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TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Nancy S. Grasmick 

DATE: April 26, 2011

SUBJECT: Senate Bill 467 and House Bill 59: *Task Force to Explore the Incorporation of the Principles of Universal Design for Learning into the Education Systems in Maryland*

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform the members of the State Board of Education regarding the activities for Senate Bill 467 and House Bill 59: *Task Force to Explore the Incorporation of the Principles of Universal Design for Learning into the Education Systems in Maryland* and share the findings and recommendations made by the Task Force.

BACKGROUND:

During the 2010 legislative session, Senate Bill 467 and House Bill 59 were enacted requesting the establishment of the *Task Force to Explore the Incorporation of the Principles of Universal Design for Learning into the Education Systems in Maryland*. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) was to provide staffing for the Task Force. The Task Force was required to study and make specific recommendations on the feasibility of applying and incorporating the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) into the policies, practices, and curriculum of the education systems in Maryland, on or before December 31, 2010. An extension was requested by the Chair, and granted for the work to be completed by March 31, 2011.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In response to Senate Bill 467 and House Bill 59, the Governor's Office appointed five (5) representatives, including the Chair, and MSDE requested that the remaining entities specified in the Bills identify a representative to be a member of the Task Force. Dr. Denise DeCoste from Montgomery County Public Schools was appointed as the Task Force Chair, along with the twenty-one (21) other representatives as outlined in the Bills. Dr. DeCoste, with support from MSDE staff, designed two full day meetings and several interim activities in order to meet the requirements of the Bills.

Descriptions of the Task Force Activities:

Activity 1:

- The first full day Task Force meeting was held on October 20, 2010 at the MSDE. The Task Force Chair and MSDE staff introduced themselves along with the members of the Task Force. The results of a previously administered online survey of the members regarding their knowledge of Universal Design for Learning were discussed. The eighteen (18) survey respondents revealed that three (3) individuals were novices, eight (8) at the intermediate level and seven (7) at the advanced level in their knowledge of UDL principles; there were six (6) individuals at the novice, intermediate, and advanced levels in their knowledge of educational practices associated with UDL; and seven (7) individuals were novices, five (5) at the intermediate level and six (6) at the advanced level in their understanding of the administrative role in the implementation of UDL. Due to the varied levels of understanding of UDL, a practical lesson design using the principles of UDL was modeled for the Task Force members by implementing the lesson as if they were the group of learners.
- The charge was discussed and it was determined that subcommittees would be needed to meet the Bills' requirements. Based upon interest and experience, the Task Force members divided into three subcommittees; Curriculum and Assessment, Materials and Technology, and Teacher Preparation (inservice/preservice). Each subcommittee, selected a leader and all participated in an activity to define what subcommittee members already knew about UDL and their topic area, and what they needed to know in reference to the principles of UDL and their implementation. The subcommittee members agreed to read articles related to their committee topic and complete interviews of experts or individuals experienced in implementing UDL to fill in any gaps in knowledge not found in the literature. The subcommittees developed questions to be answered by their readings as well as structured interview questions to be used with the identified UDL practitioners and experts. The Task Force was introduced to Google Docs and Diigo as a means of posting and sharing information and articles in an online format.

Activity 2:

- The three subcommittees had two (2) major assignments to complete prior to the last full Task Force meeting. Each subcommittee was given general informational articles about UDL, in addition to articles specific to their topic and UDL to read and summarize. Formats for article review submissions were provided, and upon completion were sent to their subcommittee leader to forward to the MSDE staff for compilation.

- In addition, from a list of interviewees compiled by the Chair with input from Task Force members, each subcommittee member selected one or two individuals with knowledge about their topic area to interview, and completed a question response form for submission to MSDE staff. In between the readings and the interviews each subcommittee participated in a webinar with the Task Force Chair to assess their work progress and to clarify any questions or issues raised by the subcommittee members. All of the article summaries and interview response forms were compiled by MSDE staff for use during the final Task Force meeting and served as a basis for the final Task Force report.

Activity 3:

- The last full day meeting of the Task Force was held on January 11, 2011 at the MSDE. Information was shared regarding what the MSDE is already doing to incorporate UDL principles and guidelines into its work. Based upon their individual readings and interviews and the compiled information from the members' submissions, Task Force members worked in groups to begin to craft recommendations for each of the education entities; the State Board of Education, the MSDE, local school systems, schools, and institutions of higher education. In addition, Task Force members generated suggestions for outreach activities.

Activity 4:

- The information from the final meeting was compiled, and draft recommendations and the final draft report were shared with the Task Force members for their feedback and the constituents they represented.

Attached is the final copy of the Task Force report in response to Senate Bill 467 and House Bill 59: *Task Force to Explore the Incorporation of the Principles of Universal Design for Learning into the Education Systems in Maryland* for your review and consideration. It is anticipated that a presentation to the Board of Education for further discussion will be on the calendar in the near future. The Task Force came to consensus that at this time, it would be premature to promulgate regulations, therefore, only recommendations are provided. Copies of the Task Force report have been submitted to the Chairs of the following legislative committees: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs; Senate Budget and Taxation; House Ways and Means; and, House Health and Government Operations Committees, as stipulated in the Bills.

ACTION:

For information only. No action is required at this time.

Attachment