that process with few problems and has held fast to high standards and expectations for all students. However, there are some issues relating to its accountability and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) that should be addressed in order to enhance the progress that the state has made.

## COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### COMMENDATIONS

- **Both the state of Maryland and the MSDE are commended for the vision of creating a single Master Plan for planning, reporting, and accountability purposes that integrates state and local requirements and funding.**

- **The State Superintendent and MSDE Leadership Team are commended for maintaining commitment to raising the achievement of all students in the state with its setting of an n of 5 for student performance and encouraging participation of all students by reducing the proficiency level of non-test-takers to basic.**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education is commended for its ongoing efforts to communicate with stakeholders about changes in its accountability system.**

- **The Program Improvement and Family Support Branch of the Division of Student and School Services is commended for its dedication to developing documents that assist school system personnel in complying with state and federal requirements, helping them to understand the link between data requests and school improvement, and minimizing duplication of requests for information.**

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 2-1:**

**Develop a plan for school systems in and beyond Corrective Action that provides specific timelines and definitive consequences for not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) beyond five years. Baltimore City is the state's first system in Corrective Action, so addressing systemwide corrections is uncharted ground.**

Certainly variations exist among school systems that will dictate specific responses and required actions. However, without being held directly accountable with specific timelines and certain corrective actions that districts know will occur, lack of AYP lingers and students' lives are vulnerable. Provisions can be made for extenuating circumstances, but school systems should not be allowed to have schools remaining in some status of improvement for a decade without system consequences. Especially now with nine systems identified in improvement, a large percentage of students in the state have their education at stake. With little guidance yet provided by the federal government, this is one place that the MSDE, with its years of experience in school improvement progression, could chart the course for the rest of the nation, rather than taking a "wait and see" approach.

**Recommendation 2-2:**

Consider expanding accountability measures to include indicators of achievement for students at the proficiency level of the scale. Interviewees expressed numerous concerns regarding NCLB causing a loss of focus on keeping the bar high for these students. With indicators such as course-taking patterns, participation in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses, dual enrollment and early college participation, there would be an assurance that these students were being challenged to reach their potential as much as more evident subgroups.

## COMPONENT 3:   REPORTING

**Definition:** The NCLB Act requires that all states develop, produce, and disseminate annual report cards that communicate information on how students are achieving overall and by disaggregated student subgroups.  States are also required to produce an annual report to the Secretary of Education regarding their progress in developing and implementing academic assessments, student achievement data by subgroup, and information detailing the acquisition of English proficiency by students identified as limited English proficient.  This report should also include information on specific areas including the names of schools identified as in need of improvement, public school choice, supplemental service programs, and teacher quality.  **(Title I, Part A, Section 1111 and Subpart 1)**

**Rubric Score: 3.9**

**FINDINGS**

NCLB's AYP reporting requirements are focused on clearly presenting student performance data by demographic subgroups. This requirement is to ensure that the achievement of those subgroups is not masked in aggregate school or district data, leaving students in those groups without adequate provision for improving their achievement and a false impression among educators and the public that school performance, as a whole, needs little improvement.  This NCLB reporting provision mandates that educators at all levels—schools, districts and states—are working to improve the education of all students.  When student performance information is presented disaggregated by subgroups, then programmatic, resource, staffing, curricular, and instructional decisions can be better targeted toward specific strategies likely to improve the learning of groups not performing at proficiency levels equivalent to other parts of the student population.  This is true at the state, the district, and school levels.  Additionally, more focused research-based methodologies and programs can be identified and utilized, and staff development provided that enables teachers to meet the specific instructional needs of these students.

Maryland makes information about school, district and state performance readily available on its extensive state Web sites with linkages clear for locating AYP and school improvement information.  In fact, one Web site is dedicated to school improvement and another to the state's report card. Additionally, every parent communication provided the CCSSO/MGT team was worded in easily understood language and included reference to where the information can be located on the Web.

NCLB requires that the following information must be reported:

- aggregate student achievement at each proficiency level on state assessments;

- student achievement at each proficiency level, disaggregated by:

  - Race

- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Disability status
- Migrant status
- English proficiency status
- Status as an economically disadvantaged student (if statistically sound);

- comparison between actual achievement of each group (excluding gender and migrant) and the state's annual measurable objectives;

- percentage of students not tested, disaggregated by each group (excluding gender and migrant);

- most recent two-year trend in achievement in each subject area and for each grade level;

- aggregate information on other indicators used to determine AYP; and

- comparison of school, school district, and state achievement on state assessments and other indicators of AYP.

The law also requires that school performance is clearly communicated to the citizens of Maryland and to the Secretary of Education in a comprehensive and timely manner. MSDE respondents to the CCSSO/MGT survey were united in believing that NCLB reporting requirements are beneficial to students by focusing attention on specific students that are not achieving and identifying why they are not. Respondents further express satisfaction in enabling schools, school systems and the state to make data-driven decisions. In general, they reported that NCLB had easily meshed with the state's prior focus on student achievement and high school graduation tests, and had heightened public awareness of disparities among schools and systems. One respondent noted success in NCLB moving the state from broader measurements of school and system performance to its inclusion of individual student reporting. Another cited that a strength of the MSDE was its "outstanding testing and data management practices" with experience in reporting, although concern was expressed about an inability to maximize the data available for support to schools by more consistently analyzing these data at the state level due to insufficient staff.

Ninety-two (92) percent of those responding to the survey recounted their belief that MSDE is in compliance with the reporting element of NCLB. Eighty-eight (88) percent also reported a belief that the reporting element is beneficial for students. When asked to list three areas of NCLB in which the Department was most prepared to comply with NCLB, seven of 25 include it as one of those three areas and none list it among their top three concerns regarding preparedness.

The current state data collection system, that is the basis of the state's current reporting system, originated in the 1990s. All aspects of Title I and AYP data collection occur in the same office as well as that for highly-qualified teachers. In order to ensure quality

and accuracy of data, a "refresh" is done every 30 days. Additionally, the Assistant Superintendent for the Division of Accountability and Assessment began work in the Department on the curriculum side of testing and was involved in the development of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) as well as the High School Assessment and development of the accountability program from that perspective. The Web sites that are used to share data and support instruction (mdreportcard.org and mdk12.org) were already in place prior to NCLB, facilitating a smooth transition to NCLB reporting requirements.

Once student performance data are available at the state level, information is sent to districts for review for accuracy and the opportunity to appeal on sound grounds. This process occurs with each series of data that arrive in the MSDE. Last year, because it was the first year of the new test, all data with the exception of attendance were available in June. This year data are anticipated to arrive before the end of the school year which will provide additional time for appeals. High school data, because they are based on end-of-course tests, will not be available before August, and, in fact, this year because of a change from a reading to an English test, those data are not expected until October. At that point, standards-setting will occur for the new test. These timelines allow ample notice to parents for school choice decision making.

Maryland has had few reporting difficulties that have presented problems in test administration and in meeting federal accountability requirements. However, interviewees expressed a deep concern that USDOE, IDEA, and individual program offices continually develop new requirements for reporting that strain the ability of a state agency or program office to meet those requirements, particularly so at a time when many states have been under budget pressures. The observation was made, too, that most of the requests are more in the nature of compliance rather than the underlying intent of NCLB for the performance of students and schools, as measured by state assessments and AYP.

Additional information on data management issues is contained in Component 11 of this report.

Four specific concerns that relate to reporting were identified in the CCSSO/MGT site visit:

- Staffing. The division has lost 15 positions since 2001. At one point, the assessment unit of the division had four key players; now there are two. These losses have occurred at a time when testing, reporting, and accountability requirements have increased with both state and federal legislation. The staff, however, works well together and is cross-trained to complete needed tasks in a timely manner.

- Reporting requests that far exceed those required by law. The USDOE, its program offices, and educational studies funded with USDOE dollars, originate requests from state education agencies (SEAs) for essentially the same data to be reported in a variety of ways. While the information is in the database, it has to be reconfigured for most of those requests, involving extensive staff

time and diverting staff focus from tasks that are aimed at improving the state's reporting, testing, and accountability systems.

■ An inability to plan for responding to NCLB implementation issues because guidance is provided within short timelines of needing to be implemented. As federal reporting processes continue to evolve, this will remain a challenge.

The MSDE continues to work to refine the Maryland Report Card that is disseminated to the public in hard copy and Web-based formats in order to make it more easily readable by various audiences. The Report Card reports state and individual district performance data. The 2004 Performance Report was in draft form during the site visit and was actually due the week of the visit. A draft was provided the team. It is difficult to discern from the draft format how graphically appealing the final document will be, but the 2003 report was aesthetically attractive and reported district-level performance data, other academic indicators, and the professional qualifications of teachers for each of the state's 24 districts and the state as a whole.

These hard copies are available upon request to anyone, but are primarily disseminated to members of the General Assembly, the Governor's Cabinet, other educational organizations, and to school districts. The MSDE considers both the hard and Web copies to be part and parcel of the same state Report Card. The 2004 hard copy format has been revised to show two-year trend achievement data by subject tested and by grade, and includes bar graphs to show more graphically changes in performance and proficiency levels. In contrast to the 2003 Performance Report, the 2004 report does not include some information for which SEAs are held accountable in NCLB performance indicators, although most information is easily accessible on the MSDE Web site.

As NCLB requirements continue to grow, so will reporting requirements. Consequently, having a Web-based Report Card allows data to be immediately accessible to large audiences as well as easily updated. The Report Card also lends itself to addressing all of the reporting requirements of NCLB in terms of comparisons among subgroups and to reporting by counties, schools, and different student groups. The state provides requisite state-level information to districts along with an email and memo from the State Superintendent with respect to components they are to provide in their district and school report cards. State data are available from the Web site for downloading and printing by districts for their reports. Translations of the most common elements of the report into the major languages in the state are also downloadable. Superintendents must also certify that their reports do, in fact, contain all required NCLB elements and send a representative elementary, middle and high school report as well as their district report to MSDE. One of the requirements included is notification of Title I parents of choice and the availability of supplemental educational services, when indicated.

The Maryland State Department of Education has made a good faith effort to improve reporting from the previous report while also adding the requirement for two-year data to be included. Some information, though, could be more clearly identified. One requirement of NCLB reporting is a comparison of each group's (excluding gender and migrant) actual achievement and the state's annual measurable objectives. This information is found on the www.mdreportcard.org Web site by clicking on several links,

none of which is specifically descriptive of that comparison. Thus, finding the information depends largely on trial and error.

Information related to offering the option of public school choice for parents of students in eligible schools and information on supplemental educational services must also be provided. This information is included in guidelines given superintendents for district report cards for relevant schools, but is not referenced on the state's Web site except for a link to a definition of "choice." Adding that information to the page where schools in improvement are listed would provide more information that is helpful to parents. Since nine districts are in some stage of improvement, it should be included for them, as well.

**COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**COMMENDATIONS:**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education had been proactive in having a reporting and accountability system in place a decade before NCLB. This system created a strong foundation for transitioning to NCLB implementation.**

- **The Division of Accountability and Assessment is commended for the level of cross-training within the unit that enables the MSDE to respond to accountability, reporting, and assessment requirements of NCLB in a timely manner.**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education is commended for the multiple documents and communication channels it has created to disseminate explicit, user-friendly information to parents, members of the public, and educators in the state.**

- **As the MSDE continues to respond to iterations of NCLB, it demonstrates the commitment to continuously revising instruments to update them and make them user-friendly within its capacity.**

- **The MSDE is commended for providing separate Web sites for school improvement and the state report card that are easily navigable and provide comprehensive, understandable explanations of all aspects of the state's educational initiatives and efforts to comply with NCLB and state legislation, including audiotaped explanations of frequently asked questions.**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation 3-1:**

**Quantify the impact of staff reduction since NCLB implementation on the Division of Accountability and Assessment in order to provide sound rationale to present to the General Assembly with a request for funding for additional personnel to**

better meet the increasing requirements of NCLB. This division is responsible for multiple tasks that are critical to responding to NCLB and replacing lost positions would assist in addressing the identified reporting issues as well as keeping up with increasing accountability and reporting requirements.

**Recommendation 3-2:**

Take the initiative through the CCSSO or another national organization of educational leaders to request that ample lead time be provided by USDOE for states to respond to NCLB implementing rules and explore additional ways in which to use the additional flexibility provisions of NCLB.

**Recommendation 3-3:**

Use more descriptive language on links on the report card Web page to facilitate navigation by the public.  While, overall, MSDE's Web pages are easily navigable, some clarification would make accessing required information easier. Additionally, informing parents of choice-related issues on the MSDE Web site should assist them in being fully informed when they are applicable to their children's schools.  This information should be posted on the Web site for districts in improvement, as well.

## COMPONENT 4:   LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

**Definition:**  Under NCLB, states establish school support teams to assist schools and school districts in complying with school improvement requirements and give additional support to schools and districts identified for improvement.  Title I schools and school districts that fail to meet state-mandated adequate yearly progress standards for two consecutive years must be identified for improvement.  **(Title I, Part A, Section 1111)**

### Rubric Score:  3.0

### FINDINGS

With Maryland having employed an accountability system for schools in need of improvement since 1994, it has been wrestling with the challenges associated with providing support and assistance to low-performing schools as long, or longer than any other state.  However, the MSDE, as many other departments of education around the country, continues to re-visit how to structure itself to provide that assistance, determine priorities for service recipients, and address capacity issues relative to its own and districts' abilities to provide appropriate services.  While Maryland has long considered such assistance an obligation of a state school system, the challenges have become more demanding with increased federal mandates and decreased personnel with which to respond.  MSDE leaders, though, are determined to stay the course, continually re-evaluating how to best use their resources to benefit Maryland students and educators.

Part of Maryland's efforts are grounded in its integration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) with the state's accountability system, making support for Title I students synonymous with that for other students. The Maryland Bridge to Excellence (BTE) Act also stimulated development of a single five-year comprehensive Master Plan that incorporates both state and national requirements and funds in one planning document for districts.

Maryland first identified low-performing schools in the 1994-95 school year.  Two schools identified that year remain on the state's list of low-performing schools.  Five years ago, three elementary schools in Baltimore City that had been making no progress in reforming, were taken over by the state. Contracts with Edison were negotiated to jumpstart those schools for eventual handover back to the district.  The contracts were explicit in the tightness of accountability measures for which Edison would be responsible, including benchmarks, reporting, and withholding of funds if benchmarks were not met.  Immediate changes included physical plant upgrades, influx of materials, and extensive professional development, including co-planning and co-teaching of regular and special education teachers. Tremendous gains in student achievement, parent participation, special education, and the physical plant have been realized. Although no additional schools have been included in the project, the state has recently extended the contract to its full possible seven years.

The state has used its experience over the years to provide support for low-performing schools through collaborative means within the MSDE as well as with districts and schools.  Senior state-level administrators who responded to the CCSSO/MGT survey

reported that they believed that NCLB had forged even stronger bonds among those institutional units to enhance a focus on the education of all students. "Students in low-performing schools being taught by highly qualified teachers and held to the same academic content standards" was one significant benefit of NCLB noted. Others were the fact that "instructional and resource allocation decisions are based on data," and that "closing the gap in academic performance for subgroup populations is a priority." Eighty (80) percent of respondents reflect confidence in the ability of the MSDE to help these schools in that they *agree or strongly agree* that Maryland is in compliance with NCLB state requirements in its provision of services to low-performing schools and that this component will benefit students. However, they realistically identified dealing with these schools as one of the three major challenges facing the State Education Agency (SEA) due to the complexity of the needs of these schools and sometimes related leadership issues at the school and district level.

Responses made by senior staff referenced practices that had been in place for a number of years and were made prior to the MSDE discussions that were occurring as the CCSSO-MGT team were on-site. Those discussions resulted in a plan for the MSDE to address concerns expressed in the survey. Almost half included providing appropriate support for these schools as an area in which the SEA is least prepared to comply with NCLB requirements. Another half of respondents identified this as the first of the three greatest challenges facing the agency. A specific challenge noted was insufficient resources to meet the demands of schools and systems in improvement. In their visualizing organizational changes that could improve NCLB implementation, several noted a need to build on and strengthen the cross-divisional approach that has emerged in the SEA and to re-allocate resources to better integrate those efforts.

An additional concern that many expressed both in the surveys and in interviews was that the focus on reaching goals via NCLB held the latent danger of eliminating programs and practices that have historically made a difference for certain groups of students. The focus on core content and tested areas may ignore the influence that programs such as career and technical education and the arts have on quality of life and even retention in school for certain students. One comment on the survey noted that NCLB, "diverts attention from curriculum areas not tested, but which are necessary to provide students with skills and knowledge that contribute significantly to success and satisfaction as an adult (the arts, social studies, etc.)"

Whereas prior to NCLB, the only schools that moved beyond corrective action were the ones contracted with Edison, MSDE interviewees report that now they see schools moving along the continuum of improvement levels and sanctions relating to transfer of students and supplemental educational services being imposed for the benefit of students. A cross-divisional group reviews the restructuring plans now before they are forwarded to the State Board of Education. NCLB requires the Board to approve the plans.

The Maryland State Department of Education provides support to schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in three areas: technical assistance, professional development, and funding. Schools in either corrective action or restructuring receive support from a technical assistant (TA). Eleven (11) Title I TAs work with schools. In addition, thirty (30) positions currently in the Division for Leadership

Development also provide technical assistance to low-performing schools. Each works with between two and four schools two to four days a week, coaching the principal in instructional leadership, participating on the school improvement team, and making recommendations locally and to the MSDE regarding needed resources and additional assistance. Those schools may also access an On-Site Team Review to analyze facets of operations, including the instructional program to make recommendations for additional resources to improve student achievement. Many in the MSDE reported that there is a need to change the qualifications for the 30 TA providers to stronger content-based knowledge and skills as the department re-examines its approach to serving low-performing schools. The new model developed to address and support school needs focuses content expertise in reading and mathematics and on developing instructional leaders.

All schools in any level of improvement receive assistance by a Plan Review Team that works with the school on adherence to the requirements of the Improvement Plan. Subsequent to review, assistance is provided when requested for assistance on implementation of the recommendations. All schools also receive Instructional Support Visits by teams of TAs who make classroom visits with the principal, central office staff, and school personnel selected by the principal. At the end of the day, they discuss observations and identify needed resources that would contribute to increased teacher capacity and student achievement.

Additional funding based on the intensity of the improvement category is available to schools in Year 2 of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. The funds are allocated according to a formula and, for the 2004-05 year, state funds amounted to $10,753,515. Additionally, Maryland's Title I School Improvement Funds are reserved for district assistance: schools with one to seven school systems in improvement receive $100,000 per school; those with more than seven schools divide the balance. The total of those funds for 2004-05 was $6,220,727.

In the recent past, one example of Title I support for low-performing schools took the form of an MSDE "SWAT" team to examine Baltimore City's use of academic coaches. All schools were notified that they may be visited, but visits were random. Teams of four people visited selected schools, each with a specific assignment: one followed the coach, one looked at documentation, one interviewed the principal, and one visited classes for evidence of training. Summary reports were then sent to the district, but no follow-up was requested.

Other Title I support includes the exemplary documents that assist schools through the process of developing plans and reflecting on needed changes that were referenced in Component 3, including a School Improvement Checklist that can be used for TA guidance for systems for those schools. Its guiding questions relate to curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development including meeting the needs of subgroups, parent/community involvement, policy, and budget. Very specific timelines and details are included so that schools address all aspects of improvement needs.

Thirty-nine (39) Maryland schools in 15 districts currently receive Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) Grants to assist in raising performance. The state has chosen to focus on the 11 components that the federal government has identified as elements of

comprehensive reform rather than on specific programs. The State CSR Coordinator has created exemplary instruments that serve both as reporting vehicles, and as implementation guides. Reporting elements embedded in the "Reporting Format" include a self-study, and start-up, end-of-year, and site visit reports. The document has integrated the 11 CSR components into four more easily operational criteria. Schools complete responses to three of the criteria and a review team using a rubric, develops an analysis of the fourth, "comprehensiveness of design" with commendations and recommendations that are forwarded to schools and districts. Guidelines, sample questions to ask, and possible resources for evidence are included.

Title I meetings with district personnel often include Human Resources and Finance staff. In order to inculcate new regulations in state and district personnel, the Title I offices designed scavenger hunts that required state personnel to become intimately familiar with new requirements and rewarded district Title I teams for accurately citing legal references.

The achievement of special education students is an enormous contributing factor to low-performing schools in Maryland. Seventy-three (73) percent of Maryland schools made AYP in 2004 in all NCLB categories, but the majority of those that did not make AYP did not do so because of their special education populations. One hundred twenty eight (128) of 236 schools did not meet AYP only for special education. This is a decrease from 166 schools in 2003. Additionally, five local school systems did not make AYP in special education only. It was the percent of special education students that did not meet proficiency expectations that was the reason for the state not making AYP in 2004. Progress is reflected in the fact that, between 2003 and 2004, in reading, grade 3 special education students had the greatest one-year increase in proficient students (17.9) across all categories and over 40 percent of grade 3 students with IEPs were either proficient or advanced.

There is a clear and cogent awareness among MSDE administrators of an obligation to address this need. Interviewees almost uniformly expressed a deep concern regarding the one percent cap. They stated a need to balance the requisite for students to be taught and tested at expectations that are appropriate for their abilities with a concern that modifying the cap in any way might jeopardize some students by lowering the bar of expectations and, thus, preventing them from reaching their potential.

However, Maryland has a number of special schools with student populations of only special education students some of which are independently accountable for AYP. That decision is left to the local school system. The movement from a functional skills test to a reading and math proficiency test has a tremendous impact on staff and students in all of the above-mentioned schools.

Since initiation of the ALT-MSA, state personnel have been working with districts and schools to provide training in scaffolding skills and inclusion of content skills and knowledge in a readiness model. Assistance includes teaching teachers how to assess daily instructional activities relative to learning objectives and alternative teaching strategies. A summer institute for teachers and principals is planned to further help them understand and develop content objectives and modification of the VSC for these students. The goal is to ensure that students have the opportunity to learn relevant

educational objectives even if it takes them longer and, consequently, that schools make AYP. This strategy not only impacts teaching, but also expectations of students by educators and even parents. It is a radical departure from previous expectations for both teachers and students and has not been readily embraced by all.

The state has allocated $1 million for discretionary grants to enhance the achievement of special education students in schools that did not make AYP because of those students. Goals of the grants are:

- increase performance of students with IEPs;
- improve VSC knowledge for special educators;
- improve direct academic intervention;
- improve models for delivering instruction;
- increase general and special education collaboration;
- catalogue and disseminate promising practices; and
- assist schools in meeting AYP.

The MSDE is providing new applicants a list of research-based programs from which to choose. The selection of another model will require justification. To ensure that new applicants benefit from the experience of previous grantees, the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services established guidelines to the 15 districts that had received grants in 2002-03 to document resulting capacity-building. Further underscoring the importance of this data collection, a document for collecting baseline and summary data was disseminated with the announcement that program findings would be broadcast to inform others of programs being used in the state. As with other data collection/program guidance instruments developed by the MSDE, the document asks specific questions that impose deep reflection throughout the application and provides sample responses for guidance. Where applicable, checklists are included to facilitate completion, and program monitoring questions are included to determine fidelity of implementation.

A related issue the state is addressing after a census exit of all special education students who received diplomas in Baltimore City is a lack of physical evidence that students, in fact, had verified credits and met standards for diplomas. As a consequence, more stringent approaches have been instituted for maintenance of proper documentation for receipt of Maryland's high standard diploma.

Using School Improvement Grants (SIGs), the SE/EIS Division has contracted for the past three years with the University of Kansas for training in the Strategic Intervention Model of scientifically-based strategies for all students in reading and math. The whole school initiative is focused on arming all teachers with strategies that can be used across the school with every child. Word intervention specialists at each school help teachers target reading improvement. The schools delve into data examining behavioral referrals, suspensions, student performance and use cross-content approaches to curriculum. Outcomes include decreased referrals to special education and suspensions occurring concurrently with achievement increases.

In recognition of the fact that the majority of special education teachers have had little content in teacher prep programs, Maryland has developed an exceptional on-line IEP

writing tool, Goal Wizard, an outgrowth of the SIGs. When a student's name is entered, assessment information for that child comes up along with a bank of activities for teachers to select from as they develop the IEP. It is linked to the VSC so that content standards are readily accessible for use in IEP development. Professional development modules, using technology and content, correlate to the Wizard.

Additionally, the fact that few special education teacher preparation programs in institutes of higher education ground their graduates in the content that is being expected of them with NCLB poses a major impediment to raising the performance of schools that are low-performing due to the achievement of their special education populations. It is imperative for the MSDE to take assertive action in order to build capacity among teachers of special education students.

Another by-product of the original SIG grant on the MSDE's Web site is *Performance Assessments: A Resource for Special Education Teacher Educators in Maryland.* It was created in collaboration with postsecondary schools and is a compendium of ways in which they can infuse strategies into their courses for teacher candidates. A current application for a SIG proposes to assist regular education teachers in differentiating instruction for special education students. Unfortunately, these SIG grants have been replaced with smaller and more limited personnel development grants for terms of three years rather than five.

The Special Education and Early Intervention Services (SE/EIS) Division has also worked with universities in changing teacher prep curricula indirectly by guaranteeing a student body for particular programs in which students are recruited who must sign an agreement to work in the state for five years. When graduates have not stayed in Maryland, the state has followed through.

A Quality Teacher Workgroup Report, dated January 26, 2005, made several recommendations related to special education preparation. A K-16 Workgroup has developed recommendations relating to highly qualified teachers and administrators and standards and curriculum alignment. However, even beyond special education teacher preparation issues, many interviewees during the site visit and in the survey expressed a strong reservation about meeting NCLB for students and teachers without a substantive re-vamping of teacher preparation programs in general in Maryland's institutes of higher education (see Component 7).

A capacity issue that interviewees identified relative to both special education and Title I is that the majority of personnel in both of those units of the MSDE are in compliance-related positions rather than those providing technical assistance to improve the performance of schools in improvement. As with other divisions, the SE/EIS has lost positions within the past two years. This leaves four full-time positions in the division who are able to work with people in other divisions to provide integrated support for low-performing schools. Considering the fact that there are over 250 schools in Maryland in various levels of improvement and that many of them are there as a result of the performance of special education students, this is insufficient staff capacity for meeting their needs and increasing the instructional and content knowledge of teachers working with those students.

The state has developed a leadership curriculum for members of school support teams for low-performing schools with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). The curriculum includes SREB research and that of other national organizations. Specific criteria for team selection are set and include factors such as leadership experience, knowledge of curriculum, assessment, instruction, research-based strategies for school improvement, the change process, and human relations skills. The training program has identified research-based success factors likely to lead to instructional improvement and increased student achievement. They are the ability to:

- prioritize, map and monitor the curriculum;

- use data to lead change;

- link assessment and instruction;

- analyze teacher assignments and student work to improve instruction;

- create a high performance learning culture;

- provide a focused and sustained professional development effort;

- build and lead effective instructional leadership teams;

- provide leadership to literacy instruction; and

- provide leadership to numeracy instruction.

The training for support teams was also aligned to the *Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework* (draft provided CCSSO/MGT) which is intended to "drive principal preparation programs in higher education, professional development, and policy initiatives." It includes outcomes related to instructional leadership and evidence in terms of practice for each that should lead to achievement of the outcome so that principals become leaders of "teaching-learning in the school." The support team criteria also include items for members related to capacity building for school leadership teams.

Another extremely successful leadership program that MSDE has initiated to strengthen leadership in low-performing schools is the Distinguished Principal Fellowship Program that began in the 2003-04 school year. Outstanding individuals in Maryland schools who have "recent experience as a principal, have exhibited excellence and distinction in their careers as instructional leaders, and who are willing to serve for three years in an elementary, middle, K-8, or high school in Baltimore City," are eligible. Those selected are loaned for the term by their districts and charged with turning around low-performing schools. In return, the districts receive highly skilled and knowledgeable principals who can then provide professional development to peers in their home districts. All participate in an intensive peer-to-peer training regimen, leadership development including best management practices utilized in business, and in the MSDE Leadership Roundtable on Effective Practices in Urban Schools. Their salaries for each year are $125,000.

Proven experience in diversity, increasing student achievement, setting high expectations, and knowledge of curriculum planning, development and implementation for at-risk students are essential qualities. Critical responsibilities are team building, data usage for instructional change, mentoring of leadership team members and potential leaders, building a critical mass of effective instructional leadership in Baltimore City schools and institutionalizing best practices to build teacher capacity. One of the intents of the program is to raise the issue of principal compensation as well as to "clear the plate" of the principal for instructional leadership matters. Two principals are currently in their third year, two more were hired last year.

At the time of the site visit, a bill in the General Assembly had just passed a subcommittee for the program to go statewide. Of the four schools with these leaders, three made AYP last year, one having made it in its first year with a Distinguished Principal. Neither the staff nor the student composition formally changes with this program, only the school leader. The program was recognized by *The Daily Record*, a business publication, as one of its 2003 Innovators of the Year because of its focus on increasing student achievement and building leadership capacity.

Maryland has developed several other grant programs targeted to the needs of low-performing schools. The Challenge I-PAS was originally developed in 1997 for all Year 2 schools with the goal of moving students from the basic to the proficient level of achievement in reading and math. Nine counties were initial recipients. The 2004 General Assembly passed budget language to distribute Challenge Grants in a manner consistent with NCLB and the state's new accountability standards. It has since been re-tooled for enhancing teacher capacity to implement the VSC and assessing student learning in 27 middle schools. Middle schools and non-Title I schools are currently targeted because of the lack of resources available to them, in general. This is the second year of implementation as currently conceived. In 2003-04, 48 Challenge schools made AYP, an increase of 19 over 2003 with 57 of the 68 schools involved increasing their overall MSA scores in math and 55 in reading. Over 20 made double digit increases in both subjects. Additionally, high schools showed the greatest gains with African-Americans, Free and Reduced Meal, and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students showing gains in all six schools in math. Scores for LEP students in the three middle schools made gains in math and in reading in two.

A spin-off benefit of the Challenge Program resulted in school districts adopting many of the Challenge methodologies and materials for effective school functioning themselves. Examples include instructional integration, classroom management, professional development, parent involvement, school management, and assessment. The Challenge processes also influenced goal alignment, objectives, and activities to facilitate program implementation and evaluation. The Challenge Grant moves reform to the teacher level by increasing their capacity. One measure of success is a self-reflective analysis of root causes that impede teachers' ability to provide quality and engaging instruction based on the VSC.

The Middle School Reading Assistance Program has been in existence for five years to improve reading instruction at that level in schools identified as in corrective action or restructuring. For the past two years, eight of the lowest performing middle schools (seven in Baltimore City and one in Prince George's County) were targeted. Johns

Hopkins University has been teaching three reading courses required for certification on-site at the schools. A coach sits alongside teachers in the course and then provides daily coaching on strategy implementation, model lessons, and planning assistance. The courses are available to anyone including teachers in schools near the targeted middle schools. Anecdotal evidence is that teacher retention is improving, and that instruction is improving markedly. One example is that at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year, 63 percent of teachers were observed using no reading strategy as part of their instruction in contrast to 80 percent of teachers observed having successfully implemented daily reading strategies into instruction at the end of the year. Johns Hopkins is currently conducting a formal evaluation of the program.

To address the culture of schools, MSDE and the University of Maryland have been collaborating in a grant-funded initiative over the past several years in integrating Baldrige principles into schools and districts. The program has been implemented in many districts and even gone to the school and classroom level in Howard County.

In 1996, an Achievement Initiative for Maryland's Minority Students (AIMMS) was commissioned to look specifically at and report to the state about aspects of data that reflect a school system that "fulfills the promise" against those in Maryland that were not. They examined all systems with respect to staffing, diversity, funding inequities and accountability, underqualified teachers, race, ethnicity, poverty, and teacher expectation levels, and made recommendations for state and local action in a 1998 report *Minority Achievement in Maryland: The State of the State*. The report correlated low student/school achievement with minority membership, poverty and number of uncertified teachers, among other factors. A subsequent report was issued in January 2001, *Minority Achievement in Maryland at the Millennium* noting that minority population was projected to approach 50 percent in Maryland by 2015. Additionally, the state has over 190 languages in its schools. The report underscores the urgent need for the state to consider thoughtfully how its schools serve these students and develop strategies to close the achievement gap while maintaining equally high expectations for all students. Recommendations for state and local systems include:

- create a task force to examine appropriate data collection that would better inform determination of educational progress and the relationship between programs and achievement;

- ensure high quality teachers for all Maryland students; and

- require all students to participate in rigorous academic programs, including Gifted and Talented and Advanced Placement to eliminate tracking and its consequences.

Unfortunately, and fortunately, these recommendations were made almost concurrently with NCLB enactment. They serve to reinforce, from a local perspective, the imperative for NCLB requirements, but taken with the NCLB reporting and accountability impact on data collection, make accomplishment of the data recommendation even more challenging.

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Since its inception, Maryland has been involved with High Schools That Work, inviting schools that demonstrate willingness to make instructional, professional growth and organizational changes to participate. School Improvement grants have been used for high schools with specific parameters set for participation that guide them in selecting interventions likely to make a difference. Citigroup is also funding, at $100,000 a year, an initiative to create Smaller Learning Communities with institutes and follow-up throughout the year. The Institute is aligned with every school's improvement plan. A pre-institute analysis of where they are, needs, and expectations for the institute is completed by participants. Staff has scoured the country to find schools that have used these approaches to raise student achievement and are similar to schools in Maryland. Peer coaches from those schools are invited to the institute. One requirement is that teams be interdisciplinary and that schools bring their feeder middle schools so that they can think about articulation and planning between them. Through the process, schools have created partnerships with peer coaches who return to help throughout the year. Participants are only invited to return if they have shown commitment to the program and have made progress.

A new factor in Maryland's NCLB implementation and AYP that has entered the picture this year is the operation of an identified low-performing juvenile services school assigned to the MSDE by the State Legislature. Within the next seven years, the Department will have taken over all juvenile services schools. Again, in anticipation, the MSDE looked across the nation for exemplary juvenile services models. They are working with colleagues at the University of Maryland and local school systems to mesh the curriculum with students' needs so that when students do return to their home schools, their instruction has been aligned. This additional direct educational responsibility exacerbates the challenges for the Department itself in services to low-performing schools but also promises a laboratory for innovation.

Immediately prior to the CCSSO/MGT site visit, a cross-divisional Executive Leadership Team led by the State Superintendent that had been meeting for over six months deliberating how best to build the most efficient and effective model for delivery of state technical assistance to low-performing schools developed a draft plan. Considerations in the draft document provided the team were:

- the technical assistance model in place prior to NCLB implementation;

- six months of interviews and reviews with districts to determine their highest priority for technical assistance;

- NCLB and Code of Maryland (COMAR) requirements for schools, districts, and the state when schools do not make AYP; and

- available resources to implement a statewide plan.

The group agreed to guiding principles that would be the foundation of support for low-performing schools. In short, they are:

- the locus of responsibility for support for these schools is the local school system;

- MSDE support will be within the parameters of its capacity;

- a cross-divisional approach will determine the technical assistance that is provided, and coordinate and sustain high-quality technical assistance focused on enabling districts to better support low-performing schools;

- one of MSDE's primary roles is to monitor the effectiveness of local support; and

- most training requested thus far has been content-related, particularly in reading and math for identified subgroups which, because of the demand, instructional specialists have not been able to fulfill to the extent requested.

The document describes "bedrock training in reading and math" that will be regularly scheduled and provided for all school district staff and all staff in low-performing schools. Priority will be given to schools in Year 2 of improvement and corrective action in order to assist schools before they are failing too deeply. It will entail a regular series of regional professional development activities focused on content and instructional strategies with modifications for all subgroups. They will be offered multiple times so that all who want the training have the opportunity to avail themselves of it. Participation will be contingent upon the school's or district's agreement that administrators will participate in the training and provide necessary follow-up at the school level. That agreement will be committed to writing in a memorandum of understanding articulating the responsibilities of each party. MSDE's role will be to support and train coaches to equip school districts and school leaders to provide teachers guided practice and self-reflection.

Toward the goal of targeting MSDE resources in schools for which there is the greatest chance of success, the Department has created a more intensive level of support for schools that migrate to Year 2 status by missing AYP for a third year. MSDE will provide a school profile, an in-depth analysis of all school data relevant to school improvement contained in one document. Schools will then be offered the option of conducting a self-assessment and leadership interviews from which recommendations will be made.

In considering the capacity of the staff at MSDE to provide support to low-performing schools, new position descriptions have been developed for technical assistance personnel so that those providing service and support to identified schools will have the content and pedagogical knowledge to maximize assistance and resources. All current employees who meet the new qualifications will be invited to become members of the Year 2 Teams or involved in designing and providing the related professional development. Those who do not will be retrained or not have their short-term contracts renewed at the end of the 2004-05 year. Vacancies that result will be filled by personnel who meet the new criteria.

If, after this level of support, schools still move into corrective action, then the MSDE's support will revert to the school district and their support for those schools in corrective action or restructuring.  During Restructuring 1 (planning year), MSDE will review and the State Board will approve the selected alternative governance and restructuring plan for schools that may move into Restructuring 2 (implementation).  The document that will serve as the blueprint for monitoring and reporting improvement efforts, as well as a communication vehicle with the MSDE, is the Master Plan at the school district level.

Beyond educational initiatives that support students in low-performing schools, the Education Commission for the States has identified a Children's Wraparound Initiative in Maryland intended to provide "better and more efficient service delivery for 'at-risk' children and their families." Two demonstration projects in Baltimore City and Montgomery County link children and families with intensive needs to community-based teams for flexible treatment and services. The goal is to provide services in home communities rather than more expensive institutions that may not address root causes. An interagency plan and fund, and a streamlined review process, will ensure that children requiring out-of-home placements are quickly placed in an appropriate setting. Six different state councils will be consolidated into a single council that will advise the children's cabinet in both developing the state plan and awarding grants from the interagency fund.

Similar "shared services networks" initiated in Florida communities by the Florida Department of Education have effectively addressed the social needs of students who are not necessarily in need of such intensive services but whose family situations serve as barriers to high academic performance. By creating councils of leaders of social service agencies that have resources and expertise in supporting families within each community, families are provided services for needs that detract from a focus on education. With those needs addressed, families can then more successfully attend to their children's educational needs.  The networks create a seamless delivery of services, fill gaps, and reduce duplication among agencies.  Some have even reached the sophistication of collaborative problem-solving around the needs of individual students. Monroe County, Florida, has created a Students-Outcomes-Services process in which feeder schools are involved with a student success team of agency members who collaboratively seek solutions and develop an integrated plan that includes aspects of each agency's plans and meets agency/school requirements as well as leveraging agency resources.

**COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**COMMENDATIONS**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education is commended for its development of a school improvement planning instrument that comprehensively addresses elements essential for reform.**

- **Many divisions of the MSDE have developed grant and other programs and tools that support low-performing schools and districts in various ways:**

- – **focusing on whole school reform, increasing student achievement, and building leadership capacity;**

- – **embedding Baldrige principles into organizational practices;**

- – **requiring a written commitment for participation;**

- – **compelling the responsible expenditure of funds;**

- – **ensuring fidelity of implementation;**

- – **rewarding successful implementation;**

- – **funding only proven programs that are listed in applications and/or requiring justification for adoption of others; and**

- – **discouraging halfhearted implementation by discontinuation of funding.**

- ■ **The Maryland State Department of Education is commended for its creative attempts to entice universities to change their teacher preparation programs to better meet student needs and to address the development of highly qualified teachers at the postsecondary level.**

- ■ **The creation of the Goal Wizard, as an on-line tool that integrates content and instructional standards into the development of IEPs for special education students, assists teachers who have not all been grounded in content and related pedagogy in developing realistic instructional goals for their students.**

- ■ **With programs such as the Challenge/I-PAS and Middle School Reading Grants, Maryland has begun to lay a sound foundation for student success at the middle and high school levels.**

- ■ **MSDE is commended for recognizing the limits of its capacity to help all schools in the state and to develop a plan to provide support where it is most likely to reap positive results while, at the same time, providing assistance to districts to develop capacity within their staff and schools.**

- ■ **Joint site visits of representatives of divisions of the MSDE such as assessment, special education, and instruction provide a strong base for comprehensive examination of school needs as well as identification of areas where MSDE staff can integrate services to assist low-performing schools.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 4-1:**

**Ensure that all current special education teachers receive training in the knowledge and skills that will prepare them to make the instructional changes necessary to instill reading and math (and soon science) skills and knowledge in the students for whom they are responsible. It is imperative with NCLB and Maryland's own content-related expectations for all students that special education teachers gain the content knowledge necessary for them and their students to succeed. Both of those strategies will contribute to their better understanding and setting realistic expectations for their students. The Maryland State Department of Education has begun to address this need with the professional development element of its new plan for low-performing schools that encourages participation of special education teachers in content training. When teachers are well-prepared in terms of content knowledge and instructional strategies, then expectations for students will be raised and achievement, too, will grow. Although this is a capacity issue at the state level and MSDE has provided much training, this is such a core issue contributing to low performance of schools in Maryland that it should not be an optional aspect of improving their performance.**

**Recommendation 4-2:**

**Require state institutions of higher education to integrate content knowledge and pedagogical skills into their teacher preparation training for all teachers. The collaborative initiatives that the MSDE has undertaken have garnered positive results among a representative group of university and special education personnel. However, NCLB's expectations for highly qualified teachers cannot be simply the responsibility of school systems once they hire teachers. If the state is to provide students uniformly highly qualified teachers in all classes, it will require a collaborative pre- and postsecondary endeavor and a change in university teacher preparation programs (also see Component 7).**

**Recommendation 4-3:**

**Include principals of special schools in the Distinguished Principals' Program. This program has proven extremely effective in turning around schools that have histories of low performance. With special education students making such a sizable contribution to the state's low-performing schools, including principals who lead schools exclusively serving special education students, offers the possibility of a "research lab" for identification of best practices that are effective with Maryland's low-performing special education students and schools. The same can be done with principals of juvenile services schools as they grow in numbers.**

**Recommendation 4-4:**

**Conduct a realistic assessment of the personnel needs of MSDE regarding its capacity to assist districts and schools in concert with addressing the qualifications of personnel who provide technical assistance to low-performing schools. In conjunction with that assessment, use the evidence that has accumulated regarding the direct positive results garnered in initiatives for low-performing schools to present a case to the Maryland General Assembly for increased staffing. Staff in the Special Education and Early Intervention Services should be a particular focus with the high percent of schools not making AYP because of these students and only four full-time staff members responsible for technical assistance (also see Component 17).**

**Recommendation 4-5:**

**Identify a grant or NCLB funding source to continue the School Improvement Grants that have clearly impacted teacher capacity as well as teacher preparation. Clearly, these grants have proven to positively impact some of the primary needs in terms of addressing the limitations of low-performing schools. Funding should, therefore, return to former levels.**

**Recommendation 4-6:**

**Expand use of the principles underlying the Goal Wizard to use in all classrooms in the state for lesson development based on Maryland content standards. This expansion would further embed content and instructional strategies into the repertoires of classroom teachers. Additionally, by developing a means with it to systematically collect additional strategies used in Maryland classrooms, the base of proven and promising strategies would grow for use by all.**

**Recommendation 4-7:**

**Exert and model leadership in maintaining a balance between achieving high academic expectations for all students and the need for students to have balanced educational opportunities that meet their social and emotional needs, link academic learning with hands-on applications, and create well-rounded citizens.**

**Recommendation 4-8:**

**Build on the Children's Wraparound Initiative to create a seamless support system for the families of students most commonly found in low-performing schools. When community agencies coalesce to weave a fabric of support for family needs, student achievement will be positively impacted.**

**Recommendation 4-9:**

**Continue to systematically evaluate all grant programs in addition to initiatives used in services to schools for their impact on postsecondary teacher preparation, professional development for current teachers, student performance, and school environmental effects. Strong evaluation processes are in place in all divisions of the MSDE. In order to focus human and fiscal resources where the return is likely to be greatest as intended in the draft plan for low-performing schools, the MSDE must, in every way, integrate services to schools by ensuring that all in the Department are in concert in their efforts.**

**Recommendation 4-10:**

**Develop processes for technical assistance (TA) providers in the Division of Leadership to routinely communicate with personnel in other divisions to ensure collaborative cross-divisional services and support to low-performing schools (also see Component 17).**

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## COMPONENT 5: SCHOOL SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION

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**Definition:** Federal law requires states to provide support to Title I schools and school districts in school improvement efforts. States must also develop a system of recognition for schools that have significantly closed the achievement gap or have exceeded AYP standards for two or more consecutive years. Schools in this category will be recognized as *Distinguished Schools*, and teachers in these schools may receive financial awards, based on the individual state recognition plan. **(Title I, Part A, Section 1117)**.

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**Rubric Score: 3.0**

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**FINDINGS**

With the increase in accountability activities and potential sanctions under the requirements of NCLB, there is an additional need and indeed a requirement, to provide school support and recognition activities. The goal of closing identified achievement gaps is an ambitious one, and one that requires a great deal of effort on the part of schools. When schools meet this challenge, states must be there to celebrate those successes. These activities not only serve to congratulate successful schools, but can also serve an important public relations function by highlighting the overall successes of Maryland's public education system.

The evidence for school support for low-performing schools was addressed under the previous section, Component 4: Low-Performing Schools.

With regard to school recognition, 13A.01.04.09 states:

> *(a) The State Board and the State Superintendent for Schools shall annually review the progress of each local school system to determine if the school system is making AYP in reading and in mathematics and shall publicize the results of the review of each local school system, teachers, staff, and the community, and include statistically sound disaggregated results.*

> *(b) The State Board, upon the recommendation of the State Superintendent of Schools, may make monetary or nonmonetary reward to schools, school systems, or both, that significantly close the achievement gap between subgroups or exceed their AYP in reading or in mathematics for 2 or more consecutive years and designated certain schools as distinguished schools that have made the greatest gains in closing the achievement gap or exceeding AYP.*

The Maryland School Performance Recognition Program recognizes elementary, middle and high schools for achievement and improvement based on the School Performance Program. This award program was initially approved by the Maryland General Assembly in 1996 and state funds were distributed to elementary and middle schools for improved

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school performance. The 2003 Program included high schools and Title I funds to help support the rewards. Maryland Blue Ribbon Schools are also recognized as part of the program. In 2004, the recognition program was modified to take into account multiple years of Maryland School Assessment data.

Each year the state releases information on how well schools have done in meeting standards of performance established by the federal *No Child Left Behind* Act. The standards represent high but reasonable levels of school performance measured in terms of student learning and participation in school. Schools are selected for recognition based on their achievement and their demonstrated improvement in progressing towards the standards. The criteria include the performance of minority groups and special populations, including special education students, limited English proficient students, and economically disadvantaged students.

All schools with an enrollment of students in grade 3 or above have a chance to be recognized. Low-performing schools that demonstrate significant improvement have the same chance to earn an award as do high-performing schools.

In 2003, the state allocated $1.22 million which was distributed to elementary and middle schools. The federal Title I program provided funds for each Title I school being recognized. The amount of each school's award depended on the number of schools qualifying for the awards. High schools received only certificates of recognition because high schools did not meet the eligibility requirements for funds from either source.

There were two types of rewards in 2003:

- School Improvement Award for Achievement; and
- School Improvement Award for Improvement Among Subgroups.

Above 40 percent (586) of schools across the state received recognition in the 2003 program. Of those, 528 elementary and middle schools earned financial awards. The remaining, 58 high schools, earned certificates of recognition. Approximately 25 percent of the schools in the state were recognized for achievement and approximately 25 percent were recognized for showing improvement among subgroups.

The School Improvement Team in each school that receives an award determines the use of the funds. Many schools use the funds for instructional materials, computers or other technology, staff development, improvement planning, and similar purposes related to continuing the progress in student learning. The funds may not be used to give bonuses or extra pay to staff or to supplant or replace other federal, state, or local funds available to the school. In their use of the awards, schools must follow local school system policies and procedures.

For 2004, no state funds were available. However, Title I funds were still available and awarded only to Title I schools. Other schools received nonmonetary recognition. For 2004, Maryland recognized schools based on the following two performance indicators:

- **Achievement**

  The Percent Proficient for each grade in Reading was added to the Percent Proficient for each grade in Mathematics and divided by the number of grades represented to yield an average score for the school.  The school had to also make Adequate Yearly Progress to quality for an award.

- **Improvement Among Subgroups**

  This is a measure of how much the school has closed its gaps in subgroup performance while improving from 2003 to 2004.  To receive an award, the school had to improve overall from 2003 to 2004 and do better than the state in closing its gaps in the same subgroup at the state level.

In 2004, the Maryland State Department of Education recognized 562 elementary, middle, and high schools for the academic performance of their students.  The program recognized schools for their overall performance on the 2004 Maryland School Assessment (MSA) and for improving the performance of special populations of students from the 2003 MSA to the 2004 MSA.

About 25 percent of the schools were recognized for overall achievement and 25 percent for showing improvement among special populations.  Special populations include race/ethnicity, special education, limited English proficiency, and students who are receiving free or reduced price meals. Some schools were among the top 25 percent in both categories.  The recognized Title I schools received small monetary awards that can be used for activities and equipment to improve student performance and family involvement.

An important accountability aspect of the 2003 and 2004 Maryland School Performance Recognition Program is the School Reward Financial Plan (see Exhibit 5-1).  This required report makes it possible for the state to maintain a comprehensive database of how successful schools are using fiscal resources to support continued success.

Despite significant success in recognizing high-performing schools, the state has not effectively communicated low-performing school improvement information so that schools in need of improvement can have examples to follow.  While Maryland's sophisticated Web site contains information to help schools improve student achievement (with special data tools to help teachers and principals analyze achievement data, areas for improvement and draft improvement plans), the site does not contain best practices of successful schools.

**EXHIBIT 5-1**
**MARYLAND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE RECOGNITION PROGRAM**
**SCHOOL REWARD FINANCIAL PLAN**
**2004**

**SCHOOL NAME** _____     **AWARD** _____

**INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS**

*What dollar amount of your reward will be spent on instructional materials?  Please list the materials and grade level for each purchase.  Some examples might include library books, textbooks, curricular programs, media center materials, physical education materials, fine arts materials, classroom supplies, etc.*

Project Description:

Project Cost:

**STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

*What dollar amount of your reward will be spent on staff development? Please list the topics and the purpose of the session.  If you intend to spend money on teacher training materials, please include that information in this section.*

Project Description:

Project Cost:

**ADDITIONAL STAFFING**

*What dollar amount of your reward will be spent on additional staffing?  Some examples of additional staffing include administrative support, resource personnel, paraprofessional staff, classroom teachers, etc.  Please include in this section any money intended to pay for substitutes for staff development sessions.*

Project Description:

Project Cost:

**PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

*What dollar amount of your reward will be spent to encourage increased family involvement? Please list in this section the activities and any monies that will be spent to increase family involvement.*

Project Description:

Project Cost:

**TECHNOLOGY**

*What dollar amount of your reward will be spent on technology in the school?  Some examples of technology projects are: purchasing computers, purchasing software, providing internet access to your school's computers, developing a school Web site, staff training on technology uses in the classroom.*

Project Description:

Project Cost:

**EXHIBIT 5-1  (Continued)**
**MARYLAND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE RECOGNITION PROGRAM**
**SCHOOL REWARD FINANCIAL PLAN**
**2004**

**INCENTIVE PROGRAMS**

*What dollar amount of your reward money will be spent on incentives?  Do you plan to develop incentives for teachers and staff, if so, please describe.  Do you plan to develop incentives for students, if so please describe.*

Project Description:

Project Cost:

**SCHOOL PLAN**

*What dollar amount of your reward money will be spent on updates, improvements and/or additions to your school's physical plant?  Some examples would be adding a playground, replacing classroom furniture, replacing cafeteria furniture, adding cafeteria supplies and/or equipment, painting the interior and/or exterior of the building, updating the main office and/or teachers lounge, etc.*

Project Description:

Project Cost:

**OTHER**

*Please describe any uses for the reward money not outlined above.  Please be specific in your project description.*

Project Description:

Project Cost:

**DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

*How will the expenditures decisions be made?  Please describe in detail.  What role will the School Improvement Team play in making these decisions?  If a committee will be established, please describe that process as well.*

Process Description:

_____   _____    _____   _____

School Principal's Signature   Date        Local Superintendent's Signature      Date

Source:  Maryland Department of Education, 2005.

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**COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**COMMENDATIONS**

- **The Maryland Department of Education has effectively implemented the intent of NCLB as it relates to recognizing successful schools.**

- **The Maryland Department of Education has created a comprehensive database to identify how high-performing schools are using their rewards.**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation 5-1:**

**Work with the General Assembly to reinstate monetary incentives for successful schools. Although the state is complying with intent of 13A.01.04.09 in recognizing successful schools through a certificate and public recognition, the provision of monetary incentives should be reconsidered as a reward for successful schools. If the monetary incentive is reinstated, provisions for successful Maryland high schools to also receive fiscal recognition should be considered.**

**Recommendation 5-2:**

**Effectively communicate successful practices in high-performing schools through the Maryland State Department of Education Web site. Effective best practices also should be showcased as part of professional development activities and conferences.**

## COMPONENT 6: STUDENT ASSESSMENT

**Definition:** NCLB strengthens requirements for state assessments. By the 2005-06 school year, states must develop and implement annual assessments in reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and at least once in grades 10-12. by 2005-06, states must develop challenging content and achievement standards in science and by 2007-08, states must also administer annual science assessments at least once in grades 3-5, grades 6-9, and grades 10-12. each assessment must be aligned with state academic content in achievement standards and involve multiple measures, including measures of higher-order thinking and understanding. **(Title I, Part A, Section 1111)**

**Rubric Score: 3.8**

In general, state assessment systems must include the following:

- alignment with state academic content standards, and student academic achievement standards;

- inclusion;

- appropriate accommodations;

- adequate reportings systems;

- prompt dissemination of results; and

- participation in the National Assessment of Academic Progress (NAEP).

**FINDINGS**

State assessment data are the linchpin by which progress toward annual and 2013-14 student performance NCLB goals are measured. Consequently, they and their collection and reporting are essential elements of NCLB implementation. They have been and remain the public measure of school success or failure and, as such, underscore the necessity of having an effective and efficient system of measuring, analyzing and reporting student assessment information.

Assessment was included (in 20 of 25 responses by senior state-level administrators) as one of the three greatest strengths in the MSDE for complying with NCLB. Ninety-six (96) percent of survey respondents believe that the state is in compliance with NCLB requirements relating to student assessment. Maryland has used assessment information as a measure of school accountability since 1994. Tests used for that purpose until enactment of NCLB were the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) and the Independence Mastery Assessment Program (IMAP), for a very small number of students with profound disabilities. When the decision was made to completely revise the assessment system with development of the voluntary school curriculum (VSC), the assessment outcomes were a new Maryland School Assessment

(MSA) and an Alternative-MSA (ALT-MSA) for the small group of students with severe cognitive disabilities. The timeline for that conversion was extremely tight with contracts being awarded in the fall of 2002 for March 2003 assessments. Exacerbating the challenge, the tests had to go to print in December for spring administration. During those few short months of development, performance standards had to be set, AYP levels calculated, and reliability and validity established as well as test development and alignment with the VSC.

The Assistant State Superintendent for the Division of Accountability and Assessment brings a balanced background to the job having worked in higher education, begun at the MSDE in curriculum and worked from that perspective in the development of former state assessments. The staff, although lacking capacity with personnel losses since enactment of NCLB, nonetheless, is a cohesive group able to carry on reporting, testing, and accountability tasks as a unit.

The former tests were not measures of individual student knowledge, but involved student group work for school accountability. They were administered as grade band assessments, so students were not assessed in all content standards, nor did they receive individual scores. Maryland had received a waiver from the United States Department of Education (USDOE) for not having tests previously that reported individual scores. Current tests meet the NCLB requirement as measures of individual student achievement and assess all content standards each year.

The testing companies chosen by a task force to work with Maryland educators in test development were CTB-McGraw Hill Terra Nova and Harcourt Educational Testing-Stanford 10 (SAT 10). A requirement of the contracts with vendors was that they produce reliable and valid assessments. The standards-setting process described below further ensured reliability and validity. Test response types are selected response (SR [multiple choice]), brief constructed responses (BCR) of a few sentences, and augmented items written to the Maryland English Language Arts Content Standards in Reading in grades 3-8 and Maryland's English Core Learning Goals at grade 10.

Math also includes extended constructed responses that are more detailed than BCRs as well as Student-Produced Responses in which students record answers on a grid. For both reading and math, the state has chosen to include both norm-referenced (NRT) and criterion-referenced (CRT) scores for students. In reading, the NRT scores derive from the Terra Nova and the Stanford 10. Overall reading scores are reported by proficiency levels of basic, proficient, or advanced.

Selected items from the two tests in addition to items created for Maryland contribute to the CRT score. It is these scores that are the determinant of AYP. In math, CRTs also determine AYP and are comprised of selected Terra Nova items in addition to items created for Maryland. Norm-referenced test scores come from the Terra Nova Survey which only has SR items. By using the CRTs for AYP accountability purposes to report proficiency levels, periodic re-norming of NRTs will not affect schools' ability to show progress under NCLB.

Standards-setting for the Maryland School Assessment (MSA), High School Assessment (HSA), and Alternate Maryland School Assessment (ALT-MSA) involved teachers,

principals, and district staff with subject and grade-level expertise serving on 13 standard-setting groups in addition to representatives of professional organizations and institutes of higher learning. People in the instructional and assessment divisions worked collaboratively to integrate the joint products. Through several rounds of discussions and voting, cut scores were set for the MSA and ALT-MSA as well as for the HSA. Participants also examined impact data in the process to consider the percentage of students disaggregated who would make proficient and advanced cuts on the MSA and ALT-MSA as well as those who would or would not pass the HSA tests with the scores selected. The Psychometric Council reviewed the work of the 13 groups for quality control and technical soundness, forwarding its recommendations and comments to a Review and Articulation Committee for examination of equivalent rigor across grades and subjects.

The State Superintendent then reviewed all of the work and submitted it to the State Board for setting cut scores and HSA passing scores in July 2003. MSA student achievement is reported in the following three categories:

- basic
- proficient
- advanced

The tests are based on the Core Learning Goals (CLGs) that the State Board adopted in 1996. Each local school system must certify that it has incorporated them into their curriculum. Consequently, if teachers are teaching the curriculum that has been certified to contain the CLGs, then there is expected to be instructional validity to the test. However, the state does not actively examine that in each district; districts must focus instructional leadership, resources, and professional development to ensure that it takes place in every classroom.

In June 2004, the Maryland State Board of Education ruled that, with the class of 2009, all Maryland students must pass the High School Assessment (HSA) tests for graduation. All students are expected to receive instruction consistent with the VSC, Maryland Content Standards, Core Learning Goals and be assessed on their attainment of grade-level reading (English ll) and math (geometry) content for the high school band of the MSA for AYP and course content in algebra/data analysis, biology, and government for the HSA. The tests are end-of-course tests for students in whatever grade they take the course. Test responses are either multiple-choice or written responses. At the time of the site visit, the MSDE was in the process of transitioning from the grade 10 Reading MSA to a new English 10 HSA requirement to reduce the number of tests administered at the high school and to merge the reading requirement with the English test. Maryland plans to field-test its science CRT assessments in grades 5 and 8 and add a science component to the ALT-MSA in those grades in the 2006-07 school year. They will be fully integrated in the 2007-08 school year assessments.

Students formerly had to take Maryland Functional Tests for graduation. They originated in the 1980s and measured basic skills. The last class to meet that requirement was the graduating class of 2004. Students may pass the HSA in several ways: attain passing scores set for each course, pass state-approved substitute tests such as possibly an

Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate test, or earn a minimum score set by the State Board on each test, but a combined score equal to the total of the four HSA passing scores.

Special education students will also be expected to pass the HSA for graduation with a diploma. Accommodations consistent with a student's IEP, 504 or LEP plan are made for MSA administration. In an effort to be better able to assess the performance of students who take the ALT-MSA using more effective instruments, a state task force was assembled in the fall of 2004 and is currently examining a more effective means of determining progress for these students, studying alternative assessments in other states. The Task Force's recommendations are due by Fall 2007.

A document *Requirements for Accommodating, Excusing, and Exempting Students in Maryland Assessment Programs* is on the MSDE Web site for assistance to educators in making decisions about accommodations for state tests. The option of earning a Certificate of Program Completion instead of a diploma is available to a very small number of students with severe cognitive disabilities. The state recognizes the one percent cap and related challenges, and senior staff interviewed expressed commitment to maintaining a low cap to ensure that a focus on "learning for all" continues. They noted that NCLB had prompted special and regular educators to work more closely together toward that goal. Students who have been identified for participation in a language instruction educational program currently take the ITP as a measure of English proficiency, but the state has plans to identify and administer, during the 2005-06 school year, an assessment that better aligns with Maryland ELL standards.

MSA and ALT-MSA testing takes place over a period of two days per subject for 90 minutes per day in March, allowing time for receipt of results in June for notification purposes for Title I parents and for timely data evaluation by systems in case of appeals. High school tests are end-of-course tests so they take place later in the year.

Interviews revealed that the most challenging part of transitioning from one assessment system to another was changing from IMAP's functional skills type of test for students with disabilities to one that measured achievement in reading and mathematics. The new ALT-MSA was phased in over a two-year period during which time extensive professional development was provided special education teachers to prepare them for accountability for reading and math instruction and assessment rather than functional skills. The goal is for teachers to become better equipped to know how to tailor mastery objectives to individual student needs and to write mastery objectives and options for students to demonstrate learning. Reports indicated that much remains to be done to achieve that goal. While that was taking place, Pearson Education was working with Maryland educators on range-finding for student projects.

When AYP data are published, the Division of Accountability and Assessment places data files on the Web site (mdreportcard.org) right next to the AYP data. These are Excel files containing school and school system data, and are readily manipulated to use the information to make instructional and curricular decisions or to analyze specific aspects of student performance and produce customized data layouts. Additionally, the student performance section of the Web site has a search tool that allows customized searches for schools with particular characteristics. Both of these components of the

Web site facilitate the use of data at all levels for educational decision making for those choosing to use it.

The Web site is exceptionally easy to navigate and to manipulate data in ways such as:

- examine data by state, county and school;
- compare all races;
- compare all races by gender;
- compare both genders;
- examine performance by subgroups; and
- examine trends.

Data are also continuously added to the site as it is available. The team noted that the information on the site during report writing in March had been updated.

When asked what the state was doing to encourage or ensure use of performance data, however, responses indicated that some training had occurred, but that capacity at the state level is insufficient to systematize data use in all schools and districts. Variations exist as well in the sophistication of district data systems. State performance data, too, are not intended to be diagnostic. Further barriers to that state level of encouragement are that MSDE personnel at this point are more focused on reporting issues rather than data analysis. Thus, there remains a need to assist teachers in the classroom to use student- and class-specific data to inform instructional delivery and tailor planning to individual students as well as student groups. The state does, however, play a primary role in other ways in creating a critical mass among districts for initiatives that would be beneficial to all systems.

The State Superintendent meets monthly with all 24 superintendents. The Assistant State Superintendent for the Division of Instruction and others as needed also hold monthly meetings with all district assistant superintendents. Those meetings have contributed to agreement among 11 of the 24 districts to purchase formative assessments for use throughout the year to inform instructional decisions. The state's role will be to work with the vendor to create those assessments. The VSC does not include pacing guides or scope and sequence, so those educational leaders agreed upon content that should be addressed by October, December, January and May for those formative assessments.

In testing, as in reporting, one of the greatest challenges identified during the site visit was the constant flux from the federal government about NCLB in terms of continuous guidelines and interpretations being promulgated, often without the requisite advance notice to be able to comply. A specific example provided was that guidance for testing LEP students for March tests arrived on February 19th. Besides the lack of sufficient notice to fulfill the request, because of a lack of information prior to that date, few systems had collected the information needed in order to conform. As a result of those kinds of ongoing experiences, the Department is placed in the position of uncertainty about the acceptability of processes they have developed in the absence of more timely guidance.

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Beginning in 2002-03, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is required to be administered in all states on a biennial basis and the state is to have a plan to facilitate that testing. Some states, such as Michigan, have chosen to use the NAEP as an accountability indicator in order to give it importance. Interviews during the on-site visit regarding Maryland's reaction to the NCLB requirement for NAEP administration reflected responses ranging from an awareness that something must be done to better align NAEP and MSA to mere acceptance of the requirement, but little concern about its need to align in any respect with the state's assessment system. Responses were, however, consistent in the concern that students in the 12th grade who take NAEP will reap no consequences for their performance so have no vested interest in applying themselves to do well on it. It is that very reason that the state uses end-of-course tests for accountability purposes. Another concern expressed regarding NAEP is that there is no prior indication of the content standards that will be measured during each administration on NAEP, so it is impossible to attempt to align either state tests or instruction with it. A final frustration reported from the school level is the timing of NAEP administration in February when teachers across the state are working diligently to prepare students for March MSA testing.

In the federal government's NCLB "Frequently Asked Questions," that is a product of the US House Committee on Education and the Workforce, it notes that "NAEP can be used as a benchmark in order to determine if state-developed assessments are measuring the factors they are intended to calculate." It goes on to provide an example of 80 percent of students scoring proficiently on a state assessment and only 40 percent on NAEP, and concludes that, in such a case, the "state may want to evaluate their assessment in order to determine if it is rigorous enough." State representatives have identified the challenges to doing so in the comments above. However, *Education Week's Quality Counts, 2005,* compares each state's student performance on NAEP with their performance on state assessments, showing the difference between the percent of 4th grade students scoring at or above proficiency on both tests in equivalent grades and subjects. Maryland's students showed a 26 point disparity between the two in 2003, indicating a disparity in alignment between what each tests. Other state variances ranged from five to 69. Exhibit 6-1 shows this most recent report.

Two indicators of successful implementation of the assessment system prescribed by NCLB are that it produces "individual student interpretive, descriptive, and diagnostic" reports and that the state reports itemized score analyses to schools and districts. Interviewees in Maryland made it clear that the MSA and ALT-MSA are not intended to be diagnostic assessments and do not produce data that is readily interpretive for use in classrooms for individual students.

In addition to the data available on the Web site, sample home reports explain the purpose of the MSA and its alignment with content standards to parents. They refer parents to the state's Web sites for specific details of what standards mean in terms of expectations for student learning and for finding additional information regarding school and system performance. They explain how parents can interpret their child's scores in comparison with those of other children at the school, in the school system, and in the state. They further detail the differences between the three levels of proficiency: advanced, proficient, and basic, and define other academic indicators selected for AYP.

**EXHIBIT 6-1**
**NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS RESULTS**
**COMPARISON WITH STATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

**Student Achievement**

Note: A dash (—) indicates data were not available or, in U.S. row, that a total was not appropriate. States are ranked by the percent of students scoring at or above proficient on NAEP; ties are ranked alphabetically.

G = Graded; U = Ungraded.

[1]State had a statistically significant decrease since the last administration of the exam.

[2]State had a statistically significant increase since the last administration of the exam.

[3]If states did not offer tests in 2003 at grade 4 or 8, *Education Week* accepted test results from the next closest grade level. Please see the **Sources and Notes** for more information on the grade levels assessed by states included in this table.

[4]Vermont assesses reading performance in two separate areas: analysis/interpretation and basic understanding. Student performance on the basic-understanding standard is significantly higher than performance on the analysis/interpretation standard. The percentage of students who achieved the standard or achieved the standard with honors in analysis/interpretation is presented as a comparison to NAEP.

[5]Iowa reading and mathematics scores represent the average between scores from the 2001-02 and 2002-03 school years.

[6]Alabama and West Virginia reading and mathematics scores are from 2004.

[7]Column denotes differences between the total percent of students scoring at or above proficient on NAEP and the total percent of students scoring at or above proficient on the state required assessment at the equivalent subject and grade.

| STATE | Reading | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Percent of 4th graders scoring at or above proficient in 2003 | | |
| | NAEP[G] | State test[3] | Difference[7] |
| Connecticut | 43 | 69 | 26 |
| Massachusetts | 40[1] | 56 | 16 |
| New Hampshire | 40 | 76 | 36 |
| New Jersey | 39 | 78 | 39 |
| Colorado | 37 | 87 | 50 |
| Minnesota | 37 | 76 | 39 |
| Vermont | 37 | 70[4] | 33 |
| Maine | 36 | 49 | 13 |
| Iowa | 35 | 76[5] | 41 |
| Montana | 35 | 76 | 41 |
| Virginia | 35 | 73 | 38 |
| Missouri | 34 | 34 | — |
| New York | 34 | 64 | 30 |
| Ohio | 34 | 66 | 32 |
| Wyoming | 34 | 44 | 10 |
| Delaware | 33 | 79 | 46 |
| Indiana | 33 | 72 | 39 |
| Kansas | 33 | 69 | 36 |
| North Carolina | 33 | 81 | 48 |
| Pennsylvania | 33 | 58 | 25 |
| South Dakota | 33 | 85 | 52 |

**EXHIBIT 6-1  (Continued)**
**NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS RESULTS**
**COMPARISON WITH STATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

| STATE | Reading | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Percent of 4th graders scoring at or above proficient in 2003 | | |
| | NAEP[G] | State test[3] | Difference[7] |
| Washington | 33 | 67 | **34** |
| Wisconsin | 33 | 82 | **49** |
| Florida | 32[2] | 60 | **28** |
| Maryland | 32 | 58 | **26** |
| Michigan | 32 | 75 | **43** |
| Nebraska | 32 | 79 | **47** |
| North Dakota | 32 | 74 | **42** |
| Utah | 32 | 78 | **46** |
| Illinois | 31 | 62 | **31** |
| Kentucky | 31 | 62 | **31** |
| Oregon | 31 | 83 | **52** |
| Idaho | 30 | 75 | **45** |
| Rhode Island | 29 | 62 | **33** |
| West Virginia | 29 | 73[6] | **44** |
| Alaska | 28 | 74 | **46** |
| Arkansas | 28 | 62 | **34** |
| Georgia | 27 | 80 | **53** |
| Texas | 27 | 85 | **58** |
| Oklahoma | 26 | 74 | **48** |
| South Carolina | 26 | 31 | **5** |
| Tennessee | 26 | 80 | **54** |
| Arizona | 23 | 77 | **54** |
| Alabama | 22 | 77[6] | **55** |
| California | 21 | 39 | **18** |
| Hawaii | 21 | 42 | **21** |
| Louisiana | 20 | 61 | **41** |
| Nevada | 20 | 49 | **29** |
| New Mexico | 19 | 45 | **26** |
| Mississippi | 18 | 87 | **69** |
| District of Columbia | 10 | — | **—** |
| U.S. | 30 | — | — |

Source:  Quality Counts, 2005, No Small Change: Targeting Money Toward Student Performance,
*Education Week.*

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An explanation of how to examine the percent of students at the child's school at each level shows how parents can understand the school's performance relative to other schools in the district and the state. The final part of the report explains the difference between either the Stanford 10 or the TerraNova norm-referenced tests (NRTs) and why they are used for measuring knowledge beyond the Maryland Content Standards measured in the MSA. The report provides a simple explanation of how to interpret the percentile scores of the NRTs.

Home reports on the ALT-MSA explain specifically which students take it and how that decision is made as a part of the child's IEP. Like other home reports, they explain reading and math content standards and refer parents to the Web site for more information. They further help parents understand the role of a portfolio in demonstrating student mastery of the assessed objectives and how those elements of assessment are a reflection of teacher decisions and the use of supports the student typically needs during instruction. As with other reports, they provide explanations of advanced, proficient and basic levels of performance, but use percentages of mastery of skills to delineate among the levels. Just as in other reports, comparisons of ALT-MSA performance are shown for students, the school, the district, and the state. The reporting issue described in Component 3 regarding parent suggestions on the home report, helps parents understand how they can assist their children's learning when the prompts are appropriate for individual students.

## COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### COMMENDATIONS

- **The Maryland State Department of Education is commended for its efforts in test construction, alignment, standards-setting, and validation. The state has effectively transitioned from one system to another while involving educators from across the state within a 14-month period of time.**

- **Department personnel have taken a leadership role in the state in creating a critical mass of districts agreeing to use formative assessments as a basis for ongoing instructional improvement.**

- **Senior leaders in the MSDE are commended for their commitment to ensuring that all students have access to the same instruction and curriculum, and are not ignored through manipulation of caps or numbers of students excluded from counted scores.**

- **The Division of Accountability and Assessment is commended for the amount of readily accessible student performance information available on the MSDE Web site.**

- **Placement of data files on the Web site for ready access by the public and educators demonstrates Maryland's commitment to**

NCLB's intent in terms of public accountability and the use of data as a basis for decision making for continuous school improvement.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 6-1:**

Seek information from other states regarding their use of NAEP results to benefit their students. The MSDE systematically scours the nation for best practices when considering new programs or practices. NAEP is an integral part of NCLB, taking student and teacher time away from instruction. Therefore, developing a means that is likely to contribute to improved student performance as a result of that lost instructional time needs to be undertaken.

**Recommendation 6-2:**

Expand the leadership role state-level administrators have taken in the use of data by developing a plan to make all teachers conversant with using data from the formative instruments provided, as well as from their own and other assessments for instructional and curricular changes.

**Recommendation 6-3:**

Take steps to better ensure instructional validity of the HSA. The state has done an exceptional job of guiding schools and districts to think through how to more effectively use resources and implement changes using documents and processes MSDE has developed for their use and for reporting and monitoring purposes. The Maryland State Department of Education could expand those same practices to instructional validity through additional considerations included in the Master Plan, technical assistance provided to districts, leadership development, teacher professional development, and/or integration into the new draft plan to assist low-performing schools.

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## COMPONENT 7:   TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

**Definition:** States must develop plans with measurable objectives that will ensure that all teachers of core academic subjects are highly qualified.  "Highly Qualified" is defined as holding state certification (alternative state certification is acceptable), holding a bachelor's degree, and having demonstrated subject area competency.  Core academic subjects include English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography.  All newly hired teachers in Title I programs after the start of the 2002-03 school year must meet these requirements.  Additionally, all existing teachers must meet these requirements by the end of the 2005-06 school year.  School districts must use at least five percent of Title I funds for professional development to help teachers become highly qualified. **(Title I, Part A, Subpart 1)**

**Rubric Score: 3.5**

### FINDINGS

The NCLB requirement for all teachers to be "highly qualified" is challenging all states to meet personnel needs in this area.  Many states already have difficulty filling teaching positions with certified staff, and this NCLB component makes this task even more challenging.

Maryland has taken a proactive approach in the state's efforts to ensure a high quality teaching force.  Nonetheless, of the items identified as concerns by MSDE senior staff, "highly qualified" teachers was close to the top of the list.

In the January 2005 NCLB Consolidated State Report on the 2003-04 school year, the data shown in Exhibit 7-1 were included.

**EXHIBIT 7-1**
**CLASSES TAUGHT BY HIGHLY-QUALIFIED TEACHERS**
**2003-04 SCHOOL YEAR**

| SCHOOL TYPE | TOTAL NUMBER OF CORE ACADEMIC CLASSES | NUMBER OF CORE ACADEMIC CLASSES TAUGHT BY HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS | PERCENTAGE OF CORE ACADEMIC CLASSES TAUGHT BY HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS |
|---|---|---|---|
| **All Schools in State** | **164,737** | **110,060** | **66.8%** |
| **By Poverty Status** | | | |
| High-Poverty Schools | 26,998 | 12,578 | 46.6% |
| Low-Poverty Schools | 51,719 | 40,344 | 78.0% |
| **By Level** | | | |
| Elementary (Prek-5) | 46,900 | 34,246 | 73.0% |
| Secondary (6-12) | 117,837 | 75,814 | 64.3% |

Source:  NCLB Consolidated State Report for Maryland, January 2005.

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As seen in Exhibit 7-1, 78 percent of the core academic classes are taught by highly qualified teachers in low-poverty schools compared to about 47 percent in high-poverty schools.

Maryland offers several incentives and strategies for the recruitment and retention of quality teachers. These include:

■ *The Distinguished Scholar Teacher Education Program* - This merit-based award program, available only to Distinguished Scholar Award recipients, is designed to provide additional financial incentives to attract highly able students to Maryland's teacher preparation programs. Each Distinguished Scholar Award recipient receives $3,000 and the Distinguished Scholar Teacher Education Program increases the total award by an additional $3,000.

■ *The Resident Teacher Certificate* – The Resident Teacher Certificate (RTC) is Maryland's alternative route to certification. Through the RTC, local superintendents may recruit, train, and hire career changers and other aspiring teachers who have a bachelor's degree and provide other evidence that they are ready to become highly qualified new teachers. RTC programs are active in several local school systems.

Expansion of alternative paths for the Resident Teacher Certificate is currently under regulatory review, and MSDE has received a federal grant to expand its Troops to Teachers Program in concert with alternative certification.

■ *Quality Teacher Incentive Act of 1999* – The Quality Teacher Incentive Act of 1999 contains provisions that provide a good start to a comprehensive, competitive effort to attract and retain quality teachers. Specifically, it provides a $1,500 tax credit to offset tuition costs for needed graduate work; up to $2,000 a year stipend (dollar for dollar match by local school systems) for teachers who earn national certification; a $1,000 signing bonus for teachers graduating with grade point averages of 3.5 and higher; an expansion of the state-supported teacher mentoring program; extension of the new teacher probationary period from two years to three years; and a $2,000 annual stipend for teachers holding advanced professional certification who work in challenge schools, reconstitution, or reconstitution-eligible schools.

■ *State and Local Aid Program for Certification of Teachers – National Board for Professional Teaching Standards* - The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, established in 1987, sponsors a voluntary, rigorous performance-based certification system to recognize quality teaching. Legislation to create a fee support program to pay the registration fees for teachers seeking certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards was

established by the 1997 session of the Maryland General Assembly. State funds are available to candidates (currently limited to 500 annually) on a local-match basis, with the state funding two-thirds of application fees and local school systems funding one-third. Stipends are available (match funds up to $2,000 for local stipends) to teachers who achieve national certification.

■ *Reemployment of Retired Teachers and Principals* – Enacted by the Maryland General Assembly during the 1999, 2000, and 2001 sessions, these bills permitted certain retired teachers and principals to be exempt from an earnings limitation if they are reemployed as classroom teachers, substitute teachers, teacher mentors, or principals in a reconstitution-eligible school, a local school system declared as a geographic shortage area, or in a subject which has been declared a critical shortage area (allowed to sunset in 2004 but is being reconsidered in 2005).

■ *Maryland's Initiative for New Teachers (MINT)* – This teacher support system was developed to complement local school system supports for new teachers. Developed by a statewide Educator Talent Bank, it provides new teachers with a social and professional network, a series of newsletters designed specifically for new teachers, a user-friendly section of the MSDE Web site for new teachers, longitudinal tracking of their progress as new teachers, and various discounts and incentives with business partners to help meet their personal and professional needs.

■ *Meritorious New Teacher Candidate (MNTC)* – Maryland has collaborated with other states in the mid-Atlantic region and the District of Columbia to develop a special distinction that honors high-performing graduates of teacher education programs. In recognition of graduate high verbal skills and content knowledge, as well as their strong performance as teacher interns, the MNTC designation enhances candidates' state certification and employability. Just as National Board Certification promotes quality among experienced teachers, the use of the MNTC designation promotes quality among new teachers and teacher education programs that prepare them.

In addition to the programs listed above, in October 2003, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted a High, Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) for Maryland's veteran teachers, providing them a convenient method of achieving "highly qualified" status using one of several options under the *No Child Left Behind* Act. Subsequently, in October 2004, the rubrics for teachers of students with special needs were adopted.

*No Child Left Behind* requires that all teachers for core academic subjects be "highly qualified" by the conclusions of the 2005-06 school year. Each school system, along with the state, must report annually the percentage of classes taught by teachers who are not "highly qualified." Parents, community members, and other stakeholders are

interested in this measure of educational rigor, and federal legislation provides for sanctions in the event that annual goals are not met. Capturing and reporting accurate data on teacher qualifications is an important way to demonstrate the excellence flourishing in schools and school systems around the state.

To assist teachers in achieving "highly qualified" status, the Maryland State Department of Education has created a single document that gives teachers the information they need to interpret the requirements of HOUSSE; assess their credentials, coursework, experience, and professional activities; complete the HOUSSE rubric to achieve "highly qualified" status; and submit their completed rubrics to human resources officials in local school systems.

In 2002, a Quality Teacher Work Group was formed to make recommendations to the State Board of Education concerning the following three issues:

- ways to ensure high quality teachers in low-performing schools;

- ways to staff areas of critical teacher shortage; and

- the need for aggressive recruitment and retention strategies.

The Quality Teacher Work Group issued its final report in February 2003. An Implementation Plan, developed in April 2003, identified lead persons responsible for implementing the 26 recommendations and appropriate timelines contained in the report.

As stated in the Introduction of the Final Report of the Teacher Quality Work Group:

*The implications for jurisdictions in the State of Maryland (and nationally) are enormous. The mandates under NCLB will drive the development of an organizational infrastructure to identify, monitor and report the numbers of "unqualified" teachers, as well as the need for resources, development and support of teachers who do not meet the standard. This law provides three choices for teachers to comply with the mandates, take coursework, pass a test, or undergo a uniform state evaluation. The irony is that many excellent teachers with histories of effectiveness, who deliver good instruction on a daily basis, may not be deemed "highly qualified" because Maryland's certification system is not in alignment with the academic content area requirements under NCLB.*

As stated, Maryland's certification system needs to be altered to be in alignment with NCLB.

In a January 26, 2005 update summary on the Implementation Plan prepared for a Legislative Committee, many accomplishments were cited for the 26 recommendations including the following which were completed or partially completed:

- Create a middle school certification endorsement for incumbent teachers who have a minimum of 30 credits in an academic content area OR pass the content portion of Praxis II for that field.

- Create a secondary content certification endorsement for incumbent special education teachers who have a minimum of 30 credits in an academic content area <u>OR</u> pass the content portion of Praxis II for that field.

- Allow professionally certified personnel to receive additional endorsements on their certificate by taking a minimum of 30 credits (appropriately distributed) in a specified content area or passing Praxis II in that content area.

- Endorse the Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) degree and support the immediate writing of outcomes in the secondary content areas, special education, and early childhood.

- Strongly support the development and implementation of the AAT degree in secondary education, special education, and early childhood education.

It is clear that the MSDE has been proactive in converting deficiencies in its current certification system. With regard to performance assessment on the highly-qualified teacher goals, the state is monitoring achievement and appears to be making progress. For example, each state department in Maryland is required to annually report on key goals, objectives, and performance measures as part of the Managing for Results (MFR) initiative. With regard to the strategic planning goal on highly qualified teachers, the results were included in the latest MFR as shown in Exhibit 7-2.

**EXHIBIT 7-2**
**KEY GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

| Goal III: All educators will have the skills to improve student achievement | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Objective 3.1**: By June 30, 2006, all schools will be 100% staffed with highly qualified teachers in core academic classes and with fully certified principals | | | | |
| **PERFORMANCE MEASURES** | **2003 ACTUAL** | **2004 ACTUAL** | **2005 ESTIMATED** | **2006 ESTIMATED** |
| **Inputs:** | | | | |
| Number of teachers | 56,705 | 56,276 | 56,000 | 55,900 |
| Number of principals | 1,370 | 1,380 | 1,390 | 1,400 |
| **Outputs:** | | | | |
| Number of public school teachers obtaining National Board for Teaching Standards certification | 343 | [1] | 500 | 600 |
| Number of Resident Teacher certificates | 150 | 200 | 250 | 350 |
| **Outcomes:** | | | | |
| Percent of core academic classes staffed with highly qualified teachers | 64.0% | 65.0% | 75.0% | 100.0% |
| Percent of schools with fully certificated principals | [2] | [2] | 95.0% | 100.0% |

Source: Maryland State Department of Education, Managing for Results, 2005.
[1]Available December 2004.
[2]Base year information available in FY 2005.

To assist state and school districts in augmenting the supply of highly qualified teachers, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) has created the electronic campus teacher center (**www.theteachercenter.org**).  The Teacher Center provides thousands of electronic courses and programs to assist teachers in becoming highly qualified.  In essence, the Teacher Center provides a one-stop shop of on-line resources to assist teachers in meeting the continuing education requirements of a state or school district.

**COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**COMMENDATIONS**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education is commended for its extensive efforts to comply with the NCLB requirements for highly qualified teachers.  The department has recognized weaknesses in its certification system and implemented major changes.**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education has developed an excellent array of incentives and strategies to improve the recruitment and retention of high qualified teachers.**

- **The HOUSSE document prepared by the Maryland State Department of Education as a guide for Maryland teachers is very comprehensive.**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Recommendation 7-1:**

- **Formalize an agreement with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) or another group or create state-developed, on-line courses and/or programs for teachers to achieve needed competencies to be recognized as highly qualified.  In today's fast-paced society, many teachers will not enroll in college classrooms to achieve high quality status.  On-line course provide an attractive alternative.**

## COMPONENT 8: PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

**Definition:** Paraprofessionals in Title I programs must have at least two years of postsecondary education or, for applicants with a high school diploma, demonstrate necessary skills of a formal state or local academic assessment. Additionally, all paraprofessionals in Title I programs must hold a high school diploma or its equivalent. All new hires in Title I programs as of January 2002, must meet these standards; existing paraprofessionals have four years from January 2002 to comply with the new requirements. However, these requirements do not apply to paraprofessionals used for translation or parent involvement. **(Title I, Part A, Subpart 1)**

The law also specifies that paraprofessionals may not provide instructional support services except under the direct supervision of a teacher.

### Rubric Score: 3.5

### FINDINGS

Paraprofessionals are central to the effective implementation of instructional strategies and academic standards in public schools. NCLB requirements significantly increase the certification standard for personnel in these positions. All paraprofessionals hired after January 2, 2002 must already meet NCLB requirements as a condition of employment, while those paraprofessionals hired prior to January 8, 2002 have four years or until January 8, 2006 to meet NCLB requirements.

Unlike many other states, Maryland offers no state certification program for paraprofessionals. The state does not license, provide professional development requirements, set performance standards, nor guide the evaluation of this group of employees.

The January 2005 Consolidated State Performance Report on the 2003-04 school year showed that 61.9 percent of Title I paraprofessionals were defined as "qualified" according to NCLB stipulations. This report was generated by MSDE based on a survey conducted of the 24 school districts. These data, however, are not maintained in the state database.

Several commercial tests have been developed to address the areas in which paraprofessionals must be assessed. At its June 24-25, 2003 meeting, the State Board of Education adopted the Educational Testing Service's test for instructional paraprofessionals, *ParaPro* with the qualifying score of 455.

Since then, *ParaPro* has served as Maryland's official state assessment for meeting the instructional paraprofessional requirements of the NCLB. Instructional paraprofessionals who participated in Maryland's *ParaPro* pilot in 2002 met the federal requirement if they met the qualifying score of 455 and held a high school diploma or GED.

Several local school systems have been working in partnership with Educational Testing Service (ETS) and are now offering the *ParaPro* on-line. With this partnership option,

local school systems can schedule *ParaPro* on demand for their prospective and veteran instructional paraprofessionals. ETS provides immediate feedback to test takers and local school system clients.

Previous states involved in the CCSSO/MGT assessment process (Hawaii and Michigan) had greater state-level requirements for paraprofessionals. Because of state law, Maryland is not involved in developing performance expectations, portfolio development, evaluations, requirement strategies, and compensation issues for paraprofessionals as is being implemented in other states.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Recommendation 8-1:**

**Modify the state database to obtain and maintain information on qualified paraprofessionals as a more efficient and effective alternative to the annual paraprofessional survey currently being conducted.**

COMPONENT 9:   READING FIRST/EARLY READING FIRST PROGRAMS

**Definition:** NCLB supports scientifically-based reading instruction programs in the early grades under the Reading First Program and in preschool under the Early Reading First Program. Funds are available to states to apply for this grant to help teachers strengthen previous skills and gain new ones in effective reading instruction. **(Title I, Part B, Subparts 1 and 2)**

## Rubric Score: 3.2

### FINDINGS

Early reading and literacy intervention is an effective strategy to promote future student achievement and is an important part of overall NCLB implementation. Federal Reading First grants are viewed by many educators as a positive step in promoting literacy and reading proficiency nationwide. Presently, Maryland's approach to implementing the NCLB requirements related to Reading First is detailed and effective.

Maryland was one of the first states to be awarded federal funds through the Reading Excellence Act, the predecessor of the federal Reading First Program. A thorough analysis of REA activities served as a guide in the development of Maryland's Reading First Initiative (MRFI).

In May 2003, MSDE established the Office of Reading First, and in September 2003, the U.S. Department of Education awarded a Reading First Grant to MSDE. Over a six-year period and subject to the state's successful implementation and congressional appropriations, the grant should provide approximately $65.8 million in Reading First funds to Maryland. The grant should provide the additional resources needed to ensure that all Maryland children are reading at grade level by the end of grade 3.

MSDE's Office of Reading First has a small central staff comprised of a Director, a Coordinator whose primary responsibility is the professional development of K-3 teachers in the State's Reading First schools, an Assessment Specialist, and a Management Associate. Eight Regional Reading Specialists who are funded by the grant are scattered geographically throughout Maryland. Each specialist is assigned to work with a subset of the 42 Reading First elementary schools that are receiving funding and assistance to improve their reading programs.

The MRFI Management Team within the MSDE is chaired by the Director of Office of Reading First, and includes the:

- Coordinator of English Language Arts;
- Coordinator of Early Childhood Education;
- Director of Instructional Professional Leadership;
- Director of Federal Programs;
- Director of Teacher Quality;
- Director of Information Management;

- Specialist in Bilingual Education Programs, and
- Specialist in Special Education.

The Governor and the State Superintendent of Education appointed the State Reading Leadership Team. Its mission is to provide broad oversight of the MRFI goal to have all students reading on grade level by the end of grade 3. The State Reading Leadership Team gave direction to and approved the Reading First proposal that MSDE submitted to the U.S. Department of Education and is assisting in the oversight of the MRFI.

The organizational structure of the MRFI is shown on the following page.

The MRFI requires that the 40 public schools in nine local school systems and the two parochial schools who are receiving funding under the grant administer a common set of screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic, and outcome assessments. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) were selected for screening, progress monitoring, and partial outcome assessment. The SAT-10 will provide additional outcome information for students in grades 1 and 2, since the state testing program does not begin until grade 3. DIBELS are brief, individually administered tests of critical early reading skills. Screening and progress monitoring will be administered three times a year, at a minimum. More frequent monitoring may be required for children who receive more intensive reading instruction because they are experiencing difficulties in learning to read. Outcome assessments are administered once each year.

The MRFI provided the incentive to convene a statewide panel called the Maryland Committee for Selecting Core Reading Programs. The outcome of the Committee's work is a final report that notes critical areas of strengths and weaknesses among seven top rated core reading programs for kindergarten through grade three that meet the requirements of SBRR and are focused on the five components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. From September 17 through October 15, 2003, the Committee met seven times, devoting one full day to evaluate each of the core reading programs. The Committee's final report was published in November 2003. It provides extensive guidance to local school systems in Maryland who are searching for effective core reading programs that will best meet the needs of their school's students and teachers.

Maryland's approved application for funding under Reading First specifies that every Reading First school must implement one of the seven approved core reading programs. However, the final report is expected to provide guidance to all of Maryland LEA's and schools in the selection of instructional materials for beginning reading. The final report emphasizes that these core reading programs are to be implemented with fidelity to directions and guidelines specified in the Teacher's Editions. Implementing a core reading program with fidelity does not permit layering (i.e., substituting instructional elements or materials that are not part of the program).

Maryland requires and funds a highly-trained, full-time reading coach in each MRFI school. The in-school coach is the first line of technical assistance—an always-present, readily available source of help to K-3 teachers. The coaches' full-time job is to improve reading instruction in their school. They have no direct classroom duties or administrative responsibilities outside the reading program.

## Reading First Organizational Chart

**STATE LEADERSHIP**

**Reading First State Leadership Team**
- Governor
- General Assembly
- State Superintendent
- Stakeholders

**MSDE**
- Office of the State Superintendent

Office of Reading First

DOI ◄► PRIM ◄► C&A ◄► DOSSS ◄► DLD ◄► SEEIS ◄► OAP

**DOI** = Division of Instruction
**PRIM** = Division of Planning, Results, & Information Management
**C&A** = Division of Certification & Accreditation
**DOSSS** = Division of Student & School Services

**DLD** = Division of Leadership Development
**SPED** = Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services
**OAP** = Office of Academic Policy

**STATE MANAGEMENT**

Office of Reading First

Reading First Management Team

Reading First Evaluation Team

DIRECTOR

- Coordinator
- Assessment Specialist
- Teacher Quality Specialist

Management Associate

8 Reading First Regional Specialists

**DIRECT SERVICES**

Regional Specialist

LSS Coordinator(s)

Reading First Project Administrator(s)

Principals

In-school Reading Coaches

Classroom Teachers

**EXTERNAL EVALUATION**

Source: www.msde.state.md.us/docs/ReadingFirst.doc  p.84

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Reading coaches are responsible for:

- working with K-3, ESL, and special education teachers to improve their reading instruction, including modeling lessons and devising strategies for hard-to-reach students;

- helping to administer DIBELS assessments required of MRFI schools as well as assist in scheduling and administering SBRR diagnostic assessments used to track student progress and identify individual student needs;

- helping teachers analyze assessment results and use these results to identify SBRR strategies to modify instruction to make sure that no child is left behind; and

- offering on-going professional development through grade level meetings, coaching services, and in-service workshops.

Senior leadership staff at MSDE that we surveyed had very positive opinions about the MRFI.

- No one perceived that the MSDE was having difficulties meeting regulations or was not in compliance with NCLB state requirements regarding the Reading First State Grant.

- No one doubted that the implementation of the MRFI would benefit students.

- When asked to identify MSDE's greatest strengths regarding implementation of NCLB, one senior staff member noted the strong support for the MRFI from the State Superintendent of Education.

Our review of the current implementation of the MRFI found only one problem. All grants given to states for Reading First Programs require contracting with an external evaluator to provide an independent assessment of the implementation and outcomes of the grant. Maryland's approved grant application to the U.S. Department of Education included plans to contract for an external evaluation. However, the Request for Proposals for the external evaluation will not issued by MSDE until April 2005. Since the evaluation contract is unlikely to begin before June 2005, the schedule for following evaluation deliverables noted in MSDE's approved application is not being met and will need to be modified:

- a June 30, 2004 first year evaluation reports to MSDE and to the participating schools that assesses initial program implementation; and

- a June 30, 2005 second year evaluation report to MSDE and to the participating schools that assesses program implementation, student achievement and impact of professional development.

Additionally, the absence of an external evaluation during most of the first two years of the program has prevented the opportunity to identify school-level implementation problems and remedies that the state and local MRFI staff may not have realized and addressed.

## COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### COMMENDATIONS

- **The MSDE has an excellent Reading First Plan for all third grade students to be reading at grade level within six years. In developing the Plan, MSDE made good use of strengths and weaknesses that were identified in the earlier implementation of state's Reading Excellence Act Grant Programs.**

- **By establishing an Office of Reading First with its Director reporting directly to the State Superintendent, MSDE has demonstrated the priority it is giving to the Reading First requirements of NCLB.**

- **The use of Reading First Regional Reading Specialists and in-school Reading Coaches is an effective capacity-building model that promotes programmatic quality and self-sufficiency.**

- **The November 2003 Final Report of the Committee for Selecting Core Reading Programs provides Reading First schools as well as schools throughout the state with critical information that they need to select and implement core reading programs that are based on scientific reading research and contain the key elements of effective reading programs.**

### RECOMMENDATION

**Recommendation 9-1:**

**Give priority to "fast tracking" the process for selecting and contracting with an external evaluator for the MRFI. The delay in issuing the RFP for the external evaluation already has resulted in no external evaluation reports being produced for the first year of the MRFI implementation and is likely to delay the reports on the second year program implementations and outcomes.**

## COMPONENT 10: TRANSFERABILITY

**Definition:** NCLB allows for the transferring of certain funds to programs and activities that have proven to be the most effective. This provision allows states to transfer up to 50 percent of funds it receives for state-level, non-administrative activities among the following programs:

- Improving Teacher Quality State Grants
- State Grants for Innovative Programs
- Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities State Grants
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers

The law also allows a state to transfer up to 50 percent of the funds it receives from these programs to carry out Title I, Part A activities. However, no Title I funds may be transferred to other programs. **(Title I, Part A, Subpart 2)**

### Rubric Score: 1

**FINDINGS**

The intent of the transferability provision under NCLB is to provide states flexibility in moving federal funds into other effective Title I initiatives. This provision is a radical departure from previous federal policy, and possibly as a consequence, is to date, one of the most overlooked portions of NCLB. Many states have not yet taken advantage of the transferability option, expending their efforts, instead in other areas of NCLB requirements.

The CCSSO/MGT consultant team found that, at the state level, Maryland has chosen not to avail itself of the flexibility provided in the transferability provisions of NCLB legislation at the time of the site visit. Some districts have reportedly used the option, however. After enactment of NCLB, the MSDE developed a PowerPoint presentation with details of new federal regulations that was part of the initial presentation of information related to NCLB. Multiple MSDE division leaders used it for presentations to their district-level counterparts in federal programs, superintendents, assistant superintendents, and local school boards.

MSDE administrators report that, when they collectively identify an initiative that might require formally exercising transferability provisions, they instead ascertain potential resources within individual divisions and leverage corporate resources to meet the needed goal. Furthermore, two of the programs (Title I and Title IV) were already located in the Division of Student and School Services, so an organizational structure was already in place for considering and merging goals of those two programs.

The state strategic plan, *Achievement Matter Most,* has five goal areas. Regarding the issue of using the transferability clause of NCLB, decisions that are made by MSDE in terms of funding, are tied to attainment of those targets by pooling state and federal funds. That approach was used, for instance in creating school recognition criteria for both Title I and non-Title I schools, and in development of assessments and the

database for MSDE's Web site. The state also submitted a consolidated federal plan to USDOE integrating all federal programs.

That state-level approach models Maryland's approach to strategic planning for districts. They submit five-year Master Plans that are updated annually. The unique format for the Master Plan began in 2003 with implementation of provisions of the Bridge to Excellence Act. The Master Plan became the vehicle by which the state consolidated federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), state and local goals into one comprehensive plan that is submitted annually to the MSDE for review before final submission to the State Board of Education for approval. Thus, because planning for all state and federal programs is interwoven, resources are leveraged and targeted to areas of the greatest need without a great need for transferring funds even at the district level. There is evidence at the state level that all funds are not automatically being channeled to Title I schools, but that there is a thoughtful effort to direct dollars to schools deemed either most in need or most willing to embrace change.

Once received at MSDE, each plan undergoes a two-fold comprehensive review. State managers of federal programs conduct technical reviews to determine that the plans are effective and in compliance with federal requirements. Additionally, they are submitted to a panel review of a cross-section of educators from various divisions in the MSDE who examine them with regard to their sufficiency to meet the needs of the local systems from each of their job-related perspectives and an analysis of district data. When those two examinations are completed, a compliance report and a plan review report are developed.

To nurture implementation of the Master Plans within all districts, ESEA Program Managers meet monthly to discuss issues relative to planning and technical assistance as well as meeting annually to more comprehensively discuss Master Plan issues. Throughout the year, each Program Manager monitors programs in the districts. The Assistant Superintendent for the Division of Student and School Services chairs joint meetings and is in charge of evaluation of master plans and ensuring that school district and state program managers are on the same page. Another means of plan monitoring and updated technical assistance occurs in the monthly meetings that take place between MSDE staff and assistant superintendents as well as with superintendents. Furthermore, technical assistance is provided when districts request it.

In contrast to the lack of use of the provision in the MSDE, interestingly, 72 percent of respondents to the CCSSO/MGT survey stated that they either *agree* or *strongly agree* that the state was in compliance with the requirement and 47 percent either *disagree* or *strongly disagree* that the state would have difficulty complying. With respect to the question of whether or not it would benefit students, though, there were more mixed feelings with 36 percent stating that they neither *agree* nor *disagree*, 40 percent *agreeing* and only 8 percent *strongly agreeing*. The ambivalence on the question of student benefit may either be because of the lack of use of the provision or because respondents feel that the processes it is currently using are effective without the need for formal transfers of funds. It could also be that they have not considered it as a means of offering flexibility in doing things beyond customary approaches with the use of federal funds.

In discussing the question of availability of program evaluations that might indicate a suitable use of the transferability provisions if the MSDE chose to exercise it, the CCSSO/MGT team found that, in many instances, the state conducts ongoing evaluations of programs it oversees and funds, and requires districts to submit at least semi-annual progress reports as well as tendering rationale for diverging from originally stated program goals and activities.  Specific examples are:

- The Division of Student and School Services has devised a simplified Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) Reporting Format for schools to use for start-up and end-of-year reporting.  The document merges the 11 national CSR components into four broad, but inclusive "criteria":  (1) student learning and achievement; (2) students' opportunities to learn; (3) activities that support the changes in practice and can be sustained; and (4) comprehensiveness of design.  In each section, leading questions guide school staffs through descriptions of their current practice, desired practice and rating progress toward the desired goal with a rubric.  To ensure consistency among report reviewers, a scoring rubric has been developed with specific examples of marginal, adequate or superior examples of relevant considerations such as: (1) current and desired performance regarding student learning and achievement; (2) current and envisioned practice related to opportunities to learn and how the envisioned practice would be evaluated; (3) examples of improvement strategies that would build staff capacity, involve parents, strengthen management practices, address resources and provide ongoing evaluation processes to inform the reform effort, each with appropriate rubrics for evaluating strategies; and (4) marginal, adequate or superior descriptions of integration and alignment of curriculum, instruction, evaluation and professional development, among other critical elements.  Each section is assigned possible points and ranges guide determination of level of successful implementation.

- The Title I School Improvement Grant Application has aligned Title I and NCLB components to carefully walk school personnel through careful consideration of all elements of change that should lead to improved student achievement in reading and math, and eliminate the achievement gap.  The guiding questions relating to needs assessments, plan of operation, measuring progress, coordination of resources and sustainability, management plan, and budget narrative and budget are aligned with federal and state requirements.  Each section clearly describes its substance and expectations for its content and practical use by the school. In addition to guiding questions in each area, sample acceptable responses are provided against which schools can evaluate their own plans.  As with the CSR reports, a review rubric has been developed to ensure consistency in plan evaluation at the state level.

Many of the programs that were identified in discussions with the team had clear processes for monitoring and evaluating them not only at the end of the year, but also throughout the year. Additionally, processes and reports were in place to require contemplation and justification before alterations to grant implementation plans are submitted to the Department. In many cases, projects were either not re-funded when schools did not make anticipated progress, when programs were not implemented with fidelity, or when schools did not show a commitment to more than the funds up front. There was evidence that the MSDE takes an organization-wide approach to grants management in order to ensure consistency of process. Processes the MSDE has put in place for grant and program administration promote uniform use of evaluative information across the Department. Each division has a Finance Officer who reports to Business Services; they also use the same auditing team. When a major issue arises such as the Bridge to Excellence evaluation that impacts multiple programs, cross-divisional teams are assembled to develop the Request for Proposals (RFP) and supervise the entire process. However, no interviews revealed nor was confirmation provided that such evaluative instruments are used as a basis to consider the flexibility offered in the transferability provision of NCLB.

**COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**COMMENDATIONS**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education has been diligent in building accountability into documents required to be submitted by districts while, at the same time, using evaluative reporting instruments as guides to assist school personnel in linking the report to actionable strategies likely to enhance student achievement.**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education has created cross-divisional processes to ensure that, without formal adoption of transferability provisions, federal funds are cross-divisionally channeled into programs that have proven their merit in terms of impact on student performance.**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Recommendation 10-1:**

**Periodically review processes and program evaluation information within the MSDE, specifically in terms of the need to formally develop procedures for enacting the NCLB transferability provision. By keeping the transferability option before them as they consider evaluation results and MSDE priorities, staff will ensure that all available options are exercised to direct fund sources to programs which are documented to be effective.**

## COMPONENT 11: DATA MANAGEMENT

**Definition:** The NCLB data management indicators are designed to help state education agencies understand the business functions that support good data management and areas in need of improvement. The major principle that underlies these indicators is— data are an asset to SEAs and they are essential for addressing NCLB requirements. Additionally, good data can help improve instruction and, therefore, is very important to SEAs. Since responding to the NCLB requirements necessitates that SEAs first consider existing data in addition to possible additions, these indicators are written to broadly address data management as it relates to the entire data resource at a state education agency. **(All provisions of NCLB are supported by effective data management)**

**Rubric Score: 3.4**

**FINDINGS**

Long before NCLB, the MSDE managed and regularly reported data to the public in an exemplary manner that enabled easy access to information at the state, school system, and school level. MSDE continues to build upon its tradition of having one of the best education data management and reporting systems among the nation's state education agencies.

MSDE uses two different Web sites to communicate vast amounts of data and information to the citizens of Maryland and to others throughout the country and world who are interested in Maryland's education initiatives and their outcomes.

The www.MDK12.org Web site, also known as the *School Improvement in Maryland Site,* was created to help schools analyze their state assessment data and guide them in making data-based instructional decisions that would support improved performance for all students. Educators from across the state contributed to the resources of this site. Its development originally was funded as part of a research grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). After the OERI monies were expended, MSDE provided funding for maintenance and further development.

This Web site is divided into four major sections:

- The **Understanding Standards, Assessments, and AYP Section** helps stakeholders better understand the history and intent of the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) Program, including how it was developed, how the standards are assessed, and what sample assessments look like for both MSA and the new High School Assessment (HSA).

- The **Leading the School Improvement Process Section** guides principals and others who are charged with leading their schools

through the school improvement process. It contains a checklist of action steps and key questions, a sample calendar of activities, and exercises to use with staff and other stakeholders as the school works through the process.

- The **Analyzing and Using Data Section** guides school improvement teams and other stakeholders through a process to analyze their MSA data and identify instructional areas that need improvement. This section also provides individual school, school system, or state report cards that chart progress toward attainment of MSA standards.

- The **Teaching and Assessing the Content Standards Section** offers teachers instructional strategies that support success on the MSA, tips from content specialists, selected research studies, the MSDE-developed Exemplars, and interviews with school principals and district leaders who have made progress toward state standards.

Since 1991, MSDE's data management has enabled the provision of performance reports on Maryland's schools, school systems, and the state as a whole. These performance reports, known as *Report Cards* have evolved and last year included data on the MSA, now that it has replaced MSPAP as the state's assessment program.

To enable widespread and cost effective use of *Report Card* data, MSDE manages another Web site www.MDreportcard.org . This Web site presents a collection of data that are compiled annually to provide information to support school improvement efforts and to provide accountability at the state, school system, and school level for reporting educational progress. The site is interactive, allowing users to easily find information at any of the three levels for which data are reported. Exhibit 11-1 shows a computer screen view of the wealth of data that are managed through this Web site.

In addition to the Web sites described above, MSDE makes extensive use of on-line interactive data collection and reporting systems for that enable teachers or administrators to streamline the processes for:

- ordering test booklets for the statewide testing programs;

- preparing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for special education students; and

- teacher certification.

During our site visit and interviews, we often found staff computer screens set to information and data available from the Web sites discussed above. Staff typically used these sites to obtain data or to pull information to answer our questions during the interviews. Thus, the MSDE staff makes frequent use of data managed through these well-designed and data-rich Web sites.

**EXHIBIT 11-1**
**COMPUTER SCREEN VIEW OF WWW.MDREPORTCARD.ORG**

Only two (8%) of the 26 members of the MSDE senior staff who participated in our survey did not agree that MSDE was now in compliance with NCLB state requirements for data management. Only one senior staffer did not believe that NCLB's data management requirements would benefit students. A relatively small percentage of the staff (21%) thought that MSDE will have difficulty complying with NCLB requirements for data management. Similarly, about one-fifth of the survey participants included data management among the three areas of NCLB for which they perceived that MSDE is least prepared to comply and will pose the greatest challenges for MSDE.

Comments offered by senior staff in response to open-ended questions of the survey demonstrate some of their concerns:

- One person was concerned that MSDE did not *…have the staff needed to stay on top of the data analyses required to best understand the impact of learning and instruction as measured by state tests.*

- Another commented that *We are struggling …with maintaining and improving our data management systems.*

- Another was greatly concerned about *…handling the incredible increase in student data; developing a data system to capture and analyze the myriad pieces associated with 'highly qualified' teacher requirements.*

Although five senior staff named data management as one of the areas of NCLB in which MSDE is least prepared to comply currently, another three senior staff had an opposite opinion and thought that MSDE was most prepared to comply with NCLB's data management requirements. Two of the 15 senior staff who identified areas were NCLB would provide the greatest benefits for MSDE identified data management as one of those beneficial areas. These staff and others offered some very positive comments about MSDE's data management in relation to NCLB requirements:

- *We are data rich and involve local school systems in all aspects of the assessment system.*

- *The Department has a wonderful data collection system and Web site to report the results of testing, etc.*

- *Maryland has a strong history of accountability, student performance reporting, and data-based instructional supports that translate well to NCLB.*

- *Outstanding testing and data management practices with some history in these areas.*

- *NCLB reinforced for all stakeholders in the state that the policy direction set a decade earlier to move to a system of testing, data-*

*driven decision making, and true rewards and consequences had been the correct policy.*

■ *The opportunity to create a data collection/management system on teacher participation in high quality professional development* that would improve teacher professional development was cited as the most significant benefit to the implementation of NCLB in Maryland by one senior staff member.

Thus, a variety of perceptions exist within MSDE about the agency's ability to comply with the data management requirements of NCLB.

MSDE identified four key areas for which it had unmet needs regarding data management. These unmet needs are directly related to the requirements of NCLB and are described below.

1. **Upgrading the Educational Data Warehouse**. NCLB's demands for more data at more grade levels and by more subgroupings of students has strained the electronic storage and retrieval capacity of the educational data warehouse. Upgrading is needed to allow information to be gathered, analyzed, and reported in a timely manner.

2. **Implementing a Unique Student ID**. Because Maryland students' identification numbers are assigned by the local school systems, they are not unique. Thus, it is not presently possible to track the progress of students who move from one system to another during their school careers. It also is not possible to track individual student's progress when they move from secondary to the postsecondary schools in the state. The variety of identification algorithms used by the 24 Maryland systems also makes it cost-prohibitive at the state level to track the progress of individual students even when they remain within the same local school system.

3. **Modifying Data Definitions**. Preparing the MSDE's data warehouse need to be prepared to meet the race/ethnicity category changes that are currently being developed by the federal government and will need to be used in future reporting to the U.S. Department of Education.

4. **Improving How MSA Data Are Reported to Parents**. Because the MSA testing program is new, replaces the former MSPAP, and must provide information on many subgroups of students, reporting test results to parents requires new and continually improving processes.

During the last budget cycle, MSDE requested $3.5 million to meet the needs noted above, and the State Board of Education approved the budget request. However, this funding request was not included in the Governor's budget.

**COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**COMMENDATIONS**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education is commended for its exemplary management and reporting of data on the progress of Maryland students long before the requirements of NCLB.**

- **The MSDE Web site provides customized reports and information to stakeholders at the state, local school system, and school levels.**

- **The MSDE Web site provides local systems with the assistance they need to analyze and correctly interpret the results of state assessments of students' progress.**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Recommendation 11-1:**

**Continue attempts to convince the Governor and the General Assembly of Maryland's need for additional resources for improvements to the educational data warehouse, for a statewide unique student identification system, and for ongoing refinements of reporting MSA results to parents.**

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## COMPONENT 12: PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

**Definition:** Students in schools served under Title I that have been identified for improvement for at least two consecutive years must be given the option to transfer to another public school within the school district, including a public charter school, that has not been identified for improvement. Additionally, school districts must provide transportation to the new school consistent with the NCLB requirements. **(Title I, Part A, Section 1116)**

**Rubric Score: 3.2**

### FINDINGS

The provision for public school choice under NCLB can be a beneficial tool to not only move students out of persistently low-performing schools, but also to motivate low-performing schools to improve or lose needed per-pupil funding. This provision is currently creating difficulties for states and school districts across the country as parents try to place their children in higher-performing schools and school districts are attempting to manage school transfers.

For the 2004-05 school year in Maryland, 55,755 (6.4%) of the state's 869,113 public school students were eligible for the public school choice option. However, only three percent of the parents of eligible students requested that their children be transferred. Some requests (8.5%) for transfers were not approved, either because these requests were received after the deadline for submission or because space for additional students was not available in the schools where the parents wished to transfer their children. Thus, in 2004-05 in Maryland, only 1,548 students actually were transferred to another school under this public school choice provision of NCLB. MSDE staff that we interviewed reported that parents' reluctance to have their children in schools farther away from their homes or communities is the primary reason for the low participation in the public school choice option.

Ten of the state's 24 local school systems had one or more low-performing schools in 2004-05, thus making their students eligible for the public school choice option. Of the 108 low-performing schools 64 of them (59%) were in Baltimore City Schools.

Following its analyses of data at the end of each school year, MSDE identifies the low-performing schools by mid-June. Thus, early each summer, local school systems are able to notify those parents whose children are eligible for the public school choice option. However, it is the parents' responsibility to request that their children be transferred to another school in the local school system that is not performing poorly. Local school systems must offer parents the choice of more than one school and may not use lack of capacity as a reason to deny students the option to transfer. The local school system also must provide transportation for the student to attend the chosen school.

MSDE staff in the Program Improvement and Family Support Branch conducts annual compliance visits to all local school systems to ensure that they are following all provisions of the public school choice component of NCLB. Staff also assists the local school systems with the wording of the letters that the systems send to parents notifying them of their school choice options. Refinements are sometimes needed to ensure that the letters communicate in clear language that is understandable to parents and not filled with technical or legal language.

At its Web site, MSDE also provides a very informative PowerPoint presentation about the public school choice component of NCLB. However, finding the link to this presentation is not easy, especially for parents. Surprisingly, it is not one of the links on the "Resources for Parents" section of the home page of MSDE's primary Web site: www.marylandpublicschools.org.

Results of the survey of MSDE senior staff that the CCSSO/.MGT team conducted revealed that no one disagreed that MSDE was currently in compliance with NCLB state requirements regarding the public school choice component. However, the public school choice component of NCLB was one of only two components for which less than a majority of MSDE senior staff believed that its implementation would benefit students.


**COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**COMMENDATIONS**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education is commended for its compliance with all state-level responsibilities for implementing the public school choice component of NCLB and for ensuring that local school systems are providing parents with the option of transferring their children out of low-performing schools.**

- **The Department identifies low-performing schools in early June each year, thus giving parents sufficient time to decide whether or not to exercise their option to have their children transferred to a better school at the beginning of the next school year.**


**RECOMMENDATION**

**Recommendation 12-1:**

**Create a prominent link to the PowerPoint presentation about public school choice at the "Resources for Parents" Section of MSDE's Web site. An excellent PowerPoint presentation currently resides at the Web site. However, it is difficult for parents to find and belongs in the "Resources for Parents" Section.**

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## COMPONENT 13: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Definition:** Under NCLB, school districts must use at least five percent of Tile I funds for professional development to help teachers become highly qualified. Additionally, schools identified for improvement must spend at least 10 percent of their Title I Part A funds on professional development for the school's teachers and principal that directly addresses the academic achievement problem that caused the school to be identified. Additionally, states must provide professional development to support other provisions of NCLB. **(Title I, Part A, Section 1111 and 1116; Title I Part A, Subpart 1; Title I Part B, Subparts 1 and 2; and Title II, Part D, Subparts 1 and 2)**

**Rubric Score: 3.2**

### FINDINGS

Professional development requirements permeate NCLB regulations and federal education programs. Comprehensive professional development promotes effective understanding and implementation of NCLB requirements as well as related state initiatives. Thus, the implementation of effective professional development activities is central to the fulfillment of NCLB requirements in Maryland.

Both before and since the passage of NCLB, Maryland has done extensive and fruitful work to improve the quality of professional development for this state's teachers. The history of this work has been well-documented in a recent report from which key sections are abstracted below.

In January 2003, State Superintendent of Schools, Nancy S. Grasmick, convened the Maryland Teachers Professional Development Advisory Council. The Council's formation was the first step in the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Initiative, an effort designed to confront the challenges of providing high-quality professional development for all of Maryland's teachers and ensuring that professional development is fully aligned with local and state priorities for improving student learning. Specifically, the Council was charged with:

- examining state and local teacher professional development policies and programs;

- recommending ways to improve the quality of professional development in the state; and

- articulating standards for high quality professional development to guide the improvement efforts.

During the course of its work, the Council met 18 times. The Council reviewed a variety of research and other information on professional development in Maryland and elsewhere. The Council also examined numerous professional development standards from other states, school districts, and educational reform entities and other organizations.

In December 2004, the Council released its report: *Helping Teachers Help All Students: The Imperative for High Quality Professional Development.* The report presented the final version of the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards. They are summarized in Exhibit 13-1.

**EXHIBIT 13-1**
**STANDARDS OF HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

| Content Standards | |
|---|---|
| Standard 1: Content knowledge and quality teaching | Effective professional development deepens all teachers' content knowledge and the knowledge and skills necessary to provide effective instruction and assess student progress |
| Standard 2: Research-based | Effective professional development ensures that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to apply research to decision making |
| Standard 3: Collaboration | Effective professional development ensures that teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to collaborate with others to improve instruction |
| Standard 4: Diverse learning needs | Effective professional development ensures that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to meet the diverse learning needs of all of their students |
| Standard 5: Student learning environments | Effective professional development ensures that all teachers are able to create safe, secure, and supportive learning environments for all students |
| Standard 6: Family involvement | Effective professional development ensures that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to involve families and other community members as active partners in their children's education |
| **Process Standards** | |
| Standard 7: Data-driven | Effective teacher professional development relies on rigorous analysis of data |
| Standard 8: Evaluation | Rigorous evaluations assess the impact of professional development on teaching and student learning |
| Standard 9: Design and teacher learning | Effective professional development content and process reflect best practices in workplace learning and in-depth understanding of how and why adults learn |

Source: http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/DF957230-EC07-4FEE-B904-7FEB176BD978/3969/PDACFinalReport1122043.pdf

The Council identified 17 indicators of quality professional development. These indicators encompass four key clusters that together define "quality" in terms of professional development for teachers. The 17 indicators of quality are displayed in Exhibit 13-2.

To determine the extent to which Maryland teachers have been engaging in "high quality" professional development, MSDE contracted with an independent firm to conduct surveys of all Maryland teachers, and 55 percent responded on the latest (2004) survey. The surveys asked teachers to report on the frequency of their participation in the five categories of professional development (see Exhibit 13-3) that reflect the four clusters of indicators shown in Exhibit 13-2. The presence of at least 15 of the 17 indicators of quality on a teacher's survey responses for a particular professional development activity was the criterion used to say that the teacher had participated in "high quality professional development".

**EXHIBIT 13-2**
**INDICATORS OF QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
**FOR MARYLAND TEACHERS**

| Planning and Governance | Learning Opportunities |
|---|---|
| ■ Determine content | ■ Explanations of key concepts and theories |
| ■ Determine learning activities | ■ Demonstrations of skills and strategies |
| ■ Set expectations for outcomes | ■ Opportunities to practice skills and strategies |
| ■ Participate in evaluation of course as professional learning | ■ Feedback and assessment of understanding of key concepts and theories |
| | ■ Feedback and assessment of mastery of skills and strategies |

| Follow Up | Benefits |
|---|---|
| ■ Ongoing opportunities for conversations | ■ Increased knowledge of subject(s) |
| ■ Explanations/presentations | ■ Increased academic rigor |
| ■ Demonstrations of skills and strategies | ■ More differentiated instruction |
| ■ Feedback and Assessment | ■ Ability to contribute to planned improvement efforts |

Source: http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/DF957230-EC07-4FEE-B904-7FEB176BD978/3969/PDACFinalReport1122043.pdf

**EXHIBIT 13-3**
**CATEGORIES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR MARYLAND TEACHERS**

| | |
|---|---|
| ■ **Graduate Courses** | ■ Courses at the masters, doctoral, or advanced studies level available in any public or private institution of higher education in Maryland or any other state |
| ■ **Workshops, Institutes, and Academies** | ■ An activity that includes multiple sessions that add up to at least a day. These activities include events that are planned and scheduled in advance and may take place during the regular school schedule or after school, on the weekend, or during the summer. They may also be residential programs that last for several days or a few weeks. These events may take place in schools, the district office, some other central facility, or on a college or university campus. |
| ■ **Coaching or Mentoring Programs** | ■ The experience of working with a coach or mentor assigned to work with you as part of a new teacher induction program or a formal coaching or mentoring program sponsored by the district or some other entity. |
| ■ **Job-Embedded Professional Development Activities** | ■ These activities often take place during the regular school day or before or after school. Typically they involve working with colleagues, including school-based professional development staff. |
| ■ **Conferences or Professional Meetings** | ■ These events include annual meetings of professional associations or other organizations, as well as special purpose events that may occur only once. In many cases, these events will take place out of the district or perhaps even outside of Maryland. |

Source: http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/DF957230-EC07-4FEE-B904-7FEB176BD978/3969/PDACFinalReport1122043.pdf

Analyses of the 2004 survey responses found that 44 percent of Maryland's public school teachers had participated in "high quality professional development". Further, the survey report estimated that 87 percent of Maryland's teachers had participated in one or more of the five categories of professional development that reflected 10 or more of the indicators of quality. Given these encouraging findings, MSDE's *Managing for Results* Report for Fiscal Year 2006, estimates that the percentages of teachers engaging in high quality professional development will be 65 percent and 90 percent for 2005 and 2006, respectively.

After presenting extensive data on the current state of teacher participation in high quality professional development, and knowing the state's goals for increasing the participation rate each year, the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Advisory Council made numerous recommendations for improving teacher professional development. Because MSDE influences the quality and availability of teacher professional development by approving courses and other learning activities for continuing professional development (CPD) credit, the Council recommended that MSDE should:

> *…modify the continuing professional development (CPD) credit approval process to ensure that all professional learning activities that generate CPD credits meet the new teacher professional development standards.*

The Council's report went even further by recommending that:

> *MSDE contribute to the development of a statewide system of teacher professional development by ensuring that all of its policies, programs, and initiatives that address teacher professional development explicitly reflect and model the new standards and demand accountability for meeting them.*

NCLB requires states to report annually on teacher participation in high quality professional development. In the baseline reporting year of 2002-03, only 19 states fulfilled this requirement. Maryland was the only state that based the figures it reported on data collected directly from teachers. MSDE reported that 33 percent of its teachers had engaged in high quality professional development in 2002-03. This figure increased to 44 percent in the 2003-04 school year.

Our surveys of MSDE senior staff revealed that only one of the 26 survey respondents did not believe that the professional development requirements of NCLB would benefit students. Over one-fourth of the staff who expressed opinions about the impacts of NCLB listed professional development as one of three components of NCLB that would provide the greatest benefits for MSDE. Although five senior staff members included professional development among the three components of NCLB with which they believed MSDE was least prepared to currently comply, only two senior staff perceived that MSDE was not currently in compliance with NCLB state requirements regarding professional development for educators.

## COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### COMMENDATIONS

- **The State Superintendent is commended for convening the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Advisory Council and having some of her staff serve on this council for two years to produce an exemplary report that provides guidance to the MSDE and to local school systems.**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education is one of a minority of states that met the NCLB baseline year requirement to report teacher participation in high quality professional development.**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education is the first state to use data collected directly from teachers to determine extent to which they are engaging in high quality professional development.**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education is commended for using a rigorous definition of high quality professional development that has shown an increase of teacher participation in high quality professional development from 33 percent in 2002-03 to 44 percent the following school year.**

### RECOMMENDATION

**Recommendation 13-1:**

Implement all recommendations that are directed toward MSDE in the December 2004 report of the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Advisory Council. The Council worked for two years and received input from more than 900 Maryland teachers, school and district administrators, local professional developers, and college and university faculty. The comprehensiveness of the Council's recommendations and their direct relationship to NCLB's requirement for high quality professional development make no additional recommendations from the CCSO/MGT team necessary.

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## COMPONENT 14: SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

**Definition:** NCLB requires that school districts obtain supplemental educational services for students attending a school not meeting AYP for the third consecutive year. Supplemental educational services can be during non-school hours, from a public- or private-sector provider that has been approved by the state. Additionally, school districts must provide transportation to the service provider. Faith-based organizations are also eligible to apply for state approval. **(Title I, Part A, Section 1116)**

**Rubric Score: 3.4**

### FINDINGS

The term "supplemental educational services" (SES) means tutoring and other supplemental academic enrichment services that are in addition to instruction provided during the school day. High quality, research-based SES are programs specifically designed to increase the academic achievement of eligible children on the academic assessments required under NCLB Section 1111 and to attain proficiency in meeting the State's academic achievement standards [NCLB §1116(e)(12)(C)]. The provision of supplemental educational services under the requirements of NCLB is widely regarded as potentially the most powerful aspect of the federal legislation. Although this provision is a component of school consequences that follow the failure to attain adequate yearly progress (AYP), it is also meant to serve as an effective school improvement mechanism.  In the current (2004-05) school year, there are 115 public schools in Maryland that are required to provide supplemental educational services to qualified students. In the previous school year (2003-04), 82 schools were required to provide supplemental educational services. Thus, the number of schools providing supplemental educational services this year has increased by 40 percent. Eligible students who elected to take advantage of the public school choice option described in an earlier section of this report are not eligible for supplemental educational services.

Title I, Part A of NCLB regulations requires all state education agencies to develop an approved list of supplemental educational services providers for use in all school districts that have one or more Title I schools that have not met AYP standards for a third consecutive year.  MSDE maintains an approved list of providers and posts it on its Web site. For the current (2004-05) school year, there are 37 approved providers of supplemental educational services. Although the current listing is displayed on the Web site, at the time this report was developed, the link to this listing was incorrectly labeled to show that it was updated on March 1, 2004. In reality, the listing was updated following the selection of approved providers in Fall 2004 and may again be updated in the near future.

MSDE selects its approved providers through a Request for Qualifying Providers (RFQ) process. Local school systems then enter into contracts with providers that they select from the state's approved list. MSDE selects its approved providers based on the following criteria:

- evidence of effectiveness of their services;
- evidence of links between research and program design;
- connection to Maryland's Voluntary State Curriculum;
- plans to monitor student progress;
- plans for communication with schools and local school systems;
- plans for communication with parents and families;
- qualifications of instructional staff;
- financial and organizational capacity;
- work plan for providing the supplemental services; and
- costs.

MSDE staff in the Comprehensive Planning and School Support Office monitor the performance of supplemental educational services providers. All providers are reviewed every two years. If gains in student achievement are achieved, a provider's approved status will be extended for two years, at which time the provider must re-apply. MSDE's monitoring has included investigations of some providers who fraudulently charged local school systems for hours of service they did not provide. MSDE has in place an effective removal process for supplemental educational services providers for whom complaints have been filed by local school systems and the complaints warrant termination of the provider, following investigation. Each complaint is reviewed by the MSDE's Coordinator for Supplementary Education Services within one week of receipt.

To date, only 11 of the 37 approved providers have been used by local school systems. Each local school system establishes goals for its provider(s) in terms of meeting the needs of students the provider serves. MSDE publishes reports on its Web site showing the extent to which different providers are meeting their goals. Exhibit 14-1 displays the latest available (November 2004) performance report on providers. The report is for the 2003-04 school year when nine local school systems contracted with supplemental educational services providers. As seen in the exhibit, supplemental educational services providers served 2,431 students in nine local school systems, and providers' attainment of goals ranged from zero percent to 100 percent in different school systems. Statewide, providers met 64 percent of their goals.

MSDE's statewide Coordinator for Supplementary Education Services chaired a committee of local school system staff that produced an excellent *Toolkit* for all districts to use to implement the requirements of NCLB's supplemental educational services requirements. The *Toolkit* is available on MSDE's Web site and includes a wealth of information and suggestions including:

- the approved list of providers;
- suggested calendars;
- questions for providers;
- sample contracts;
- monitoring instruments;
- parent notices and forms; and
- lessons from the field.

**EXHIBIT 14-1**
**NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED AND PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO MET GOALS BY SES PROVIDER AND LSS**

| Supple-mental Education al Services Provider | Anne Arundel | | Baltimore City | | Frederick | | Harford | | Montgomery | | Prince George's | | Talbot | | TOTAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | # Students Served | % Met Goals | # Students Served | % Met Goals | # Students Served | % Met Goals | # Students Served | % Met Goals | # Students Served | % Met Goals | # Students Served | % Met Goals | # Students Served | % Met Goals | # Students Served | % Met Goals |
| **Ashlin Prep** | | | 83 | 48.2 | | | | | | | 43 | 79.1 | | | **126** | **58.7** |
| **Edison Schools** | | | 982 | 34.0 | | | | | | | | | | | **982** | **34.0** |
| **EdSolutions** | | | | | | | | | 73 | 0 | | | | | **73** | **0** |
| **Education Station** | 118 | 59.3 | 1244 | 42.5 | 18 | 72.2 | 37 | 94.6 | 360 | 51.9 | | | | | **1777** | **46.9** |
| **Huntington Learning Centers** | | | 11 | 0 | 52 | 0 | | | | | 44 | 47.7 | | | **107** | **19.6** |
| **IEP** | 24 | 37.5 | 258 | 60.5 | | | | | 117 | 0 | | | 30 | 60.0 | **429** | **42.7** |
| **Kumon** | | | 17 | 0 | | | | | | | 10 | 100 | | | **27** | **37.0** |
| **PE & C** | | | 115 | 0 | | | | | 20 | 0 | 53 | 83.0 | | | **188** | **23.4** |
| **SCORE!** | | | 26 | 100 | | | | | | | 10 | 100 | | | **36** | **100** |
| **Baltimore Curriculum Project** | | | 35 | 34.3 | | | | | | | | | | | **35** | **34.3** |
| **Princeton Review** | | | | | | | | | 10 | 80.0 | | | | | **10** | **80.0** |
| **TOTAL** | 142 | 55.6 | 2771 | 39.6 | 70 | 18.6 | 37 | 94.6 | 580 | 33.6 | 160 | 74.4 | 30 | 60.0 | **2431** | **64.0** |

Source: http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/917715FF-9106-4FEB-B99E-3FD03540F1E4/5766/SESDataLtr110804.doc  Attachment A.
Note: Annual progress toward meeting goals was determined by each provider, creating different standards for targeted goals.

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At its Web site, MSDE also provides a very informative PowerPoint presentation about the supplemental educational services component of NCLB. However, finding the link to this presentation is not easy, especially for parents. Surprisingly, it is not one of the links on the "Resources for Parents" section of the home page of MSDE's primary Web site: www.marylandpublicschools.org.

MSDE also developed a Microsoft Access database shell and interactive data entry system for local school systems to use to track all students who are receiving supplemental educational services. The database may be downloaded from MSDE's Web site. After the database is completed by the local school system, it is used to inform providers and MSDE about the students who are receiving supplemental educational services. Through this automated database, MSDE has a uniform data reporting system that enables it to efficiently report required statistics to the U.S. Department of Education about students who are receiving supplemental educational services.

Our survey of MSDE senior staff revealed that only one of the 26 survey participants did not agree that MSDE is now in compliance with the supplemental educational services state requirements of NCLB. Two of the 26 respondents did not agree that the supplemental educational services component of NCLB would benefit students. None of the MSDE staff responding to the survey indicated that the supplemental educational services requirements of NCLB were among those components of the law for which MSDE is least prepared to comply. Therefore, nearly all MSDE senior staff do not view compliance with the supplemental educational services requirements to be problematic for the state, and they should benefit students.


**COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**COMMENDATIONS**

- **The Department has an excellent *Toolkit* which is provided to local school systems to help them to implement all of the supplemental educational services requirements of NCLB.**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education is commended for its exemplary processes for selecting and monitoring supplemental educational services providers that local school systems may use.**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education makes extensive information about the supplemental educational services processes and outcomes publicly available at its Web site.**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation 14-1:**

**Create a prominent link to the PowerPoint presentation about supplemental educational services at the "Resources for Parents" Section of MSDE's Web site. An excellent PowerPoint presentation currently resides at the Web site. However, it is difficult for parents to find and belongs in the "Resources for Parents" Section.**

**Recommendation 14-2:**

**Correct the label on the link for the approved list of supplemental educational services providers. Although the site is up to date, the Web site needs to show the date that the listing was last updated. The March 1, 2004 date now displayed is incorrect.**

## COMPONENT 15: EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

**Definition:**  The Educational Technology State Grants Program awards formula grants to states to support improved student achievement through the use of technology. The program emphasizes high quality professional development; increased access to technology and the Internet; the integration of technology into curricula; and the use of technology for promoting parental involvement and managing data for informed decision making.  **(Title II, Part D, Subparts 1 and 2)**

**Rubric Score:  3.5**

### FINDINGS

The effective use of technology in education has become an integral part of educational programs. With this in mind, NCLB contains provisions for the advancement of educational technology use throughout the nation. In alignment with this policy, Maryland, as well as other states across the country, has made technology use a mandated component of state education practice.

In 1995, the State of Maryland began implementation of the Maryland Plan for Technology in Education, a blueprint for effective utilization of technologies in schools statewide. The Plan was developed under the leadership of the Maryland Business Roundtable (MBRT) by key stakeholders throughout Maryland that represented not only the educational community but the public and private sectors as well. The Plan serves as the foundation for development and funding of educational technology programs on both the state and local levels.

In 1997, the U.S. Department of Education approved the Maryland Plan, but also made suggestions which prompted the state to reexamine the Plan in light of new data and national goals. The Plan was revised and presented to the Maryland State Board of Education in 1998 for adoption. In keeping pace with the rapid changes in technology and technology education, the Plan has undergone yet another revision for the three year period (2002 to 2005) and was accepted by the Maryland State Board of Education on March 26, 2002. This latest plan has the following as its core vision:

> *Improved student learning will be achieved through the seamless integration of technology into Maryland schools. The use of technology, and the digital content that it brings, will create dynamic and challenging learning environments that engage and motivate our students, enabling all to be independent, competent and creative thinkers, and effective communicators and problem solvers. In addition, improved planning, monitoring and productivity will result from the use of information systems by teachers and those who administer and manage classrooms, schools and school programs.*

The plan states that by 2005, Maryland will be a recognized innovator and technology leader where:

■   access to technology and its rich resources is universal;

■   all teachers possess the knowledge and skills to effectively use and integrate technology into their classrooms;

■   technology tools and digital content that engage our students are seamlessly integrated into all classrooms regularly;

■   technology tools are effectively used to improve school administrative functions and operational processes; and

■   effective research, evaluation and assessment result in continuous improvement in the implementation and use of technology.

Since 1995, MSDE has done an exemplary job of conducting annual inventories of the availability and use of educational technology in Maryland's schools. By doing so, MSDE is able to assess the extent to which it is meeting the vision described above. The latest inventory report was very recently issued in March 2005. The Executive Summary from the report is displayed as Exhibit 15-1 because it succinctly summarizes the major findings about the current state of education technology in Maryland's schools.

The report shows the following:

■   With the exception of Baltimore City, where only 67 percent of its classrooms have Internet connectivity, 95 percent of Maryland's other classrooms can access the Internet.

■   Statewide, there are four computers per student for classroom use. This ratio is better than the 2005 goal of a 5:1 ratio. This ratio has improved tremendously since 1995, when the ratio was 16:1 as seen in the graph below.
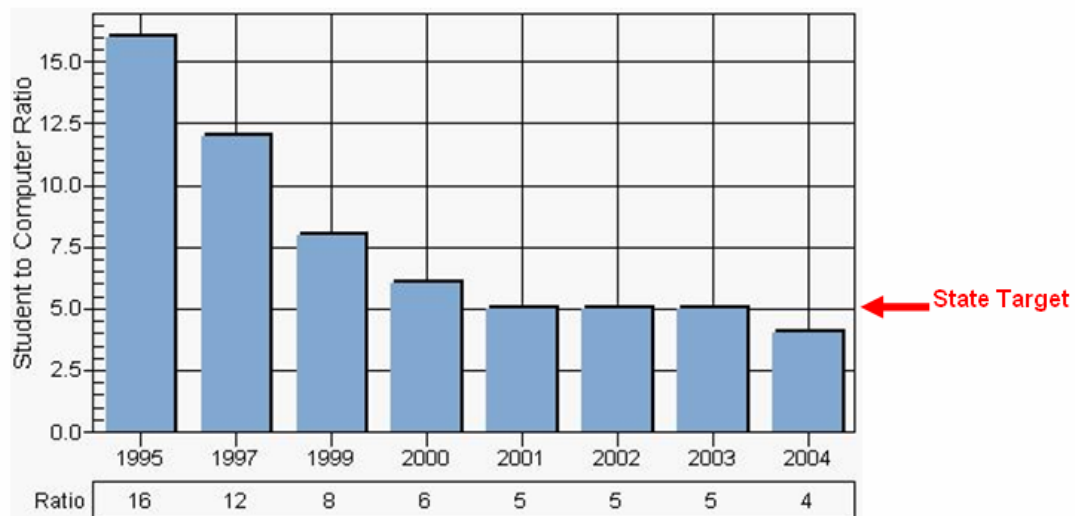


Source:  http://md.ontargetus.com/freqReq_Trends.asp

- Despite significant professional development efforts, little progress has been made in teacher knowledge and skills related to the effective use and integration of technology into the curriculum.

- Only 56 percent of teachers report using technology to "analyze and/or report student/school improvement data" at least a few times per month, which is essentially unchanged from the 2004 data.

- The higher the poverty level of the schools, the less frequently the technology is used for tasks that require higher-level thinking and meaningful application of knowledge and skills. Thus, the digital divide remains a problem in Maryland.

None of the MSDE senior staff who participated in the CCSSO/MGT survey believe that MSDE was not in compliance with NCLB requirements for educational technology. Only one member of the senior staff did not agree that the implementation of the educational technology requirements of NCLB MSDE would benefit students.

## COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### COMMENDATION

- **The Maryland State Department of Education is commended for conducting comprehensive inventories of education technology usage in Maryland schools for the past 10 years. Extensive reports on these inventories clearly identify the progress it is making in its state plan for educational technology and the areas in which expected progress has not yet been made.**

- **The Maryland State Department of Education is commended for its 10-year effort that resulted in bringing the student computer ratio in classrooms down from 16:1 to 4:1. This outcome surpassed the goal of a 5:1 ratio by 2005.**

### RECOMMENDATION

**Recommendation 15-1:**

**Implement all seven recommendations from the March 2005 *Progress Report on Technology in Maryland Schools* (see Exhibit 15-1). The Maryland Business Roundtable for Education/Committee on Technology in Education did an exceptional job identifying those areas that still need improvement to insure that technology delivers on the promise of making significant contributions to improving learning for all Maryland students. If the Committee's recommendations are followed, Maryland's achievements in educational technology will continue to be among the best in the nation.**

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**EXHIBIT 15-1**

A Progress Report on Technology
Resources in Maryland Schools

MARYLAND
BUSINESS
ROUNDTABLE FOR
EDUCATION

March 2005

Prepared by Maryland Business Roundtable
for Education / Committee on Technology in
Education

**Executive Summary**

Since the adoption of the first State Technology Plan in 1996, Maryland has made a commitment to improving student learning through the effective and efficient use of technology in all classrooms. On March 26, 2002, the State Board of Education accepted an updated Maryland Plan for Technology in Education, which guides the State's strategic direction related to educational technology. This plan expires in 2005 and is being updated now by MSDE to guide efforts into the future.

Over the past nine years, a substantial financial investment of over $1B has been made by the State, local school systems, the federal government and the private sector to enable Maryland to fulfill its commitment to improve learning with technology. This summary represents the eighth in a series of annual reports that highlight not only our progress, but also specific and important gaps that remain to be addressed. The data provided in this summary are important both for what they show about the capacity of Maryland students and teachers to access technology-based resources, and for what they reveal about the way that students and teachers experience technology use in their day-to-day learning.

**Technology Infrastructure**

The data confirm that significant progress has been made in establishing a strong technology infrastructure. With few exceptions, schools possess sufficient numbers of computers and almost all classrooms are connected to the Internet. Statewide, the student-to-computer ratio now stands at 4:1 (4 students for every computer available for classroom use), which is better than the planned target of a 5:1 ratio. 95% of all classrooms statewide now possess Internet connectivity. Baltimore City schools are the exception to this trend, where only 67% of all classrooms possess Internet connectivity.

**Teacher Knowledge and Skills**

With regard to teacher knowledge and skills related to the effective use and integration of technology into the curriculum, the data do not show progress consistent with the Plan's objectives. Approximately 70% of teachers rate themselves at an Intermediate skill level or higher on the use and integration of technology, short of the Plan's target of 100% of teachers with these capabilities. More significantly, the year-over-year trends do not indicate any material improvement in this area despite significant investments in professional development activities.

**EXHIBIT 15-1  (Continued)**
**PROGRESS REPORT ON TECHNOLOGY IN MARYLAND SCHOOLS**
**MARCH 2005**

**Student, Teacher and Administrative Use of Technology**

The primary objective of our investment of resources in technology is improved student learning, which can only be achieved by the effective use of the technology tools within the curriculum and in daily classroom instruction. Unfortunately, data from this report indicate that the technology in our schools is not being used as frequently, nor as effectively, as outlined in the State's Strategic Plan. This is particularly true in the more complex uses of technology that experts suggest should exercise higher-order critical thinking skills that will improve student problem solving skills. The trend data suggest little or no improvement in these areas year-over-year.

In some of the most basic uses of technology, 2005 data show that 40% of schools report that their students use technology to "plan, draft, proofread, revise and publish written text" every day, or almost every day. The 2005 data show that 51% of all schools report that their students "gather information/data from a variety of sources (e.g. via Internet, World Wide Web, Online services, CD-ROM-based reference software)" every day, or almost every day.

With regard to the more important and complex uses of technology, 2005 data show that only 13% of schools report that their students use technology to "Display data/information (e.g., using charts, graphs and maps)" every day, or almost every day. Data show that only 9% of schools report that students used technology to "Manipulate, analyze and interpret information" every day, or almost every day. Data in these two important activities are essentially unchanged over 2004. The 2005 data show modest gains in teacher and administrator use of technology for basic activities. As an example, almost 90% of teachers and administrators now use email to communicate with staff and colleagues every day or almost every day. However, the use is less frequent for more complex uses of technology. Only 56% of teachers report using technology to "analyze and/or report student/school improvement data" at least a few times per month, which is essentially unchanged over the 2004 data.

In summary, the data suggest that technology tools are being used effectively to improve communications and collect information and data. However, technology is not being used effectively for higher level, analytical and problem-solving activities, where research and experts agree that education can derive the most compelling benefits for improved learning.

**The Digital Divide**

Efforts to bridge the digital divide continue in Maryland; however, challenges remain. Significant progress has been made regarding student-to-computer ratio with minimal variance evident between high and low poverty schools. However, classrooms in the highest poverty schools are much less likely to have Internet access enabled. Nearly 100% of classrooms in low poverty schools are connected to the Internet, while only 80% of high poverty schools have similar connections. The lack of classroom connectivity in Baltimore City is driving this statistic (note that State funding to complete Internet access in all Baltimore City schools has been available since 2001. However, BCPS released the final contracts in fall, 2004 for the work to be completed by 2006). Further, schools with the highest poverty remain below average in teacher knowledge and skills, and student and administrator use of technology.

As in years past, the digital divide in student use is of most concern. Data show that, in general, the higher the poverty level of the schools, the less frequently the technology is used for tasks that require higher-level thinking and meaningful application of knowledge and skills. The difference is striking when one looks at the percentage of schools reporting that their students regularly* use technology to:

**EXHIBIT 15-1 (Continued)**
**PROGRESS REPORT ON TECHNOLOGY IN MARYLAND SCHOOLS**
**MARCH 2005**

|  | **LOW POVERTY** | **HIGH POVERTY** |
|---|---|---|
| Draft, revise, and publish writing | 65% | 30% |
| Gather information from the Internet | 70% | 54% |
| Communicate or report information | 45% | 15% |
| Manipulate, analyze or interpret data | 20% | 10% |
| Perform measurements and gather data | 15% | 5% |

\* Regularly is defined as every day or almost every day

Given research that links improved student learning with these uses of technology, it is imperative to eliminate this gap.

**Recommendations**

The stakes have never been higher for education in Maryland. Currently, according to High School Assessment results, many students are far from reaching the new high school graduation requirements. It is imperative that schools better prepare our students, and technology tools can and should be key contributors to success. However, the benefits will not materialize if the technology is not effectively used in our classrooms. To insure that technology delivers on the promise of making significant contributions to improving learning for all Maryland students, it is recommended that:

1. A revised State Strategic Technology Plan and revised district Technology Plans, aligned with the State Plan and local master plans, be completed. The Plans should focus on the tight and seamless integration of technology tools into existing curriculum, with particular emphasis on the use of technology to foster higher-level critical thinking skills - January, 2006.

2. Technology requirements/assessments be incorporated into all teacher and administrator re-certification programs and in pre-service teacher preparation programs - Fall, 2006.

3. MSDE require local master plans to incorporate and address needs identified from an analysis of data from the Online Technology Inventory Report - Fall, 2006.

4. MSDE review and document the effectiveness of professional development activities related to technology integration - Summer, 2005).

5. MSDE review state and local organizational structures within educational systems to insure that such structures are compatible with and conducive to effectively integrating technology into the curriculum and daily instruction - Spring, 2006.

6. MSDE investigate why progress is not continuing, through ongoing dialogue with school systems - Summer, 2005.

7. MBRT reconstitute the Committee on Technology in Education to include a membership comprised of leading business and IT executives that will review and make recommendations to MSDE regarding the State Plan and convey effective corporate technological practices used in the transformation of companies that are applicable to education - Spring 2005.

CCSSO

MGT of America

## COMPONENT 16: STUDENT SAFETY AND HEALTH

**Definition:** NCLB contains provisions designed to promote student health and safety. The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act supports programs to prevent violence in and around schools; prevent the illegal use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco by young people; and foster a safe and drug-free learning environment. The Gun-Free Schools Act places requirements on all states receiving NCLB funds regarding guns on school campuses. The Unsafe School Choice Option requires each state receiving funds under NCLB to implement policy requiring that students who attend persistently dangerous schools or become victims of violent crimes on their school grounds be allowed to attend a safe school within the same school district. The Pro-Children Act of 2001 prohibits smoking in buildings used to provide children under the age of 18 with regular or routine health care, day care, education, or library services. **(Title IV, Part A; Part A, Subpart 3, and Part C; and Title IX, Part E)**

**Rubric Score: 3.0**

### FINDINGS

In the wake of tragic circumstances that have plagued some schools in recent years, there has been a national focus on providing safer schools that promote overall student health. State departments of education, including the MSDE, have taken steps to implement national programs designed to provide improved educational environmental for students.

The MSDE serves as the flow-through agency for Title IV funds that all 24 Maryland local school systems receive for the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Program. For the past two years, about $4.9 million has gone to local school systems in Maryland for this program, and MSDE has used about $370,000 both years. MSDE uses its small portion of the grant to partially fund directly-related positions of MSDE staff in the Student Services and Alternative Education Branch of the Division of Student and School Services and for professional development that MSDE provides to local school systems to better enable their personnel to implement the program. We found that with the exception of limited input from parents and students on the state plan for Safe and Drug-Free Schools, all procedures and guidelines as set forth in Title IV are followed by MSDE in its administration of this program.

MSDE staff conduct annual compliance audits to ensure that all 24 local school systems are using their Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities grant funds appropriately and that they are implementing scientifically-based research curricula and programs as required by NCLB.

Maryland's Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program is comprised of the following six components:

- Kindergarten-12th grade Drug Prevention Education
- Peer Leadership
- Student Assistance/Early Intervention

- Peer Leadership: Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug (ATOD) Policy
- the Maryland Adolescent Survey
- the Middle Grades Tobacco Prevention Education Initiative

Brief descriptions about each of the above components are available at MSDE's Web site, and about 10 additional pages of information were being developed at the time of our review.

Several policies in the Code of Maryland Regulations directly relate to NCLB's requirements for safe schools:

- Maryland has defined a "persistently dangerous school" as one where for three consecutive school years, the number of student suspensions for more that 10 days or expulsions for specified serious offenses equals 2.5 percent or more of the students enrolled in the school.

- Maryland's State Board of Education places a school on probationary status if the above definition of a "persistently dangerous school" applies for two, but not yet for three consecutive years.

- Corrective action plans are required for all schools that are designated as "persistently dangerous" or on probation.

- Local school systems must notify parents of students who are in "persistently dangerous schools" and allow students to transfer to a safe school within the school system.

At the time this report was prepared, only baseline (2002-03) data were available on the state performance indicators for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Program. These measures showed that there were:

- seven (7) violent criminal offenses in Maryland schools, but none resulted in transfers of students to other schools;

- alcohol use among 6th, 8th, and10th graders were at a levels of 5.0 percent, 16.4 percent, and 35.0 percent, respectively with goals of reducing these to 4.25 percent, 14.0 percent' and 28.0 percent, respectively by 2006-07;

- other drug use among 6th, 8th, and10th graders were at a levels of 3.7 percent, 11.4 percent, and 21.3 percent, respectively with goals of reducing these to 4.25 percent, 14.0 percent' and 28.0 percent, respectively by 2006-07; and

- fifty-three (53) percent of school staff were trained to implement programs proven to reduce disruption. The goal by 2006-07 is 73 percent.

The Maryland State Board of Education also recently (December 2004) enacted regulations for emergency plans that must be developed and implemented by each local school system. These emergency plans must include preventative action to reduce the loss of life or damage to property resulting from violent or traumatic events on school grounds during regular school hours or during school-sponsored activities.

Our survey of 26 senior staff in MSDE revealed that no one perceived that that MSDE was not in compliance with NCLB state requirements for student safety and health. Only one staffer thought that MSDE would have difficulty complying with these requirements, and only two of the 26 senior staff who participated in the survey disagreed that the student safety and health component of NCLB would benefit students.

When asked on the survey to describe the most significant consequences to the implementation of NCLB in Maryland, only one member of the senior staff offered a comment related to the student safety and health component of NCLB. This individual noted that:

> *The unsafe school transfer option is an example of a significant part of the law without sufficient guidance. To be designated as "persistently dangerous" in essence is a death knell for a school. Moreover, the allowance of a transfer to a "safe" school is laudable, but no resources have been provided to implement that provision (e.g. funding for transportation).*

## COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## COMMENDATIONS

- **The MSDE Student Services and Alternative Education Branch is commended for instituting and administering the six components that comprise Maryland's Safe and Drug-Free Schools program.**

- **The Maryland State Board of Education is commended for establishing clear policies on identifying and eliminating persistently dangerous schools.**

## RECOMMENDATION

**Recommendation 16-1:**

**Include the involvement of students when the state plan is revised. It is critical that the MSDE solicit the input from all stakeholders, including students, on student safety and health issues.**

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> ## COMPONENT 17: OVERALL ORGANIZATION OF THE STATE EDUCATION AGENCY

**Definition:** In several sections of NCLB, reference is made to the need for greater collaboration and communication at the state level and among the state, local and national levels. The statements in this section address the state's readiness to fully implement NCLB. This component is designed to evaluate the organization's operational capacity to successfully implement state and national laws. All provisions of NCLB are supported by effective organizational management.

> **Rubric Score: 3.5**

### FINDINGS

The Governor, State Board of Education, and State Superintendent have worked in partnership to improve Maryland's public schools. Under the effective leadership of State Superintendent of Schools, Nancy S. Grasmick (who has been at the helm for 14 years), the Maryland State Department of Education has become recognized as one of the leading state education agencies in the country.

The Maryland educational system is one of the less complex education systems in the country in that there is one state department of education and 24 school districts, with no regional education structure. The type of organizational structure promotes greater communication and accessibility. Furthermore, all Maryland school districts are located within three hours driving distance of each other.

The Maryland State Department of Education provides an exemplary organizational structure which is based on team work, effective communication, and coordination among divisions and offices. This structure was created to support the state's accountability system and was further refined to meet the demands and challenges of NCLB.

Among the effective characteristics of the MSDE are the following indicators:

- The major functions in the SEA (e.g., testing, accountability, school improvement, Title I) are integrated and coordinated.

- The SEA has a well-defined and clear strategy for improving student achievement and performance measures.

- The SEA has short- and long-term goals, action plans, and performance measures.

- The SEA has an effective information and data system to support key processes and action plans.

- The SEA has data that are rapidly deployed and consistently used to analyze, align, and improve organizational performance.

- The SEA has a system to help teachers and staff members develop and utilize their full potential, while aligned with LEA and SEA goals.

- The SEA has a system for designing, implementing, evaluating, and improving instructional processes and student support services.

- The SEA regularly examines the results of student performance and compares these results to SEA goals and state and national results.

- The SEA uses performance measures to drive and improve operational effectiveness.

- The SEA regularly examines key budget, financial performance measures, and market results in order to compare results to SEA goals.

In June 2003, the State Board of Education approved and MSDE released a strategic plan (2003-08) under a new plan for preK-12 public education, *Achievement Matters Most*. This consolidated plan includes Maryland's refined approach to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and accountability.

*The Achievement Matters Most* Plan consolidated the following documents:

- *No Child Left Behind* Act

- *Visionary Panel for Betters Schools* – a 2002 state report with eight major recommendations and 30 strategies for improving Maryland public schools over the next decade.

- *Bridge to Excellence* Act – produced by the Maryland General Assembly in April 2002 to guarantee educational equity and adequacy. This Act collapsed 27 state funding programs into four, increased state aid to public schools, and required each school system to prepare a five-year master plan outlining exactly how it will start getting all students up to standards.

*Achievement Matters Most* has the following five goals:

- Goal 1: Achievement will improve for each student.

- Goal 2: Instruction, curriculum, and assessment will be better aligned and understandable.

- Goal 3: All educators will have the skills to improve student achievement.

- Goal 4: All schools will be safe, drug-free, and conducive to learning.

- Goal 5: Parents will be involved in education.

Each goal is accompanied by objectives, performance measures and targets within the strategic plan.

The CCSSO/MGT Self Assessment results in the area of SEA organization were very positive:

- Ninety-two (92) percent of senior manager respondents state that there is collaboration among MSDE divisions in the implementation of NCLB.

- Seventy-one (71) percent indicate that the implementation of NCLB requirements is being effectively coordinated across areas of responsibility, while only 17 percent disagree.

- Eighty (80) percent of senior managers believe that the NCLB implementation process is well-defined by MSDE and that the management system is effectively addressing the implementation of NCLB requirements; only 12 percent disagree.

- Forty-eight (48) percent of the respondents indicated that the current organizational structure of MSDE is adequate to promote effective NCLB implementation and future success in compliance with its requirements; 32 percent disagree; of those who disagree, the primary deterrent cited was that too few staff are in the MSDE.

With regard to the last item listed above, those respondents providing open-ended comments stated that the size of the MSDE staff is inadequate to support all NCLB requirements directed at the state.

When asked about MSDE strengths in implementing NCLB, the following comments were among those made:

- *We have climbed out of our silos and have begun to work together in real and substantive ways. Our State Superintendent has insisted in a cross-divisional approach, and we believe we have avoided unintended consequences from enacting policies helter skelter.*

- *The SEA has used the requirements of the NCLB to focus public education through the Department's strategic plan. The Department has a wonderful data collection system and Web site to report the results of testing, etc. The various divisions of the Department have used the NCLB to focus their work on behalf of students and schools.*

- *The increased collaboration across divisions within the SEA has been a boost to our ability to work with local school systems. Also, although it was a challenge and created other issues, I was pleased to see our state testing go from a measure of only school and system performance to now include measures of individual students.*

■ *The longevity of Dr. Grasmick as State Superintendent of Schools contributes greatly to staying the course with a vision, mission, and goals that pre-dated NCLB to educate every child in meaningful content. Under her leadership, the Department staff speaks with one voice through effective communication with local school system (LSS) leaders and close working relationships with the 24 local school systems to provide state-led leadership, technical assistance, and professional development in the implementation of NCLB.*

■ *We have had strong accountability measures and alternate assessments in place prior to NCLB implementation.*

■ *Maryland has a strong history of accountability, student performance reporting, and data-based instructional supports that translate well to NCLB.*

■ *Maryland's experience in statewide assessment and strength of our state accountability program. The structure of public education and geography of Maryland with only 24 local school systems and the ability to hold statewide meetings with travel times of no more than three hours.*

■ *Readiness to implement at the conceptual level. Significant experience with a state-led systemic approach to school reform buttressed by the recent work of a Visionary Panel for Better Schools and increased state investment in aid to education.*

Despite the array of positive implementation strategies taken by MSDE for NCLB, MSDE has not defined its technical assistance and compliance monitoring role as specified in NCLB. Some senior staff noted that improvements are needed in internal communication. While the *Maryland Classroom* provides an effective communication vehicle at least quarterly to school districts, more needs to be done to improve internal communications. Current vehicles include:

■ minutes of executive team meetings which are shared only among senior staff;

■ state superintendent meetings with all department staff which occur every couple of months;

■ e-mails with press releases as they are disseminated by MSDE; and

■ televised State Board of Education meetings.

Nonetheless, there is no formal communications on a regular basis below the executive team level.

**COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**COMMENDATIONS**

■ **The Maryland State Department of Education has high quality, professional staff that are well-respected by local education agencies with the state and by their peers nationally.  Under the leadership of Dr. Nancy Grasmick, MSDE has emerged as one of the premier state education agencies.**

■ **The Maryland State Department of Education has developed and implemented a systemic approach to achievement, assessment, and accountability that consolidates all previous and current federal and state mandates. NCLB has been effectively integrated with Maryland's existing educational focus and previous plans on student performance and accountability.**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation 17-1:**

**Create an additional vehicle for internal communication in the state education agency.  Some state education agencies have used a Friday newsletter or e-mail to facilitate communication.  A more formal communication vehicle between and among divisions could assist in this effort.**

**Recommendation 17-2:**

**Clearly define the Maryland State Department of Education role of technical assistance and monitoring. As the definitions are formulated, the department needs to clarify the relationship among all units in the department that provide technical assistance to schools and districts.**

**Recommendation 17-3:**

**Petition the Governor and the Legislature for additional resources for the state-level administration of newly-funded programs.  Although beyond the scope of the current study, it is apparent that the Maryland State Department of Education has not always received state-level resources to support new initiatives.  A recent example is the Thornton Bill which provides $1.2 billion to local school districts. No additional resources were provided to MSDE to administer this program (also see Recommendation 4-4).**

# SECTION 4 – SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

# SECTION 4 – SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

*No Child Left Behind* is among the most seminal educational policy initiatives of all times in the breadth of its impact on schools and personnel at every level of the educational spectrum. It is intended to touch the lives, skills, and knowledge of instructional and non-instructional staff members, of students, their parents, and members of school, district, and state educational organizations. The potential rewards for successful implementation are lofty for students and, in fact, our nation. Conversely, the potential consequences are equally sweeping in their impact on lives and the nation's economy and standard of living.

Thus, it is imperative that a state education agency position itself with policies, procedures, and organizational structures that will facilitate planning, communications, and decision making. These aspects of an organization are the elements that will determine the success or failure of educational policy implementation.

Since enactment, NCLB has challenged educational organizations to raise the bar for their own performance levels as well as for student achievement. By moving the magnifying glass closer to the classroom with requirements for disaggregated student performance data, accountability has moved beyond overall school or district achievement to responsibility for the continuous progress of large and small groups of students. This action has forced educators to confront long-held perceptions, right or wrong, about student abilities. In doing so, the spotlight has also been focused on the preparation of teachers and paraprofessionals for new roles and responsibilities. New skills, ways of work, and ways of thinking have been necessitated from the classroom to local and state agencies, board rooms and legislative bodies.

In response to these demands, the Maryland State Department of Education has undertaken a myriad of activities and developed a plethora of processes to effectively facilitate NCLB implementation at the state and local level. They are founded on careful, collaborative, sound decision making and input solicited from broad stakeholder groups within the state. Many instances of exemplary practices were identified during the review. As NCLB continues to burgeon, the need for more processes and activities will persist. The ongoing proliferation of associated implementing rules also leaves open continuing opportunities for improvement within the state organization to maximize benefits to the state.

The CCSSO/MGT team found practices in the overall implementation process that exhibited varying levels of implementation and response to federal requirements with the majority being effective and efficient. From our findings on organizational structure, process and practice, we compiled commendations and recommendations that are designed to highlight successful implementation strategies as well as to propose opportunities for improvement.

A number of strengths exist within the state agency upon which it can build in developing strategies in response to the recommended actions to more effectively implement NCLB within the state. Some, but not all, include:

■ Maryland has a long history of accountability for its schools. Schools in Maryland have been identified for improvement based on student performance since 1994, even going so far as to contract with an external vendor five years ago to take over schools failing to make progress. The results were extraordinary in terms of student performance, teacher retention, and parental involvement. This experience has contributed to plans and actions to support low-performing schools.

■ The MSDE's response to both federal mandates and locally-identified needs has resulted in an integrated, cross-divisional approach that has developed a strong department-wide commitment to initiatives; integration of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development; and an extremely collegial aura within the SEA. The staff is unified in its steadfastness that state actions must support high quality, content-based education for all Maryland students, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, language, or special needs. Many senior staff credits that vision to the state's unusually stable, well-respected, strong leadership in the State Superintendent, Nancy Grasmick, who has held that post for 14 years.

■ Beyond her collaborative approach to management of the MSDE, her response to broad educational challenges is to embrace key stakeholders in the identification of needs and crafting of educational initiatives and responses. That outreach has engendered strong support for education in the state at the General Assembly, resulting in additional funds targeted to schools and districts in the Thornton Bill, as well as an understanding and respect for the activities of the MSDE. The MSDE has capitalized on having only 24 school districts in the state with its leadership meeting regularly with superintendents and assistant superintendents for information sharing as well as cooperatively identifying needs and devising strategies to address them. Also, with so few districts, all of which are within a three hour drive of MSDE, cross-divisional teams regularly visit schools, know their needs, and provide guidance and support, as well as responding to common issues such as the development of benchmark tests for use by almost half of the districts.

■ Both the state and MSDE have embedded school and district reporting documents with processes that assist school and district personnel in thoughtfully undertaking initiatives including strategic planning and grant application, revision, and review. In conjunction with the additional funding that resulted from the Thornton Bill, the 2002 *Bridge to Excellence* Act prompted integration of state and federal planning, reporting, accountability, and expenditure of funds from both sources into one strategic five-year Master Plan for each district. Examples of grant application, reporting, and review documents provided the team by representatives of each division in

the MSDE provide extensive evidence that evaluation is an integral part of decisions relative to the expenditure of state and federal funds to guide school and district personnel as they think through plans to improve student performance. Evaluations further underlie MSDE decisions about channeling funds to those most committed to changing their operations and instruction since the MSDE only re-funds schools that demonstrate progress. Much evidence abounds that evaluative information is considered in revising state programs as well. An accompanying part of many grant opportunities includes only the use of programs that the state has identified as proven. The MSDE has attentively developed grant programs that promise maximal impact, promote collaboration with postsecondary institutions, and have a long-term systemic bearing on teaching and learning at the state level as well as the classroom.

- The vanguard position Maryland was in with its pre-existing accountability and reporting system has contributed to an exemplary database and three key MSDE Web sites that are utilized extensively by MSDE employees as well as serving as a timely and effective communication tool with the public. They further provide school and district educators with a facile means of accessing and analyzing achievement data, and understanding, retrieving and using information on standards, content, instruction, and school improvement processes and tools and even ordering statewide testing materials. They further capture information to be shared on activities and information on how schools that receive rewards for exemplary progress toward meeting AYP goals are using those funds. The database is also used to collect information on highly qualified teachers.

- The state's focus on related classroom technology has resulted in the state's exceeding its goal of having a 5:1 ratio of students to computers by 2005. This lends itself to the additional technology training needed among the state's educators as well as providing a powerful vehicle for integrating content and technology once teachers become well-versed in the instructional uses of technology.

- The Maryland State Department of Education has done an exceptional job of providing information, guidance and tools relating to supplemental educational services to educators in schools not meeting AYP for a third consecutive year. The SEA has also developed exemplary processes for selecting, monitoring, and holding accountable providers of supplemental educational services.

From the nearly 40 recommendations developed from the review findings, several general themes emerged. They are not presented in any order of priority.

■ Funding issues related to MSDE capacity and the continuation of programs and practices that have proven effective in meeting the challenges of NCLB implementation are the overarching concerns identified in the study. In almost every division of the MSDE, specific instances and evidence of staff reduction since NCLB enactment were provided. In two divisions, the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services and the Title I office in the Division of Student and School Services, the majority of staff provides support for compliance-related issues rather than support for meeting NCLB aspirations for all students being academically proficient by 2013-14. The Division of Accountability and Assessment with its reporting, assessment, and accountability responsibilities under NCLB provisions has also lost staff. NCLB needs continue to intensify the lack of capacity at the state level with mounting assessment, accountability and reporting requirements. Additionally, state-funded initiatives that have proven to have a positive impact on student performance and reduce achievement gaps have lost funding. specifically, school improvement grants have been replaced by professional development grants with reduced terms and funding limits. Past school improvement grants have led to several of the exemplary practices noted in Section 3 of this report that are and will continue to positively impact student achievement and teacher knowledge and skills. Additionally, monetary incentives for successful schools have been eliminated, being replaced by certificates and public recognition in 2004 (with the exception of Title I schools). Furthermore, they have never been available for high schools making progress. A need to bolster the capabilities of the database to meet NCLB requirements is also evident.

■ In terms of professional development, despite efforts the MSDE has made and national leadership it has demonstrated, a continuing need exists for intensive teacher training in the areas of special education content knowledge and of technology integration, among all Maryland teachers but especially among teachers in highest poverty schools. Additionally, although MSDE has collaborated with universities on some teacher preparation issues, strides need to be made in bringing postsecondary schools on board in contributing to imminent NCLB requirements for highly qualified teachers.

■ With respect to accountability, the Department has not fully characterized its role in technical assistance and monitoring. Notwithstanding its long history of identification of and provision for ramifications for schools in need of improvement, it has not yet developed a plan with certain timelines and consequences for school systems in improvement. Baltimore City has a history of lack of progress and is currently in Corrective Action. Eight other districts were recently identified "in improvement." In order to continue to lead the nation and to progress toward the state's and the federal

government's achievement goals, the MSDE must discuss and define these critical aspects of accountability.

- The state's extensive database could be even more effective in providing essential information to schools and districts if it were expanded in several ways. The database should:

  - include information on the qualifications of paraprofessionals in the state;

  - reflect best practices occurring in both high- and low-performing (but turning around) schools so that effective processes do not have to be reinvented and that schools facing challenges can consult and visit those that have overcome them; and

  - make it easier to locate information on issues of interest to parents such as supplemental educational services and public school choice for those whose children attend eligible schools.

- The effective, cross-divisional organizational structure of the MSDE could be even further enhanced by the creation of systematic communication channels that ensure that all department employees are apprised of crucial, accurate information in a timely manner.

The Maryland State Department of Education has responded promptly, thoughtfully, and with open arms to the mandates of NCLB. Senior managers across the entire Department not only believe that NCLB will benefit students in the nation and the state, but they are also committed to ensuring that, for the students of Maryland, the state's response will lead to greater access to a standards-based curriculum for the vast majority of students in the state. The MSDE has developed accountability parameters and definitions that leave no doubt as to that commitment. The state's long-standing experience with accountability that began in the early 1990s poised it for a smooth transition to meeting NCLB requirements. Challenges to meeting NCLB mandates to Maryland's high degree of expectations remain. However, with their experience and the flexibility that continues to evolve with NCLB, MSDE should devise creative improvement strategies from which other states could benefit. The MSDE staff has tried to anticipate NCLB modifications and proactively develop strategies to meet them before they arise. Their desire to do so is evidenced by their commissioning of this study.

Within this report many existing commendable practices that may serve as models to other states in their NCLB implementation are noted. The report also includes some recommended strategies to assist the MSDE in more effectively addressing NCLB requirements. The recommendations are intended to assist in fine-tuning an already well-conceived approach to the implementation of the federal mandates. It is our hope that they will be used to the benefit of the state education agency and the students, educators, and public in the state of Maryland.

*APPENDIX:*

*SURVEY RESULTS*

# APPENDIX

# MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
# SELF-ASSESSMENT ON IMPLEMENTING THE
# *NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND* ACT

# SURVEY RESULTS

**TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES = 26 out of 30 (86.7%)**

## PART A:     OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF NCLB REQUIREMENTS

| STATEMENTS ON ASSESSMENT  INSTRUMENT | SA (%) | A (%) | N (%) | D (%) | SD (%) | DK/NA (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.   The requirements of NCLB are well designed. | 4 | 38 | 27 | 31 | 0 | 0 |
| 2.   The USDOE provided for sufficient State Education Agency input in the development of NCLB requirements. | 4 | 8 | 8 | 42 | 19 | 19 |
| 3.   The requirements of NCLB are appropriate for the current educational environment in the United States. | 4 | 50 | 23 | 23 | 0 | 0 |
| 4.   The requirements of NCLB are appropriate for the current educational environment in our state. | 4 | 46 | 15 | 31 | 4 | 0 |
| 5.   All requirements of NCLB can be successfully implemented in the United States. | 0 | 12 | 23 | 42 | 23 | 0 |
| 6.   All requirements of NCLB can be successfully implemented in our state. | 4 | 23 | 15 | 42 | 15 | 0 |
| 7.   Implementation of the requirements of NCLB will benefit students in the United States. | 12 | 69 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8.   Implementation of the requirements of NCLB will benefit students in our state. | 12 | 73 | 12 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 9.   Implementation of the requirements of NCLB will increase student achievement in the United States. | 12 | 69 | 8 | 4 | 0 | 8 |
| 10.  Implementation of the requirements of NCLB will increase student achievement in our state. | 12 | 77 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 8 |
| 11.  Implementation of the requirements of NCLB will close gaps in student achievement in the United States. | 8 | 62 | 15 | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| 12.  Implementation of the requirements of NCLB will close gaps in student achievement in our state. | 8 | 62 | 15 | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| 13.  Implementation of the requirements of NCLB will improve the effectiveness of State Education Agencies in the United States. | 4 | 35 | 31 | 19 | 8 | 4 |
| 14.  Implementation of the requirements of NCLB will improve the effectiveness of our SEA. | 0 | 46 | 23 | 23 | 8 | 0 |
| 15.  Implementation of the requirements of NCLB will improve the effectiveness of my division(s)/department(s). | 4 | 36 | 16 | 36 | 0 | 8 |
| 16.  Implementation of the requirements of NCLB will improve the effectiveness of schools in the United States. | 4 | 62 | 15 | 4 | 0 | 15 |
| 17.  Implementation of the requirements of NCLB will improve the effectiveness of schools in our state. | 8 | 73 | 8 | 4 | 0 | 8 |

Legend:
*SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neither Agree/Disagree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, DK/NA = Don't Know/Not Applicable

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## 18. DESCRIBE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NCLB REQUIREMENTS IN OUR STATE (IF ANY).

- The development and implementation of a systemic approach to measure student achievement across the state is critical to adjustments in instruction and improvements in student acquisition of content knowledge.

- NCLB has improved instruction throughout the state.

- Maryland has been in the business of school reform with school accountability since 1990, so NCLB is only a new suit for us, not a new structure. We are finding the same schools doing well under the new accountability system as under the old one, even with new tests. The annual testing grades 3 through 8 and now at the high school opens up new opportunities for schools to have more precise information about what needs fixing. It underscores the recommendations of our Visionary Panel for Better Schools, which in January 2002 laid out a blueprint for upgrading our accountability system. If anything, it puts focus on what we were doing and promises to extend improved instructional opportunities to populations (i.e., special education, LEP) who were tracked in the past, but for whom direct accountability was lacking.

- Students in low performing schools are being instructed by highly qualified teachers and held to the same academic content standards. Instructional and resource allocation decisions are based on data. Closing the gap in academic performance for subgroup populations is a priority. Development of consolidated/comprehensive plans has made cross coordination and collaboration within agencies more efficient.

- Accountability in closing the achievement gap; increased use of data for decision-making, particularly related to instruction; concentration on all sub-groups.

- NCLB implementation has underscored the achievement and resource gaps among different groups of students principally based on wealth and race/ethnicity.

- Focus of accountability on those students who have most often received the weakest instruction.

- The concentration of efforts and resources on all students reading at proficiency level and the requirement of qualified teachers.

- The opportunity to create a data collection/management system on teacher participation in high quality professional development serves as an impetus to improvements in teacher professional development resource allocation, program design, implementation and evaluation.

- Focuses the public's attention on public schools. Places responsibility for accountability on more people. Requires more dialog between educators and parents.

- There is much more aggressive attention to EACH child instead of "on the average."

- The concentration of efforts and resources on all students reading at proficiency level and the requirement of qualified teachers.

- NLCB requires SEA, LEA, and schools to evaluate and adjust ongoing strategies to improve the achievement of all students.

- All students have a right to a high quality education and to a level playing field in attempting to achieve. NCLB requires a focus on identifying who is not achieving and why.

■ The Reading First Program offers specificity in how beginning readers (K-3) should receive instruction and what their teachers need to know to provide instruction based on scientific research in reading. The federal roadmap was clear, and the approved state application for funding established clear direction.

■ From my perspective, the biggest weakness in NCLB is the expectation/requirement that students with IEPs will meet the same achievement standards as all students AND the biggest positive impact is that students in special education will meet the same standards. In the short term, NCLB moves special education into the general education arena in ways that have not happened before. Yet, the long-term requirement for such students to meet proficiency in reading and math a la general education is bound to fail. Another unresolved issue is the use of duplicated counts when tracking student performance. Subgroup duplication (i.e., a special education and FARMS student being counted multiple times) distorts school-level performance.

■ Promotes moving away from "credit count" as a route to teacher certification. Heightens focus on academic knowledge. Promotes the necessity improving teaching and learning for minority, ESOL, and special education students.

■ LEAs and schools are no longer able to "hide behind the averages" and are forced to look at the performance of all students.

■ The voluntary state curriculum is being implemented by most local school systems as a result of high stakes testing thus helping to standardize rigorous content. Professional development standards and instructional leadership standards are being disseminated by MSDE to inform a more systemic approach to preparing teachers and leaders capable of improving student achievement.

■ NCLB shines the light on all subgroup student achievement results.

■ The greatest benefit will be to the low-income schools as they are now required by federal law to meet certain requirements and some additional resources have been targeted to this effort.

■ 1. Focus on the students most often neglected in public education.  2. Uniform high standards for all students.  3. Placing emphasis on putting qualified teachers in the schools most often bereft of them.  4. Emphasis on results over the method or process. 5. Holding education accountable at all levels.

■ NCLB has supported our state focus and efforts to eliminate the achievement gap. NCLB has also lead to the identification by many local school systems of the need to develop and the actual development of a voluntary state curriculum.

■ The requirements force all schools to be measured on the same criteria.

■ Focus on equity of educational access, particularly in terms of quality; promotes increased formative as well as summative assessment, looking carefully at all students.

■ Supports our state's focus on eliminating achievement gaps and improvements to our state assessments and standards-based professional development for teachers -- efforts already underway at the time NCLB was enacted.

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**19. DESCRIBE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CONSEQUENCES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NCLB REQUIREMENTS IN OUR STATE (IF ANY).**

■ Understanding of what students know is the plus. The sanctions are simply going to cause many local school systems to throw up their hands and begin to manipulate the data or give up on real instructional improvement for certain subgroups.

■ Some students with disabilities and some ELL have not been able to achieve proficiency on state assessments as NCLB is currently designed.

■ Some of the unintended consequences of the federal law have yet to be realized, in my estimation. While the ongoing increased AMO trajectory is absolutely the right approach, the ability of schools and systems to respond to the hardest-to-teach populations' needs is yet to be understood.

■ The SEA does not have sufficient resources to meet the demands of schools and school systems in improvement. Institutions of higher education are not producing sufficient graduates to meet the needs of school systems. Alignment of assessment to meet reporting and AYP notification deadlines is problematic.

■ General educators and special educators are working together more closely; greater collaboration across division of the SEA and among LSSs; greater involvement of institutions of higher education as partners.

■ The most significant consequences have yet to occur--they will.

■ I worry that is will make schools appear, to some parents and some current and future teachers, to be failures and not good places for their children or as career area.

■ Low-performing schools are in high visibility and are receiving increased support from local systems.

■ Significant staff time devoted to assessment development, implementation, and accountability without comparable investments in curriculum, program design and implementation and teacher professional development to address student learning gaps.

■ Diverts attention from curriculum areas not tested, but which are necessary to provide students with skills and knowledge that contribute significantly to success and satisfaction as an adult (the arts, social studies, etc).

■ I worry about the labels of "failing" for schools.

■ Low performing schools are in high visibility and are receiving increased support from local systems.

■ Some of the requirements of the law remain unfunded mandates. The goals are lofty, but the resources are limited. The requirements of NCLB need to be fully funded in order to allow for optimal opportunity for implementation. The unsafe school transfer option is an example of a significant part of the law without sufficient guidance. To be designated as 'persistently dangerous' in essence is a death knell for a school. Moreover, the allowance of a transfer to a 'safe' school is laudable, but no resources have been provided to implement that provision. For example, in the case of funding for transportation. On the plus side, the law is forcing schools, school systems, and the SEA to make data-driven decisions. That is a good thing. It should go beyond academics though too. The MSDE and the local school systems in Maryland take the

mandates of the NCLB extremely seriously and have attempted to make sure that we are in compliance with their requirements.

■   Low performing schools are in high visibility and are receiving increased support from local school systems.

■   The way the state has drawn the graph for LEAs to meet AYP demands very steep annual growth levels in out years. It does not seem possible for LEAs to meet AYP expectations in aggregate or for sub-populations.

■   The burden on the SEA and local school systems is tremendous. We see staff from both sides of the table leaving education as the demands for accountability exceed the capability of existing management systems, whether its people, testing demands, differentiation of instruction for diverse learners, or data systems to monitor results. We just are not there yet. Another serious and unresolved issue is what to do with the failing schools and systems. There has been so little guidance from the federal side about how this will actually play out. The existing NCLB guidance is insufficient in this regard.

■   The costs associated with educating all children to high standards are not covered by federal funding. The state and locals have had to dig deep to find funding to provide the types of rigorous programs and interventions that improve student achievement. Addressing students with special needs has posed significant challenges.

■   It will be more difficult to recruit special education teachers.

■   Different parts of the state and local educational establishments must work together to implement the law--the breakdown of "educational fiefdoms."

■   NCLB reinforced for all stakeholders in the state that the policy direction set a decade earlier to move to a system of testing, data-driven decision-making, and true rewards and consequences had been the correct policy to be established.

■   Unless data systems are improved the state's ability to report will be in jeopardy.

■   NCLB has meshed with existing focus on student performance and adoption of high school graduation tests; increased public attention to disparities among schools and school systems; heightened consideration of alternative routes to teacher/administrator certification; unanswered questions about special education, ESOL, other multiple- subject teachers.

■   The spotlight on achievement gaps.

20. **WHAT ARE OUR SEA'S GREATEST STRENGTHS WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NCLB (IF ANY)?**

- Standards and accountability.

- State assessments have forced instruction to improve throughout the state.

- We have climbed out of our silos and have begun to work together in real and substantive ways. Our State Superintendent has insisted in a cross-divisional approach, and we believe we have avoided unintended consequences from enacting policies helter skelter.

- Strong accountability system prior to passage of NCLB. We have a very strong accountability and assessment system. We are data rich and involve local school systems in all aspects of the assessment system.

- Use of data to drive day-to-day instruction by teachers; state testing was already in place (though had to be reshaped).

- The Department is keenly aware of and sensitive to the school performance deficiencies for economically disadvantaged and other minorities (racial, ethnic, and linguistic).

- Our many previous years implementing school accountability programs.

- Professional development for school leaders around issues of learning for all students and teachers.

- A deep commitment to improving student learning for ALL students. A willingness to work collaboratively across divisions in the SEA and with district and school level staff.

- A high quality, professional staff that is respected by local education agencies.

- A thoughtful team that is committed to doing what is right for each child.

- Professional development for school leaders around issues of learning for all students and teachers.

- Our state standards, voluntary state curriculum, and assessments are in place and aligned.

- The SEA has used the requirements of the NCLB to focus public education through the Department's strategic plan. The Department has a wonderful data collection system and website to report the results of testing, etc. The various divisions of the Department have used the NCLB to focus their work on behalf of students and schools.

- Professional development for school leaders around issues of learning for all students and teachers.

- Maryland's Superintendent of Schools is very supportive of NCLB, especially Reading First. Departments within our SEA have become better at sharing information and sharing ownership of NCLB initiatives.

- The increased collaboration across divisions within the SEA has been a boost to our ability to work with local school systems. Also, although it was a challenge and

created other issues, I was pleased to see our state testing go from a measure of only school and system performance to now include measures of individual students.

■ Outstanding leadership from our Superintendent, who boldly holds high standards. Outstanding staff throughout the agency!

■ Maryland has a strong history of accountability, student performance reporting, and data-based instructional supports that translate well to NCLB.

■ The longevity of Dr. Grasmick as State Superintendent of Schools contributes greatly to staying the course with a vision, mission, and goals that pre-dated NCLB to educate every child in meaningful content. Under her leadership, the Department staff speaks with one voice through effective communication with local school system (LSS) leaders and close working relationships with the 24 LSSs to provide state-led leadership, technical assistance, and professional development in the implementation of NCLB.

■ We have had strong accountability measures and alternate assessments in place prior to NCLB implementation.

■ The state already had a strong accountability system in place and was able to modify it to be in line with NCLB.

■ 1. A decade of strong, state led educational accountability and testing, replete with a structure of rewards and consequences all the way to the school building level.  2. Strong, consistent leadership at the helm of the sea.  3. Strong state board support. 4. Close and regular SEA/LEA collaboration.

■ Maryland's experience in statewide assessment and strength of our state accountability program. The structure of public education and geography of Maryland with only 24 local school systems and the ability to hold statewide meetings with travel times of no more than 3 hours.

■ We have had an accountability program in place for many years which allowed us to transition to NCLB more efficiently.

■ Outstanding testing and data management practices with some history in these areas (MSPP) voluntary state curriculum; small number of LEAs with fairly tight communication; outstanding strategic planning; strong history in student assessment; existing alternative certification path; and development of HOUSSE rubrics for regular and special educators.

■ Readiness to implement at the conceptual level. Significant experience with a state-led systemic approach to school reform buttressed by the recent work of a Visionary Panel for Better Schools and increased state investment in aid to education.

**21. WHAT ARE OUR SEA'S GREATEST WEAKNESSES IN REGARDS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NCLB (IF ANY)?**

■ Issues related to students with disabilities; no recognition of IDEA eligibility and sanctions through IDEA.

■ We have too few staff in our Division of Special Education who are able to work on instructional issues. The majority of the staff deals with special education compliance. In addition, we do not have ample staff to address schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

■ If we are going to make a difference with our hardest luck cases, there is not likely enough staff and resources to do what needs to be done. We have always been frugal about staffing and supporting initiatives, but the demands on us are growing exponentially and will likely reach a point where we are unable to do what really needs to be done. We had a decade of experience working with low performing schools before NCLB, and we are having a hard time settling on an effective strategy to take those efforts to the next level...particularly without any additional money.

■ Defining a system of school support that leads to positive outcomes for students is difficult. Salary and workload requirements hamper SEA's ability to recruit highly competent staff. Most of the instructional staff with expertise in reading and mathematics are developing assessments.

■ This limits our ability to respond to professional development requests in school systems.

■ Lack of funding; technology infrastructure needs; lack of a state technology portal; organization of the SEA into discreet divisions; and local control by LSSs.

■ Availability to sufficient human and financial resources. Lack of access to properly researched programs that have proven effective in accelerating achievement for specific sub-groups.

■ Adequate staff.

■ Our capacity to provide direct support to schools and systems on their most problematic issues (i.e., special education and LEP).

■ Budget cuts at the federal and state levels make quality implementation impossible with current staff and program dollars.

■ Not enough staff.

■ Pulling in all staff who work in this area so that all services are targeted appropriately and help is delivered effectively and efficiently. Turf battles are diminishing but still exist.

■ Developing technical assistance strategies to meet the needs of all LEAs and obtaining enough highly qualified teachers to serve every classroom in the state.

■ The funding issue remains an issue. It is very frustrating to have programs and requirements mandated by law yet the resources unavailable to fully implement. An example is in the area of character education and drop out prevention. Federal funding has been limited, on a competitive basis, and only for evaluation. More funding is needed to help local school systems implement evidence-based programs.

- There seems to be an exaggerated SEA focus on assessment. This transfers to LEAs who appear to be overly engaged in practicing for the assessment, rather than building foundational skills that children will need for lifelong learning, and incidentally for performing well on the state assessment.

- We just don't have the staff in house to do all that this legislation imagines will be done to assist local school systems. Nor do we have the staff needed to stay on top of the data analyses required to best understand the impact of learning and instruction as measured by state tests. NCLB has been too much and too quick. I am not sure how our SEA will survive the challenges of dealing with restructured schools (or systems) or the backlash from achieving but over-burdened other school systems. And where is the federal leadership in directing SEAs to evidence-based practices? So much of this information is needed to ensure that schools and districts are using federal and state dollars in ways that align with what is known about effective practice and programs.

- The excessive time commitment required without the funding to address the issues means staff works harder, longer, and more, while still continuing to expand services to mean other increasing demands. SEA staff at every level, though, are top performers who are dedicated to meeting demands with excellent products and processes.

- We are currently struggling with effective support for schools in improvement and with maintaining and improving our data management systems. Meeting the requirements of highly qualified teachers will be a challenge in light of teacher shortages.

- The Department would benefit from additional human and fiscal resources to provide the level of service that local school systems want in terms of professional development in the content areas and help designing formative and summative assessments. The staff in the Department does a fantastic job, but they work many long hours to serve the needs of the local school system and the public at large.

- We lack the capacity to serve the number of schools that will be in improvement and restructuring.

- 1. Lack of commitment of teacher organizations to reform. 2. Lack of leadership/commitment in some LEAs. 3. Inadequate federal resources accompanying the legislation

- Providing "highly qualified" teachers in every classroom. We have tweaked the system by offering some small incentives, etc. but until we elevate teaching to a truly professional status and a salary that is competitive with other professions we, along with the rest of the country, will only have marginal success in meeting the NCLB requirements.

- Resources, both human and material, to meet the requirements on time.

- Handling the incredible increase in student data; developing a data system to capture and analyze the myriad pieces associated with "highly qualified" teacher requirement. Special education teacher preparation that does not require content minor or major.

- Limited fiscal and human resources at the state level.

## PART B:    UNDERSTANDING AND COMMUNICATION

| STATEMENTS ON ASSESSMENT  INSTRUMENT | SA (%) | A (%) | N (%) | D (%) | SD (%) | DK/NA (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.   I have a good understanding of the requirements of NCLB as they relate to my job. | 65 | 35 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2.   I have a good understanding of the statewide requirements of NCLB. | 46 | 50 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 3.   The USDOE has effectively communicated the requirements of NCLB to our SEA. | 15 | 54 | 15 | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| 4.   Our SEA has effectively communicated the requirements of NCLB to its individual divisions/departments. | 35 | 58 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 5.   Our SEA has effectively communicated the requirements of NCLB to its individual school districts and schools. | 27 | 65 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 6.   Employees of our SEA have been made aware of their responsibilities in implementing NCLB. | 42 | 50 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Legend:
*SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neither Agree/Disagree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, DK/NA = Don't Know/Not Applicable

**7.  WHAT COULD OUR SEA DO TO IMPROVE THE SYSTEMWIDE UNDERSTANDING OF NCLB REQUIREMENTS AND EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES?**

- If we had a better understanding of areas of potential change or if the interpretations were consistent, we could better explain NCLB to LEAs and employees.

- I think our SEA should continue to do what it has been doing to communicate NCLB requirements. The repetition and continued clarification will result in a deeper understanding.

- It is a significant challenge to get all the requisite information to individuals. While we meet monthly with superintendents and assistant superintendents from the local school systems, the trickle-down of information frequently doesn't happen. Luckily, we have 24 local school systems, and our communication with many of the local departments of education is pretty good. For NCLB, there is an insatiable need for more information that will perpetually drive us to do more. We have tried to reach parents, teachers, principals, central office staffs, our own staffs, and the public with the key facts, but we know that no amount of communications work will be adequate.

- NCLB requirements are understood by most employees. Job descriptions and performance evaluations need to align better to NCLB requirements.

- More and better internal communication; SEA needs more than small percentage off the top of subgrants in order to lead statewide strategic, systemic change; USDOE needs to be consistent on reporting requirements.

- Continue to maintain well-designed Web-based information for the public and professionals. Ensure that higher education (teacher and principal) preparation programs provide needed information as part of their programs.

- This is a resources issue, but not a critical problem.

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■ Make sure that everyone who represents MSDE has a working knowledge of NCLB and experts to consult when new questions arise.

■ Develop a Standing Operational Procedures document for requirements, implementation, and documentation.

■ We need to continue to engage with dialogue with all stakeholder groups about the requirements. The performance program for employees needs to be aligned with the requirements as appropriate.

■ Our SEA could benefit by organizing large and small group meetings of personnel associated with NCLB. These meetings would help staff understand better how they connect to NCLB as a large initiative and also how they might better connect to peers within the SEA in promoting NCLB statewide.

■ I don't know.

■ Dr. Grasmick holds periodic briefings for the staff which are effective in sharing information. Continue these as well as the newsletters that are sent to all staff via e-mail that highlight important information-these help keep all staff informed of updates. The Executive Team meets regularly with Dr. Grasmick and information is shared that is brought back to the Divisions by each Asst. State Superintendent. The Department also publishes a printed newsletter that typically focuses on one issue in NCLB, for example, highly qualified teachers or assessment requirements, and those newsletters are very useful as well and should be continued.

■ I think the SEA has done an excellent job in this regard.

■ I think our SEA has done an excellent job of making employees aware of this legislation's requirements.

■ The requirements of NCLB are so far reaching that substantial funding for marketing and communicating its directives should have come with the law. We need to reach every home by several means, including a state-produced videotape to every parent.

■ Consistent rules regarding the implementation of the requirements.

■ NCLB cuts across the organizational structure (a problem, as well, in school systems). Single-point coordination might be worth a look. Minimally, a web site (or dedicated section of our web site) exclusively "NCLB" might help. The key is in trying to pull all of the NCLB items, FAQs, etc. into one spot.

■ Continue to enhance access to information via the Web.

## *PART C:* *REQUIREMENTS OF THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT*

| STATEMENTS ON ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT | SA (%) | A (%) | N (%) | D (%) | SD (%) | DK/NA (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Our SEA is currently in compliance with NCLB state requirements in the following areas: | | | | | | |
| a. Academic Standards | 64 | 36 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| b. Accountability/Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) | 56 | 28 | 4 | 8 | 0 | 4 |
| c. Reporting | 60 | 32 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| d. Low-Performing Schools | 52 | 28 | 8 | 8 | 0 | 4 |
| e. School Support and Recognition | 44 | 44 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| f. Student Assessment | 68 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| g. Teacher Qualifications | 36 | 28 | 12 | 16 | 0 | 8 |
| h. Paraprofessional Qualifications | 24 | 28 | 24 | 12 | 0 | 12 |
| i. Reading First/Early Reading First Programs | 44 | 28 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| j. Transferability | 40 | 32 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 12 |
| k. Data Management | 36 | 32 | 8 | 8 | 0 | 16 |
| l. Public School Choice | 36 | 48 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| m. Professional Development | 28 | 40 | 16 | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| n. Students With Disabilities and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) | 40 | 28 | 8 | 8 | 0 | 16 |
| o. Supplemental Educational Services | 40 | 40 | 4 | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| p. Educational Technology | 32 | 28 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| q. Student Safety & Health | 36 | 32 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| r. Overall Organization of the SEA | 32 | 52 | 8 | 4 | 0 | 4 |

Legend:
*C = In Compliance, P = In the Process of Becoming Compliant, N = Not in Compliance, DK/NA = Don't Know/Not Applicable

| STATEMENTS ON ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT | SA (%) | A (%) | N (%) | D (%) | SD (%) | DK/NA (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. Our SEA will have difficulty complying with NCLB state requirements in the following areas: | | | | | | |
| a. Academic Standards | 4 | 13 | 4 | 22 | 48 | 9 |
| b. Accountability/Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) | 0 | 30 | 9 | 9 | 39 | 13 |
| c. Reporting | 0 | 13 | 9 | 26 | 35 | 17 |
| d. Low-Performing Schools | 12 | 24 | 12 | 12 | 28 | 12 |
| e. School Support and Recognition | 0 | 9 | 4 | 30 | 35 | 22 |
| f. Student Assessment | 0 | 0 | 4 | 30 | 48 | 17 |
| g. Teacher Qualifications | 13 | 33 | 17 | 4 | 21 | 13 |
| h. Paraprofessional Qualifications | 4 | 36 | 8 | 16 | 20 | 16 |
| i. Reading First/Early Reading First Programs | 0 | 0 | 13 | 26 | 30 | 30 |
| j. Transferability | 0 | 13 | 22 | 17 | 30 | 17 |
| k. Data Management | 4 | 17 | 17 | 22 | 22 | 17 |
| l. Public School Choice | 4 | 17 | 9 | 30 | 26 | 13 |
| m. Professional Development | 5 | 5 | 14 | 36 | 18 | 23 |
| n. Students With Disabilities and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) | 13 | 29 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 21 |
| o. Supplemental Educational Services | 0 | 9 | 9 | 32 | 32 | 18 |
| p. Educational Technology | 0 | 4 | 13 | 26 | 22 | 35 |
| q. Student Safety & Health | 0 | 4 | 17 | 26 | 22 | 30 |
| r. Overall Organization of the SEA | 0 | 4 | 9 | 30 | 26 | 30 |

Legend:
*SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neither Agree/Disagree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, DK/NA = Don't Know/Not Applicable

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| STATEMENTS ON ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT | SA (%) | A (%) | N (%) | D (%) | SD (%) | DK/NA (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. The implementation of the following components of NCLB will benefit students. | | | | | | |
| a. Academic Standards | 52 | 44 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| b. Accountability/Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) | 28 | 56 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| c. Reporting | 32 | 56 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| d. Low-Performing Schools | 36 | 44 | 8 | 4 | 0 | 8 |
| e. School Support and Recognition | 32 | 44 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| f. Student Assessment | 32 | 60 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| g. Teacher Qualifications | 40 | 36 | 12 | 4 | 0 | 8 |
| h. Paraprofessional Qualifications | 16 | 52 | 20 | 4 | 0 | 8 |
| i. Reading First/Early Reading First Programs | 32 | 48 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| j. Transferability | 8 | 32 | 36 | 4 | 4 | 16 |
| k. Data Management | 32 | 40 | 16 | 4 | 0 | 8 |
| l. Public School Choice | 12 | 32 | 28 | 12 | 4 | 12 |
| m. Professional Development | 40 | 48 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| n. Students With Disabilities and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) | 32 | 48 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 12 |
| o. Supplemental Educational Services | 20 | 40 | 28 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| p. Educational Technology | 24 | 44 | 16 | 4 | 0 | 12 |
| q. Student Safety & Health | 29 | 42 | 8 | 8 | 0 | 13 |
| r. Overall Organization of the SEA | 21 | 42 | 25 | 4 | 0 | 8 |

Legend:
*SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neither Agree/Disagree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, DK/NA = Don't Know/Not Applicable

**For items 4 through 7, please refer to the 18 areas of NCLB contained in previous questions.**

**4. LIST THE THREE AREAS OF NCLB THAT OUR SEA IS MOST PREPARED TO CURRENTLY COMPLY WITH.**

- Assessment, reporting, and SEA administration.

- Standards. We retooled our content standards in 2003 and believe ours are as good as they get. NCLB helped us push through grade-by-grade standards where we had grade band standards before. Reporting. We have an outstanding Web site and a good system of providing the public and school folks hard copy report cards. AYP. We have used the data correctly to identify schools in school improvement.

- Academic standards, accountability, and adequate yearly progress, student assessment.

- Academic standards.

- The academic standards for all students and the need to strive to accelerate achievement for all students. The technical assistance to low performing schools is a critical need and beginning to be effectively addressed by our Department. If done well by local school systems and our Department this area potentially holds the greatest promise for students attending low performing schools – and that is thousands!!! The high quality testing program is continuing to develop on course and in a proper timeframe.

- Assessment and accountability, standards, Title I provisions.

- AYP, student assessments, and academic standards.

- Standards, student assessment, and accountability.

- Assessments that are currently required by NCLB and reporting to the public and to parents.

- Assessment, AYP, and reporting.

- Data management, reporting, and student assessment.

- State academic standards, accountability and student assessment.

- Data management, reporting, and student assessment.

- Reading first, academic standards, and student assessment.

- Academic standards, AYP, and Reading First.

- AYP, HQT, and supplemental services.

- Standards, reporting, and student assessment.

- Academic standards, student assessment, and overall organization of the SEA.

- Participation in assessment program, participation in alternate assessment, and data collection of professional development.

- Standards, assessments, and help and assistance to low performing schools.

- Academic standards, accountability/reporting, and student assessment.

- Academic standards, assessment, and accountability/AYP.

■ Academic standards. A new voluntary state curriculum tied to state content standards in core academic areas aligns all assessments with instruction consistently across the state. Accountability/AYP. The previous state-driven assessment program was internally tied to an accountability system which looked at schools progress/regress on a cumulative basis. Student assessment. We have a ten-year history in high stakes assessment prior to NCLB. That experience base helped us know exactly what to highlight for NCLB testing.

■ Student assessment, Reading First/Early Reading First Programs, and educational technology.

■ Academic standards, student assessment, accountability/AYP.

5. **LIST THE THREE AREAS OF NCLB THAT OUR SEA IS THE LEAST PREPARED TO CURRENTLY COMPLY WITH.**

■ Implementation of teacher qualifications, achievement of students with disabilities, and supplemental services.

■ Highly qualified teachers. These data are very hard to collect and get accurate, so the state struggles to produce data for which we are very comfortable. But more than that, there is a dearth of certified and qualified teachers in the lowest performing schools and districts. The 100% highly qualified teacher's goal may be elusive. Dealing with low performing schools. The needs of these schools are complex, and the leadership in these schools is frequently very poor. Our most challenging situation may continue to be beyond our reach, given the fact that districts with high concentrations of such schools are very poorly prepared to deal with their needs. The actual role of MSDE in this respect is unclear. Again, we worked with some of these schools in the 1990's and found that they were near to impossible to budge. Special education. Special education students are the subgroup that most frequently causes a school to miss AYP. The reason may be that the label Special Education covers a multitude of conditions. While we set the passing standards in a way that recognizes the presence of these students in our student population, our challenge is that the least able of special education students will not likely make the standard. Consequently these so-called "gray area" kids are not properly factored into school accountability. The problem for us is that many such students are able to do more and will perform at higher levels now that they are taught more effectively, but we do not know where the lower limit lies. There are students for whom the standards are unreasonable. In time, the feds will need to help us make sure that such students are treated fairly in the accountability system.

■ Paraprofessional qualifications and professional development.

■ Accountability/adequate yearly progress (AYP) and data management.

■ The recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers in core academic areas for all students is the single most critical challenge for the state, school systems, and the nation. If we fail in this area we will fail to achieve the promise of NCLB and public education in general for countless students.

■ Special education students who are just above the 1% most severely cognitively challenged students.

■ Low performing schools, school support, and teacher qualifications.

■ Teacher qualifications (in specific districts), students with disabilities and limited English proficient, and Reading First.

■ Future high school testing requirements, especially the cost.

- Support to low performing schools, paraprofessionals, and true parental involvement by schools in improvement.

- How to impact the ability of students in low performing schools to meet student achievement goals, how to address local school district needs regarding the achievement of students with disabilities and who are LEP students, and how to ensure all students have highly qualified teachers.

- Teacher qualifications, paraprofessional qualifications, and professional development.

- Public school choice, paraprofessional qualifications, transferability.

- Low performing schools, data management, and professional development.

- Professional development and school choice.

- Accountability/AYP – although our accountability plan is well-reasoned and leads to the goal of 100% proficient by 2013-14, will our schools and systems actually be able to reach the proficiency targets?? Teacher qualifications and low performing schools – finding the right combination of support and enforcement.

- Providing highly qualified teachers.

- Data management.

- Teacher qualifications, low performing schools, and SEA organization.

- Data management, professional development, and low performing schools.

- Low performing schools, teacher qualification – systemic, national shortages in math and science and insufficient numbers of teachers in our teacher preparation pipeline are a chronic challenge, and transferability.

- Accountability/AYP, teacher qualifications, and data management.

- Low performing schools.

6. **LIST THE THREE AREAS OF NCLB THAT WILL POSE THE GREATEST CHALLENGES FOR OUR SEA OVERALL (IF ANY).**

- Improving achievement of subgroups, impact of highly qualified teacher requirements, and implications of school status and AYP.

- Low performing schools, highly qualified teachers, and special education.

- Students with disabilities and Limited English Proficiency, support to low performing schools and school systems especially those in corrective action and restructuring, and teacher qualifications.

- Accountability/adequate yearly progress (AYP), data management, and students with disabilities and Limited English Proficiency.

- Providing genuine value to school systems and schools in their efforts to achieve increase student achievement for all sub groups of students.

- Special education

- Teacher qualifications, low performing schools, and school support.

- Low performing schools, teacher qualifications, and students with disabilities and Limited English Proficiency.

- Funding to meet the requirements.

- How to impact the ability of students in low performing schools to meet the student achievement goals, how to address local systems' needs regarding the achievement of students with disabilities and who are LEP students, and how to ensure all students have highly qualified teachers.

- Teacher qualifications and technical assistance to LEAs.

- How to impact the ability of students in low performing schools to meet student achievement goals, how to address local systems' need regarding the achievement of students with disabilities and who are LEP students, and how to ensure all students have highly qualified teachers.

- Accountability/adequate yearly progress, low performing schools, and student disabilities and limited English proficiency.

- Low performing schools, special education, and professional development.

- Special education and LEP – these are difficult populations for our schools and systems to reach effectively. Effective support for low performing schools.

- Students with disabilities and limited English proficiency, low performing schools, and accountability and adequate yearly progress.

- Highly qualified teachers and subgroup AYP.

- Data management and school choice

- Teacher qualifications, low performing schools, and SEA organization.

- Data management.

- Students with disabilities and LEP, professional development, and public school choice.

- Accountability/adequate yearly progress (AYP), low performing schools, and teacher qualifications.

- Low performing schools and data management.

7. **LIST THE THREE AREAS OF NCLB THAT WILL PROVIDE THE GREATEST BENEFITS FOR OUR SEA (IF ANY).**

- Recognition of need to improve content standards and measure students against grade specific content, systemic measures of the performance of subgroups, and understanding of subgroup achievement, as well as the persistent nature of underachievement among subgroups.

- Accountability/ AYP, student assessment and reporting, and teacher qualifications.

- Academic standards, data management, and educational technology (if funded).

- The law will continue to help us focus our efforts to be efficient and effective—for we will not succeed if we are not responsive to the law's requirements and the school systems' needs.

- Academic standards, student assessments, and AYP.

- Standards, reporting, and professional development.

- Focusing our efforts on areas of greatest need/resources, and challenging us to reexamine our priorities and internal processes for delivering services to local school systems.

- Reading First, academic standards, and teacher qualifications.

- Academic standards and special education.

- Professional development, teacher qualifications, and paraprofessional qualifications.

- Greater emphasis on intra-agency coordination.

- Data management and professional development.

- Professional development, teacher qualifications, and academic standards.

- Academic standards, Reading First/Early Reading First Programs, and reporting.

- Teacher qualifications.

- None.

## *PART D:     SUBGRANTS*

| STATEMENTS ON ASSESSMENT  INSTRUMENT | SA (%) | A (%) | N (%) | D (%) | SD (%) | DK/NA (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.   The successful implementation of the following subgrants is of critical importance within our state's educational environment: | | | | | | |
| a.   Even Start Family Literacy | 32 | 36 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 24 |
| b.   Education of Migrant Children | 20 | 28 | 16 | 12 | 0 | 24 |
| c.   Prevention and Intervention for Children Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk | 36 | 28 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 28 |
| d.   Comprehensive School Reform | 44 | 24 | 8 | 4 | 0 | 20 |
| e.   Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund | 40 | 28 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 24 |
| f.   Enhanced Education Through Technology | 40 | 32 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 20 |
| g.   Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities | 32 | 32 | 16 | 4 | 0 | 16 |
| h.   Community Service Grants | 12 | 28 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 28 |
| i.   21$^{st}$ Century Community Learning Centers | 25 | 33 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 21 |

Legend:
*SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neither Agree/Disagree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, DK/NA = Don't Know/Not Applicable

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## *PART E:    ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE*

| STATEMENTS ON ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT | SA (%) | A (%) | N (%) | D (%) | SD (%) | DK/NA (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The current organizational structure of our SEA is adequate to promote effective NCLB implementation and future success in compliance with its requirements. | 16 | 32 | 20 | 32 | 0 | 0 |
| 2. The current management system within our SEA is efficiently addressing the implementation of NCLB requirements. | 28 | 52 | 8 | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| 3. The current implementation process is well defined by our SEA. | 36 | 44 | 8 | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| 4. Input on effective implementation strategies is gathered from all levels of our SEA. | 28 | 44 | 16 | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| 5. The implementation of NCLB requirements is being effectively coordinated across areas of responsibility. | 21 | 50 | 13 | 13 | 4 | 0 |
| 6. There is collaboration among our SEA divisions in the implementation of NCLB. | 36 | 56 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |

Legend:
*SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neither Agree/Disagree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, DK/NA = Don't Know/Not Applicable

**7.  WHAT CHANGES IN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE COULD IMPROVE NCLB IMPLEMENTATION EFFORTS IN OUR SEA (IF ANY)?**

- Clear assignment of lead responsibility for certain NCLB functions.

- The handling of low performing schools requires a cross-divisional team to coordinate, and it is helping very much to improve uniform approaches to schools. While there is confidence in what the Title I schools are receiving, there is less confidence in some other areas, but that is improving. Assembling effective strategies that we can afford is a huge challenge.

- Realignment of responsibilities for support to low performing schools (i.e. positions targeted as technical assistant/monitor for school improvement).

- Greater emphasis on vertical articulation across various divisions rather than by individual programs or "content".

- The state has a tremendous resource in its voluntary state curriculum --the Department needs to structure its available resources to assist the leadership of the 24 school systems improve the performance of teachers in teaching the curriculum requirements. This would require a major shift in fiscal resources within the Department to acquire the level of trained staff for deployment in partnership with leadership in school systems.

- Question is unclear (as many questions have been). If by implementation you mean strictly implementing the law - we are fine. But if you mean ensuring that student and school performance requirements are met - than we need significant adjustments.

- Reallocation of resources to provide support in reading and math to low performing schools.

- A clear line of who must deliver school-based support is needed.

- Increase staffing or shift staff to areas that are greatly impacted by NCLB requirements.

■ It would be helpful if a position were established for a point person whose single focus would be to coordinate all aspects of NCLB and provide for more open communication channels among staff implementing NCLB requirements.

■ We need to reorganize in order to address the NCLB requirements for low-performing schools and districts. We may also need to reevaluate how professional development is provided across the department.

■ Resources -- people and funding -- for several initiatives are in separate divisions and need to be brought together and allocated in the most effective manner. This is true for assistance to schools in improvement status and for the provision of professional development for teachers and instructional leaders.

■ No changes are needed - implementation efforts are clearly communicated. The Web site is a very useful tool for both state and local educators and the general public to use to obtain information.

■ Consolidate professional development into one division.

■ Work with low performing schools needs to be integrated. Currently handled by two divisions. The one division deals with schools in improvement and the other deals with Title 1 schools. In many instances, we are talking about the same schools. Resources need to be consolidated and focused.

■ Additional resources.

■ This is a highly effective structure with excellent cross-divisional communications and a non-silo mentality. At the same time, it might be worth considering a discrete branch (if not a division) with responsibility for federal accountability. This is tricky, of course, since this entity would be reliant in large measure to other departments. Under present leadership, the current structure is working well.

■ None recommended.

## PART F:    ACCOUNTABILITY

| STATEMENTS ON ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT | SA (%) | A (%) | N (%) | D (%) | SD (%) | DK/NA (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. A single, statewide accountability system is applied to all public schools and LEAs equally. | 80 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2. All public school students are included in our state accountability system. | 84 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3. Current state accountability plans are adequate to bring all students to 100 percent proficiency in reading/language arts and mathematics within 12 years. | 12 | 12 | 40 | 24 | 8 | 4 |
| 4. Our SEA makes appropriate annual decisions about the achievement of all public schools and LEAs. | 32 | 56 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| 5. The state definition of AYP is based primarily on our state's academic assessments. | 44 | 44 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| 6. Our SEA is providing appropriate assistance to schools in implementing the requirements of NCLB. | 12 | 44 | 36 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| 7. Current state plans place an appropriate level of accountability on schools for student performance. | 24 | 68 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 8. Current state plans adequately reward successful schools. | 16 | 28 | 24 | 28 | 0 | 4 |
| 9. Current state plans adequately identify low-performing schools. | 48 | 44 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| 10. Current state plans provide adequate assistance to low-performing schools | 4 | 28 | 20 | 40 | 4 | 4 |
| 11. Current state plans adequately sanction failing schools. | 16 | 48 | 16 | 12 | 4 | 4 |
| 12. Our state plan to provide supplemental educational services is adequate to promote the meeting of state student performance requirements under NCLB. | 8 | 56 | 16 | 4 | 0 | 16 |
| 13. Our state plan to ensure public school choice is adequate to promote the meeting of state student performance requirements under NCLB. | 4 | 60 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 16 |

Legend:
*SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neither Agree/Disagree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, DK/NA = Don't Know/Not Applicable

**14. PLEASE LIST SPECIFIC STATE ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES YOU BELIEVE SHOULD BE MODIFIED TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF NCLB IMPLEMENTATION (IF ANY).**

- How systems in school improvement are identified.

- We are working on the issue of supports for low performing schools and will face an ongoing challenge making this work for all schools.

- None.

- Don't know.

- We are fine with current implementation effort.

- How we provide assistance to low performing schools.

■ I do not think that it is possible for the state to meet 100% proficiency requirements within the next 12 years. To draw a flat curve for the first years and a steep curve for out years to meet the 12-year target appears foolish and does not address the problem.

■ Again, issues specific to low performing schools need to be revised.

■ Adequate yearly progress - the bar will be raised each year and will get harder to reach in each ensuing year. The measure should be looked at to ensure it is a realistic milestone.

■ The timeline for accelerating academic achievement of special education students may need to be adjusted. For too many years, special education student access to the general curriculum and to highly qualified teachers has been significantly limited. The "catch-up" timeframe will undoubtedly be longer.

## 15. PLEASE LIST NEW STATE ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES THAT SHOULD BE ADDED (IF ANY).

■ The HQT requirement is unreachable in Maryland unless we do something significant to increase recruitment and training of new teachers. MSDE cannot do this alone. We need colleges and universities and the community to aid us. We particularly need help in getting HQ teachers into low performing schools and systems.

■ Don't know.

■ There is a general feeling that with the high degree of emphasis on reading, math, and science principally to achieve proficiency standards, other subjects and high-level achievement could suffer. Would like to see either state or federal standards include indicators of "high-end achievement" for all students. Examples could be rigorous course taking patterns in high school, participation in SAT-AP programs and testing, dual enrollment in college-high school, early college program participation, participation in Gifted and Talented programs, etc.

■ See #14- I do not think that it is possible for the state to meet 100% proficiency requirements within the next 12 years. To draw a flat curve for the first years and a steep curve for out years to meet the 12 year target appears foolish and does not address the problem.

■ Would like to see a hierarchy of subgroup accountability that reduces duplicated counting of students with multiple eligibilities.

■ What do you do with a school that has been restructured and still doesn't show improvement? How long does a system stay in corrective action?

■ Parents need to be partners with the schools - so many of the issues impacting students' performance stem from problems in the family or the home. Accountability for behavior, for studying, and for completing homework should begin at home.

■ Two responses stated None.