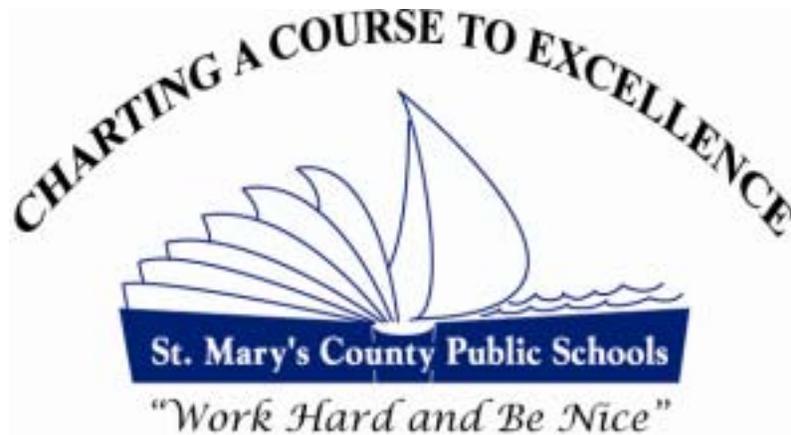


# St. Mary's County Public Schools

## Bridge to Excellence Master Plan 2008 Annual Update

### Part I



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Dr. Michael J. Martirano, Superintendent of Schools  
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Mrs. Linda J. Dudderar, Chief Academic Officer  
Mr. William C. Caplins, Director of Technology  
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Mr. F. Michael Wyant, Supervisor of Safety & Security

Note: For more information, please visit our website at <http://www.smcps.k12.md.us>.



Please direct all inquiries about this document to:

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# **The 2008 Master Plan Annual Update**

## **Authorization and Purpose**

### Authorization

Section 5-401, Comprehensive Master Plans, of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland

### Purpose

The Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002 (BTE) requires that each local school system reassess and revise its Master Plan as necessary and submit an Annual Update to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for review. Each local school system should submit the Annual Update to the county board at least 60 days prior to the final submission to MSDE. MSDE can request revisions to ensure that updated plans are having the effect of improving student achievement, eliminating achievement gaps, and increasing progress toward meeting State performance targets.

## **Background**

In 2002, the State of Maryland strengthened its standards-based education reform model to ensure Maryland public education was adequately and equitably funded. Perhaps the most important element of this reform effort was the enactment of The Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act (BTE), which resulted in a significant increase in State funding and gave school systems the flexibility to determine the best allocation of those resources. In exchange, school systems are held accountable for the performance of their schools and their students.

As part of the standards-based education reform model, the State established content area and grade level standards for student achievement as well as performance standards to support student learning at high levels. These standards are designed so that all students are proficient in reading and mathematics, receive a high school diploma, are taught by highly qualified teachers, and attend safe schools.

Under the Bridge to Excellence Act, each school system was required to develop, adopt, and implement a five-year comprehensive Master Plan linking funding from federal, State, and local sources to strategies designed to improve student achievement and school performance. The plans are updated annually.

Because the Master Plan Updates, by law, are due to the county boards and the Maryland State Department of Education before some or all of the MSA and HSA data analysis are final, the assessment data contained in this updated Master Plan, unless noted otherwise, is preliminary only. It does not reflect the full analysis necessary to ascertain AYP or students' progress toward achieving a diploma. The update will be amended to reflect final assessment data analysis when it is available.

**Bridge to Excellence Master Plan  
2008 Annual Update**

**Part I: The Content— Due: October 15, 2008**

**Local School System Submitting This Report:** St. Mary's County Public Schools

**Address:** 23160 Moakley Street, Leonardtown, Maryland 20650

**Local Point of Contact:**

**Name:** Mrs. Linda Dudderar, Chief Academic Officer

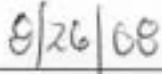
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**WE HEREBY CERTIFY** that, to the best of our knowledge, the information provided in the 2008 Annual Update to our Bridge to Excellence Master Plan is correct and complete. We further certify that this Annual Update has been developed in consultation with members of the local school system's current Master Plan Planning Team and that each member has reviewed and approved the accuracy of the information provided in the Annual Update.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (Local Superintendent of Schools)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

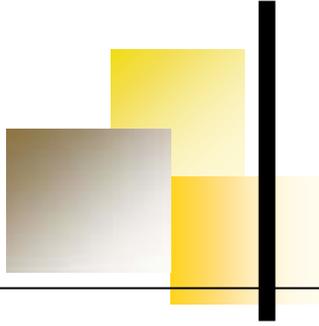
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (Local Point of Contact)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### Local Planning Team Members

Use this page to identify the members of the school system's Bridge to Excellence Master Plan Planning Team. Where applicable, include their affiliation or title within the local school system.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation/Title with Local School System</b>
Mrs. Linda J. Dudderar	Chief Academic Officer, BTE Point of Contact
Mr. J. Bradley Clements	Chief Operating Officer
Mrs. Kathleen Lyon	Executive Director of Student Services
Mr. Jeffrey Maher	Director of Professional and Organizational Development
Dr. Edward Weiland	Director of Human Resources
Mr. Theo L. Cramer	Director of Academic Support
Dr. Charles E. Ridgell, III	Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Mrs. Kelly Hall	Director of Elementary Instruction, Administration, and School Improvement
Mr. J. Scott Smith	Director of Secondary Instruction, Administration, and School Improvement
Mrs. Melissa Charbonnet	Director of Special Education
Mr. William Caplins	Director of Technology
Mrs. Regina Greely	Supervisor of Data Warehouse, Instructional Technology, and Library/Media
Mrs. Janis Taylor	Supervisor of School Improvement and Strategic Planning
Mrs. Rhonda Maleen	Restricted Grants Accountant



# 2008 Master Plan Annual Update

## Guidance

### PART I



## **Executive Summary to the 2008 Annual Update**

### **Overview**

St. Mary's County Public Schools has once again taken bold, yet measured, steps in our journey to move our school system from good to great to greater. Our streamlined mission statement requires that we know the learner and the learning, expecting excellence in both. We commit to educating all students, accepting no excuses, and building our organization on rigor, relevance, respect and positive relationships. We build all that we do throughout our school system on these commitments to our students, teachers, and community. The renewed energy and focus in our school system continues and the epidemic of targeted improvement and strengthened relationships prevails.

### **Focus**

We are focused on targeted, short term cycles of improvement via our Professional Learning Communities. Our practitioners are continuously examining, assessing, and fine-tuning their instructional practice each day based on assessment results. Our data warehouse provides immediate information regarding student achievement. Our student information system, *eSchool Plus*, allows another lens to sharpen the focus on individual student progress and to identify the barriers that hinder that progress. The momentum that we have achieved by shifting our focus to teams of teachers who have found more effective ways to reach our students is encouraging and invigorating. We have provided nearly \$70,000 for our collaborative teams to meet at the schools to assure that teachers are learning together and reflecting on and improving upon their practice. In the 2009 school year, we have provided the same level of funding and added four early release days to our calendar dedicated to collaborative planning and professional learning communities. Our streamlined school improvement plans and process and the more relevant emphasis on team collaborative plans have shifted the locus of our strategic planning to the people who truly will make the difference.

### **School System Priorities and Distribution of Fiscal Resources-*Tough Decisions and Funding Priorities***

Looking back at our fiscal climate during the last school year, we realized an \$18,274,447 increase in our FY 08 operating budget over our FY 07 funding, a 12.05% increase. However, \$4,154,976 of the FY 08 budget increase was allocated to the GASB 45 requirement, Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB), having an allocation of \$3,154,976 and the possible Health Call having an allocation of \$1,000,000. Due to these additional budget allocations the net increase in our FY 08 operating budget over our FY 07 funding realized was \$14,119,471, a 9.3% increase. A significant portion of this budget increase was targeted to honoring our negotiated agreement and continuing to assure competitive salaries for our teachers (8<sup>th</sup> in the state for beginning teacher salaries). We added 94.09 new positions, 71% of which were classroom teachers and support to teachers. Additionally, SMCPS received \$22,765,000 in the Capital Budget to support 12 capital projects.

For the current year, we have realized a \$10,722,582 increase in our FY 09 operating budget over our FY 08 funding, a 6.3% increase. However, \$5,086,200 of this budget increase is allocated to the GASB 45 requirement, Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB). Due to this additional budget allocation, the

net increase in our FY 09 operating budget over our FY 08 funding realized is \$5,636,382, a 3.3% increase. A significant portion of our budget increase was targeted to honoring our negotiated agreement and continuing to assure competitive salaries for our teachers. We added 11.35 new positions, 97% of which were classroom teachers and support staff. Additionally, SMCPs received \$19,888,000 in the Capital Budget to support 15 capital projects.

### **Funding Priorities-Educational Pathways**

**A variety of Educational Pathways have been established to assure that students are given varied opportunities to pursue instructional programs that are tailored to their needs:**

- **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Academies**-We have continued into the second year of academies at the elementary, middle and high school level. This rigorous and unique program of study emphasizes the core areas of mathematics and science with an infusion of technology and engineering. The program includes extensive laboratory experiences using the most contemporary technologies for scientific inquiring, mathematical calculation, engineering design and problem solving techniques. There is an emphasis on critical and creative thinking in an interdisciplinary approach to learning. Culminating projects will provide opportunity for application of learning. Mentorships and internships will be supported by our military contract community and the Patuxent River Naval Air Station engineers, scientists, and test pilots.
- **The Chesapeake Public Charter School (CPCS)**-This elementary, K-6, charter school opened on August 22, 2007 and accommodates 214 students. CPCS is Southern Maryland's first charter school with a focus on integrated instruction and environmental themes. They completed their first year with excellent achievement results and sound financial management.
- **Fairlead Academy**-Fairlead Academy is a ninth grade program that is designed to meet the academic needs of 60 underachieving incoming ninth grade students. The students will receive extended instructional time in mathematics and English. Fairlead Academy will also offer small class sizes with a 1:10 student to teacher ratio, a mentoring period each day, monthly academic and enrichment field trips, the infusion of interactive technology, and extensive support and training from central office for teachers. Once the students transition back to their home high schools for their 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade years, they will be provided with ongoing support from a transition coordinator.
- **Tech Connect**-Tech Connect is a program housed at the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center (JAFCTC) and aimed at engaging first year freshmen by developing their technology literacy. The program takes 75 freshmen who had struggled in middle school and showed signs that they may ultimately drop out of school. Students travel to the JAFCTC daily and receive 60 minutes of instruction with embedded elements of mathematical fluency and supportive mentorship. Their goal is to pass the class and earn the five credits needed to move to their sophomore year.
- **Middle School Reform Initiative**-The recommendations of the Middle School Task Force were implemented, the most pivotal being the allocation of an additional forty-five minutes of math in the seventh grade for 2008 and eighth grade in 2009. For two middle schools, Esperanza and Spring Ridge, forty-five additional minutes were added to eighth grade ahead of schedule. This additional time, coupled with concrete expectations for student learning, a well paced curriculum map, and data driven instruction, yielded the most significant student performance gains in mathematics the system had seen. Other recommendations such as collaborative planning, professional development, personalized learning environment, and instructional consistency

underpinned each school's improvement plan and ensured that all staff members actively contributed to the success of their students and school. All SMCPS middle schools made AYP for 2008 - the first time this has happened since NCLB was implemented.

- **The Safe Schools Initiative**-The recommendations of the Safety and Security Task Force were implemented. They include the addition of a department of Safety and Security led by a Supervisor of Safety and Security. Security vestibules have been added to numerous schools this summer bringing the number of schools with these vestibules to 22 out of 26. The remaining four schools will be completed during this school year. The Safety and Security Supervisor has implemented other components of the Task Force Plan including the development and implementation of a Safety and Security Strategic Plan. The current safety and security strategic plan has identified many primary focus areas and functions for the department:
  - Manage employee and volunteer identification badges
  - Oversee automated school visitor registration management
  - Ensure school based notification of known sex offenders
  - Manage background checks and screening for all school volunteers
  - Oversee mandatory daily security checks and screenings of all facilities
  - Identify and implement needed physical security enhancements to include vestibule security, electronic locking systems, surveillance camera systems, and alarms
  - Oversee the Superintendent's Young Driver Safety Initiative
  - Assist in the implementation of School Safety Patrols(elementary schools)
  - Conduct bi-annual school safety and security site visits identifying current concerns and ensuring compliance with policy and procedures
  - Conduct formal annual safety and security audits of all SMCPS sites to include follow up and after action meetings with site based management
  - Monitor attendance, discipline, and arrest data at schools
  - Oversee implementation of the Student Crime Solvers Program
  - Oversee and monitor site based drills of emergency response protocols
  - Coordinate site based professional development staff training on safety and security procedures and current trends in youth crime
  - Oversee an annual review and revision of all school crisis manuals, procedures, protocols and school emergency plans
- **Technology Enhancements**-We have provided enhancements to the technology at each school while meeting the goals of our life-cycle replacement program. Additionally, we have created a model for technology integration by adding Smart Technology at all of our STEM Academies, Fairlead Academy, Leonardtown Elementary School, George Washington Carver Elementary School and Spring Ridge Middle School.
- **Maintain our Board of Education Class Size Goals**-We have set maintaining classes within our goal structure as a priority. The Board of Education has established class size goals and caps:
  - Kindergarten 20/23
  - Grades 1 to 2 21/24
  - Grades 3-5 23/29
  - Grades 6-8 25
  - Grades 7-9 25
- **High School Assessment Initiative**-Through the addition of staff at each high school, we were able to identify key teachers in each content area of the High School Assessments (H.S.A.) and

flex their schedule. This additional time was embedded in a lead teacher's instructional day so that they could chair a professional learning community for that High School Assessment, remediate students as needed, and oversee the testing process. These instructional leaders were also charged with mining the data generated by quarterly county created assessments and past student performance on state tests. In each high school, the H.S.A. leaders became members of the instructional leadership team for the school and met monthly with the administrative team.

- **Mandarin Chinese** as a high school course
- **Honor all negotiated agreements**

## **Demographics**

St. Mary's County Public Schools employs 2,410 staff members; approximately 1200 of our staff are teachers. The percent of classes taught by highly qualified teachers is 92.9 %. In the 2007-2008 school year, we served 16, 890 students in 26 school settings. We had 16 elementary, 4 middle, 3 high schools, a career and technology center, a public charter school and an alternative learning center. Our student population was made up of 73% white, 20% African American, 3% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and >1% Native American students. Our county average for students who are economically disadvantaged is 26%. Special education students make up 12% of the school population.

In 2008, our average class size was 19.5 in PK; 19.9 in Kindergarten; 21.4 in grades 1 and 2; 21.7 in grades 3-5; 18.9 at middle school; and 18.7 at high schools. Our graduation rate was 86.23%.

## **Goal Progress**

We have moved from good to great, where actions and attitudes have changed considerably and the contagious effect has impacted our students. Our quest to achieve even greater success has a momentum that is measurable and palpable. Across the board, we must work even harder to assure sustainability for new initiatives that will provide differentiated pathways for our students to find success. Sustainability at present levels of support and resources will be an ever increasing challenge. We must respond to the ever changing need for more choice as the world changes and the needs of our students and community changes.

## **School System Successes-*Abundant Good News***

Maryland School Assessment/High School Assessment; LEP; AYP; Gap Closing; Safe Schools

### **Elementary School**

- **All elementary schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).**
- At the elementary level, 89.5% of "all" students were proficient in reading; 88.9% of "all" students were proficient in mathematics.
- At the elementary level, all subgroups improved the percent of students at proficient in reading and mathematics from 2007 to 2008.
- At the elementary level, African American students posted a double digit gain of 11.1 percentage points in reading performance; they achieved a 4.9 percentage point gain in mathematics (having posted double digit gains in 2007).
- In elementary reading, the gap between African American and white students closed by 8.4 percentage points.

- Elementary students have improved their attendance by 1.3 percentage points since 2003, achieving a 95.9 attendance rate in 2008, the highest recorded.
- More than 1/3 of tested students scored advanced on the MSA with 33.3% in mathematics and 40.3% in reading at the advanced level of performance.
- LEP students improved their proficiency in reading with a more than double digit gain (10.9 percentage points) to a level of 87.1% proficient; they gained 7.1 percentage points in mathematics to achieve 87.5% proficiency.

### **Middle School**

- **All middle schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).**
- At the middle school level, 83.7% of “all” students were proficient in reading; 77.6% of “all” students were proficient in mathematics.
- At the middle school level, African American students made a 17.8 percentage point gain in mathematics.
- In middle school math, the gap between African American students and white students closed 9.2 percentage points.
- At the middle school level, FARMS students made a 14.3 percentage point gain in mathematics.
- At the middle school level, students exceeded the 94% satisfactory standard for average daily attendance. They have gained 2.5 percentage points over five years and 1.3 percentage points in one year to achieve attendance of 95.3%.

### **High School**

- **All high schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).**
- SAT scores increased by 16 points to a combined total of 1532 with more than 50% of graduates participating in the test. Performance exceeded both state and national results.
- At the high school level, attendance has improved 3.7 percentage points since 2003 and 2.0 percentage points in one year to an all time high of 93.5%.
- The graduation rate of 86.23% exceeds the state AMO (85.50%) by .7 percentage points.
- The dropout rate of 2.80% is within the state satisfactory standard of 3.00%. We had significant progress over a two year period in the percentage of students dropping out in both the FARMS subgroup (from 6.55% to 3.99%) and in the special education subgroup (from 5.01% to 1.66%).

### **All Schools-Safe Schools**

- No persistently dangerous schools.
- No elementary schools with suspension rates exceeding identified limits (14%).
- Harassment and sexual harassment suspensions reduced by 15%.
- Out of school suspension incidents reduced by 15.7%.
- In school suspensions reduced by 7%.
- Six schools reduced the disproportionate representation of African American students in their suspension data.
- Eight schools reduced the number of students with an IEP who were suspended from school.
- Fourteen schools experienced a reduction in the number of out-of-school suspensions.
- Twelve of seventeen elementary schools had 10 or fewer suspensions.

## **School System Challenges-*The Brutal Facts***

### **Elementary School**

- Although gaps are closing, there continues to be a double digit gap between African American students and white students; between FARMS students and non-FARMS students; and between special education students and their non-disabled peers in both reading and mathematics.
- All student groups exceed the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) for attendance with the exception of students who are American Indian/Alaskan Native (21 students).

### **Middle School**

- Although the gap has closed slightly, a 25.3 percentage point gap persists in mathematics and a 23.3 percentage point gap persists in reading between African American students and white students.
- The achievement gap is closing for all subgroups, but it is still significant. Double digit gaps persists in reading for the FARMS (17.8 percentage points), LEP (33.7 percentage points), and special education subgroups (23.8 percentage points).
- In mathematics the gap for these groups persists as well. A double digit gap persists for FARMS (20.4 percentage points), LEP (30.9 percentage points), and special education (27.3 percentage points) subgroups.
- Although attendance for all students has improved significantly at the middle school level, two subgroups continue to fall below the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) of 94%: American Indian/Alaskan Native (93.8 %) and FARMS (93.4 %)

### **High School**

- The satisfactory standard of 94% attendance was not reached at the high school level; however, their attendance rate of 93.5% exceeds the previous year by 2.0 percentage points. We continue to work to improve the attendance of some subgroups: African American (91.5%); American Indian/Alaskan Native (92%), white (93.9%), special education (91.5%) and of particular concern, FARMS (88.9%) which is the lowest attendance for a subgroup in 2008.
- We saw a slight decline in the graduation rate for all students (1.46 percentage points) with our most significant declines for LEP and Special Education students.
- Four subgroups (African American, FARMS, LEP and males) have a dropout rate that exceeds the satisfactory standard of 3.00%.

### **All Schools**

- There is disproportionate representation of some subgroups in our discipline data:
  - Male students represent two-thirds of the in and out-of-school suspensions.
  - African American males accounted for 46% of the students suspended out of school and 37% of students assigned in-school suspensions.
  - FARMS students received out of school suspension (47.5%) and in school suspension (38%) at a higher rate than they represent in our school system demographics (22%).
  - Special Education students comprise 12% of our population but account for 14% of in-school suspensions and 21% of out of school suspensions.

### **Highly Qualified Teachers**

Although the percent of classes taught by highly qualified teachers declined from 94.2 % to 92.9%, SMCPS maintains a commitment to recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers. In elementary classrooms identified as high poverty, 100% of the classes were taught by highly qualified teachers. Schools identified as Title I are staffed completely by highly qualified teachers.

## **Cross-cutting themes:**

**Educational Technology**-SMCPS was effective in providing technology to meet the goals outlined in the Master Plan for both students and teachers. SMCPS provided online resources, software, and professional development for students and teachers. Key to our continued success was ongoing professional development provided for all administration and staff in year two of the use of the *eSchoolPlus* Student Information System and our *Performance Matters* data warehouse.

**Education That Is Multicultural**-The Superintendent's Blue Ribbon Task Force to Eliminate the Achievement Gap has two major objectives: implement site-based, targeted interventions and acceleration programs designed to increase student achievement and eliminate achievement gaps; and maintain a process for the community and the school system to share ideas and communicate strategies to increase student achievement, especially for underperforming students. As a result of the recommendations made by the Task Force subcommittees, a number of system-wide strategies and initiatives were implemented. Data supports that gaps are closing.

## **Communication, Collaboration, and Commitment**

Collaboration is not just an initiative that we discuss; it is a reality and has had a revolutionary impact on the conversations and the norms. It is the change agent that has created this new momentum across our school district. We are committed to building positive and productive relationships within our organization and extended to our parents and community partners. We communicate often via our automated telephone system, enhanced web pages, educational television channel (Channel 96), the student information system, *eSchool Plus*, with a Teacher Access Center (TAC) and a Home Access Center (HAC). We have also held more parent and community forums such as *What Counts*. The organizational structure of the departments in central administration have been restructured to assure a more efficient flow of information and a more effective and efficient response (time and substance) to our schools and our community.

## **Our commitment to our students and community**

We continue to strive to provide every student with access to academic experiences that will extend their knowledge, prepare them each year for the next level of learning, and assure that they will be competitive as they move beyond high school to their next endeavor. We continue to listen to the needs of our community and create pathways of learning that will carry our students to the next level of higher education and to the world of work.

## Finance Section

### Prior Year Variance Table – Analyzing Questions

#### Instructions:

Please respond to the following questions using the information provided in the Prior Year Variance Table.

#### Revenue Analysis

1. Did actual FY 2008 revenue meet expectations as anticipated in the Master Plan Update for 2007? If not, identify the changes and the impact any changes had on the FY 2009 budget and on the system's progress towards achieving Master Plan goals. Please include any subsequent appropriations in your comparison table and narrative analysis.

The Prior Year Budget Variance Table for St. Mary's County Public Schools indicates an increase in actual revenue, \$1,632,924, in comparison to the original FY2008 general and restricted fund budgets. The decrease in state revenue was due to Special Education Non-Public tuition for 2008. The offset to the lower than anticipated state revenue was the increase Medical Assistance, Quality Teacher Incentive, and NTBS Certification revenues. The decrease in federal revenue was the changes in actual federal grant funding to budgeted, although the federal revenue in local funding realized an increase. The increase in other local revenue was mainly due to insurance refunds that were received and greater than anticipated.

#### Analysis of Actual Expenditures

2. Please provide a comparison of the planned versus actual expenditures for each local goal provided in the Prior Year Variance Table. Identify changes in expenditures and provide a narrative discussion of the impact of the changes.

#### Master Plan Goal 1

The total change in the budget estimate to actual expenditures for Master Plan Goal 1 was the result of lower actual cost of the Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) initiative for the first year of the program. The change in the Full-day Kindergarten initiative was due to the realignment of classroom teachers to actual need based on student count. The Middle School Task Force was a partial year implementation, resulting in the actual cost being lower than the budgeted amount. The Data Warehouse and *eSchool Solutions* did not require the total budgeted dollars to effectively and efficiently implement and utilize this initiative in 2008. The offset to the above lower than budgeted costs were realized in the High School Assessment, Middle School Math Block Scheduling, and Math and Science initiatives, which realized increased actual cost to budget due to higher salary contracts.

### **Master Plan Goal 3**

The actual expenditures supporting Recruitment and Retention of teachers for St. Mary's County Public Schools was lower than anticipated due to the lower salary of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Specialist, and the prudent spending which obtained expected results.

### **Master Plan Goal 4**

The aggregate decrease of \$244,306 for supporting the Safe Schools initiative was the result of savings due to actual and partial year salary contract. The decrease for the initiative, In-School Health and Home and Hospital services, was a result of actively and effectively monitoring cost, but realizing the same results for these programs.

### **Salary increases and Fixed Charges**

St. Mary's County Public Schools realized an increase on mandatory/cost of doing business. The increase was realized from the increase in fixed charges, transportation, Charter School, and contract salary actual expenditures. The increase in fixed charges was due to the contribution to Other Post Employee Benefits. Transportation costs were higher than expected due to the increase in fuel prices and the volatile oil market. The Charter School realized an increase in actual cost due to the first year of operation and alignment of expenditures to actual. The increase in negotiated contract salaries was due to the cost of actual salary expenditures. The Special Education Non-Public cost was substantially less in FY 2008 due to proactive planning and the development of programs for intensive needs students. The decrease in actual utility cost was due to the design and implementation of proactive and prudent energy cost savings measures within the school system. New teachers for growth were lower than anticipated due to the lower contract salary of the new hires.

## **Goal Progress**

### **Maryland School Assessments/High School Assessments**

**No Child Left Behind Goal 1: By 2013-2014, all students will reach high standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.**

**No Child Left Behind Indicators 1.1 and 1.2: The percentage of students, in the aggregate and for each subgroup, who are at or above the proficient level in reading/language arts and mathematics on the Maryland School Assessment.**

As required under No Child Left Behind, Maryland has established continuous and substantial growth targets, annual measurable objectives, for 100% of students to reach proficiency in reading/language arts and mathematics by 2013-2014. NCLB also requires States to test students in science once in each grade band – elementary, middle and high school. Additionally, Maryland requires all students, beginning with the Class of 2009, to pass the High School Assessments (English II, Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, and Government) in order to graduate.

## Maryland School Assessment/High School Assessment (continued)

### Reading

Based on the Examination of MSA AYP Proficiency Data in Reading (Tables 2.1 through 2.3):

1. Describe where progress is evident. In your response, identify progress in terms of grade band(s) and subgroups.

Progress was made by all subgroups at the elementary and middle school level.

All elementary subgroups exceeded the AMO. African American student performance increased 11.1 percentage points to 77.1% proficient. Hispanic student scores increased 17 percentage points to 92% proficient. Asian student performance increased slightly to 94.9% proficient. Special education student scores increased 7.6 percentage points to 75.5% proficient. FARMS student performance increased 9.6 percentage points to 78.3% proficient. LEP student scores increased 10.9 percentage points to 87.1% proficient.

At the middle school level, African American student scores increased 8.6 percentage points to 65.1% proficient. Hispanic student performance increased 2.6 percentage points to 84.3% proficient. Asian student scores also increased 8.6 percentage points to 94.7% proficient. FARMS student scores increased 9.1 percentage points to 65.9% proficient and special education student scores increased 11.3 percentage points to 59.9% proficient. LEP student performance increased 2.9 percentage points to 50% proficient (12 total students).

2. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies and the corresponding resource allocations to which you attribute the progress.
  - Fidelity to the core reading program: Houghton Mifflin Reading is used in grades PreK-5 with an emphasis on increasing students' engagement with print.
  - Consistent assessments: All students in grades K-5 are administered DIBELS. The AIMSWeb MAZE is administered to all students in grades 6-8. AIMSWeb oral reading fluency assessment is administered to all students in grades 6-8 who do not achieve proficiency on the MSA. Locally developed benchmark assessments which test the VSC objectives are administered in grades 2-8, three times during the year. Collaborative teams discuss the data and plan instruction.
  - Consistent interventions across district which are explicit, systematic, and research based: Each student is evaluated and specifically matched to interventions that address Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Fluency.
  - 6+1 Trait Writing: Students receive instruction in 6+1 Trait Writing in grades 2-8 with ongoing professional development for teachers.

- Ongoing professional development in guided reading techniques and efficient use of the instructional block was provided. At the elementary level, emphasis was placed on how to effectively use the 135 minute reading block. This included staff overviews and modeling of lessons with discussions and practice. At the middle school, level professional development is provided in guided reading and analysis of each student’s ability to decode and comprehend text.
- At the elementary level, schools have built their intervention times into the school schedule ensuring that students receive their interventions in addition to their reading language arts classroom instruction.
- Increasing scores at middle school are attributed in part to a renewed commitment to the literacy lab format. (One middle school that implemented the model with fidelity achieved a 15 percentage point increase on grade 7 MSA.)

3. Describe where challenges are evident. In your response, identify challenges in terms of grade band(s) and subgroups.

Although progress was made by all student groups at both the elementary and middle school levels, African American, FARMS, limited English proficient, and special education students did not meet the AMO at the middle school level. Special education students did not meet the AMO at the high school level in 2007.

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

In order to improve overall reading fluency and comprehension, 11,000 leveled texts were ordered for middle school in sets of eight books to allow teachers to teach guided reading during the “literacy lab” part of the language arts block. By providing high interest, appropriate leveled literacy and non-fiction texts, guided reading can take place during literacy lab (the portion of the 90 minute language arts block in which the skills and processes of reading and writing are addressed at the students’ instructional levels). Professional development is also planned for middle school teachers so that they will be able to provide effective small group reading instruction.

In addition, there is a joint partnership research project in place between the University of Maryland and St. Mary’s County Public Schools. The project, a five year commitment, is based on the most current research on adolescent reading and motivation. The project is in the second year of implementation and is in operation at all four middle schools with a target population of seventh grade students. The focus of the instruction will be centered around informational texts aligned with the units of study in science and social studies. Teachers are receiving professional development in the most effective ways to help students read and understand informational texts.

1. Provide information on interventions that are in place to support students required to pass this high school assessment in order to graduate. In your response, and where applicable, include:

## **How students in danger of not passing are identified**

English teachers and school based administrators work collaboratively, using local and state assessments and student grades, to identify students in danger of not meeting the proficiency target on the English HSA. Appropriate interventions are provided during and after school based on student need. A central office Instructional Resource Teacher (IRT) position has been funded to assist schools with identifying students in danger of not passing and providing interventions to meet those student needs.

Quarterly benchmark assessments and pre and post grammar tests are fully aligned with the curriculum maps. The assessment items are developed to mirror the items on the public released assessment items for English. Benchmark assessments are administered to all 9th and 10th grade students. Quarterly benchmark meetings are held with 9th and 10th grade teachers to review data, discuss student needs based on their performance on the quarterly assessments, and to develop plans for re-teaching specific indicators.

St. Mary's County Public Schools implemented *eSchool* for the 2007-2008 school year to more closely monitor student learning in each course. The electronic grade book can be used beyond the grade warehousing to permit the ongoing monitoring of individual student progress by the teacher and the school site administration. Parents/guardians have direct access to their son's/daughter's grades as well as curriculum information.

Students at risk are further identified using the data warehouse, *Performance Matters*, based on the locally developed quarterly assessments. Teachers score the constructed response sections and upload these scores directly. Scan sheets with the selected responses are sent to the central office for scanning. Item analysis of these assessments identifies how each individual student performed on each item in the assessment. This allows teachers to design instruction to meet the specific needs of each student. *Performance Matters* allows filtering of student groups to identify students within the group and analyze their performance separately. Interventions include co-teachers within special education inclusion classes, reading and writing strategies, peer review of constructed responses, use of graphic organizers, and tutoring. System resources were reallocated to provide personnel to staff this critical aspect of monitoring student learning. Technical assistance is available to teachers and principals.

The Academic Literacy I course is offered at each of the high schools and targets students with severe decoding difficulties using the *Wilson Reading Program*. The Academic Literacy II course offered at each high school targets students who have moderate deficits in decoding, fluency and/or comprehension. Fluency interventions, including *Read Naturally*, *The Six Minute Solution to Fluency*, *REWARDS*, *Bridges to Literature*, are used depending on student need as well as high interest/low readability trade books.

This year at all three high schools and the Fairlead Academy for at-risk 9th graders, English 9/90 is being offered in grade 9 for students who have reading deficiencies. English 9/90 is a ninety minute English 9 course with integrated reading interventions using the *Language! 4<sup>th</sup> edition* by Sopris West. Teachers of the 9/90 course will form a collaborative group and will be trained together. It is hoped that the 9/90 model will replace the need for the Academic Literacy II class.

**Include plans for students with special needs (i.e., students receiving special education services, Limited English Proficient students, and students with 504 plans) and plans for students who have taken, but not passed, the English II HSA**

*Special Education students -*

- All accommodations specified in IEP are met.
- Special education students are in the general education classroom to the maximum extent possible, based on decisions made by the IEP team. There is a commitment at both the district and school level to ensure co-teaching is taking place. Grouping may take place within the classroom for specific purposes or to address specific needs.
- Special education students take all local assessments and the results are monitored through *Performance Matters*. Where challenges occur, instruction is modified to meet the challenge. This may include differentiation to address specific concepts.
- Since many of these students have reading issues, teachers have received significant training in reading in the content area. Reading strategies are regularly implemented to assist students with reading challenges. Kurzweil software is used to assist students with reading disabilities and all local assessments are available using the software.
- Some students with persistent difficulties receive smaller group instruction or occasional pull-out, one-on-one instruction as needed.
- Close contact is kept with parents and communications include suggestions for home support.
- Special education teachers participate in all professional development activities, including professional development days, quarterly data meetings, professional learning communities, and the vertical articulation day. In addition, special educators participate in the Governor's Academy and other professional development opportunities offered by the Maryland State Department of Education.
- An Academic Literacy class is offered at the high school to offer additional assistance to regular and special education students who enter high school with serious deficiencies in reading.

*Limited English Proficient students -*

- All instruction is in English.
- English Second Language (ESL) teachers provide support as needed once or twice per week as indicated by the student's level of proficiency. This support consists of assistance with the text and with writing or other assignments as needed.
- *Performance Matters* is used to follow the achievement of these students providing intervention in the classroom or with the ESL teacher.
- One ESL teacher has been designated to coordinate the instructional program among the teachers. A consultant, Katie Arnett, from St. Mary's College of Maryland, is working with the teachers to increase student learning in both the English language and content areas. Student interns from St. Mary's College of Maryland worked with ELL students this year. The community liaison will expand parent/guardian outreach programs to provide additional information regarding the High School Assessments.
- This year, The Center for Applied Linguistics will conduct training on the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) for mainstream and ESL teachers. This push-in model will be piloted at three elementary schools.

*Students with 504 Plans -*

- The 504 Plan is followed.
- Student grades and assessment data are reviewed and discussed during the Pupil Services Team (PST) meetings for each 504 student. The most appropriate placement and interventions are determined to meet the student's needs.
- The sequencing of the courses is critical to ensure students with 504 plans have mastered the prior knowledge necessary for success upon enrolling in a course with a High School Assessment.
- These students are often scheduled in mixed inclusion classrooms with a co-teaching model in which a full time special educator and English teacher collaborate in instruction. Grouping may take place within the classroom for specific purposes or to address specific needs.
- Students who are not in inclusion classrooms are closely monitored in the regular classroom and *Performance Matters* is used to identify achievement challenges early. Differentiation may be used to address specific challenges.
- Close contact is kept with parents and communications include suggestions for home support.

*Plans for Students Who have Taken but not Passed HSA -*

- Summer school test prep is available. English certified teachers work with students who have passed the course but not the HSA in several intensive days to ensure that all content is mastered prior to the summer administration of HSA.
- Each high school uses a pull-out model to provide additional assistance to students who need to pass the HSA.
- This year, one high school is designating an 11th grade English class for students who passed the course, but failed the English High School Assessment. Teachers use data to identify areas most in need of review and differentiate instruction for each student to support success in passing the High School Assessment on the retest.
- Instructional resources are identified for interventions. The English instructional resource teacher and HSA lead teachers attended the fall 2007 training for the online resources for English. These resources are used as part of instruction. Ongoing assessments to monitor student learning are part of the course.
- Staffing resources were provided to support the implementation. The school system budget provided one additional staff member per high school to assist with interventions and remediation. An instructional resource teacher specifically for English is funded to provide more staff resources to coach teachers. This coming year, HSA lead teachers are in place at each high school to provide assistance with review classes or with individualized support as needed. These teachers have reduced teaching schedules to free them up for this support.

## Maryland School Assessment/High School Assessment (continued)

### Mathematics

Based on the Examination of MSA AYP Proficiency Data in Mathematics (Tables 2.5 through 2.7):

1. Describe where progress is evident. In your response, identify progress in terms of grade band(s) and subgroups.

Progress was made by all subgroups at the elementary and middle school level with the exception of LEP in middle school. All student groups met the AMO at the high school level in 2007.

All elementary subgroups exceeded the AMO. African American student performance increased 4.9 percentage points to 75.3% proficient. Hispanic student scores increased 8.3 percentage points to 90.3% proficient. Asian student performance increased 5.3 percentage points to 97.5% proficient. Special education student scores increased 4.6 percentage points to 71.6% proficient. FARMS student scores increased 4.5 percentage points to 76.4% proficient. LEP student scores increased 7.1 percentage points to 87.5% proficient.

At the middle school level African American student scores increased 17.8 percentage points to 57.2% proficient. Hispanic student performance increased 8.9 percentage points to 79.5% proficient. Asian student scores also increased 7.8 percentage points to 93.9% proficient. FARMS student scores increased 14.3 percentage points to 57.2% proficient and special education student scores increased 11.4 percentage points to 50.3% proficient.

2. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies and the corresponding resource allocations to which you attribute the progress.
  - MSDE professional development workshops in the processes of mathematics and communication were provided by Mrs. Patricia Turner, MSDE, and attended by school leadership teams comprised of principals, instructional resource teachers and classroom teachers. This was followed up at both the school and district level.
  - We continued the use of the core mathematics program, *Investigations in Number, Data and Space*, with an emphasis on *Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI)* with ongoing and increased emphasis on curriculum alignment. We introduced a weekly communication document “Math Talk” which provided a lesson with specific alignment to the VSC for each unit as it was introduced. There was a focus on increased rigor in assessments.
  - A continued emphasis on Cognitively Guided Instruction-
    - Teacher-Leader teams from 13 out of 17 elementary schools attended a series of CGI Workshops which incorporated professional development, collaboration and reflection on practice. Follow up was provided to schools.

- Dr. Stephanie Smith, consultant, from the University of Georgia, worked with Title I schools over the course of the year providing small group differentiated support with follow up.
  - School based training and follow up (as requested) was provided by the mathematics resource teacher.
- Continued and increased emphasis on data driven instruction-
    - Mid-year data meetings were held with the Director of Elementary Instruction, Administration, and School Improvement, the mathematics resource teacher, and the principals to discuss mid-year scores, student progress and trends to that point; plans to adjust instruction and programs were then implemented as needed.
    - The mathematics resource teacher met with school teams as requested to review data.
3. Describe where challenges are evident. In your response, identify challenges in terms of grade band(s) and subgroups.

Although progress was made by special education students at the middle school level, they did not meet the AMO. Additionally the LEP student group did not make the AMO for mathematics and their performance declined 8.3 percentage points.

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

Application of a consistent mathematics philosophy grades K-12 which emphasizes flexibility, accuracy, and efficiency and outlines the progression from flexibility to efficiency was required. The SMCPS philosophy is in alignment with the NCTM Standards, Focal Points, and Presidential Panel Report on Mathematics. Articulation of computational fluency expectations is spelled out grades K-8.

New textbooks were adopted to align with the SMCPS mathematics philosophy and provide appropriate intervention, (*Investigations in Number, Data and Space 2009* published by Pearson). The program was selected because it builds a solid conceptual foundation with an emphasis on flexibility. It is more teacher friendly, more aligned to Maryland VSC, and more focused on computational fluency than the classic *Investigations* currently in use in St. Mary's County. Additionally, the series contains a very strong algebra component from kindergarten through grade 5.

*Math Connects* was adopted in grades 4-8 because it is balanced and provides a bridge between the conceptual foundation developed in Grades K-3 *Investigations* and more efficient procedures required to do middle school mathematics. This is in alignment with the NCTM Focal Points and the President's National Math Panel Report. For articulation, the textbooks in grades 4-8 were back mapped from Algebra and written with Algebra and beyond in mind. The series provides opportunities for ongoing assessment including diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment in addition to district assessments. The three tiered *Response to Intervention* (RTI) supports daily, strategic, and intensive interventions. *Math Triumphs* has been purchased as a component of *Math Connects* for Tier III intervention. *Math Connects* has also written an RTI into its teacher's editions.

The CGI workshop group has decided to re-form as a Professional Learning Community (PLC) in 2008-2009 at the system level. The monthly meetings will incorporate professional development to support ongoing initiatives (CGI, the new materials, “Math Talk”, and formative assessments including exit slips). Participants will share and reflect on practice in their buildings, examine data and create common assessments in order to assess student learning and adjust instructional practice.

Professional Learning Communities within schools will focus on formative assessments. In addition to district assessments, there will be an emphasis on professional learning communities creating and analyzing the results of formative assessments throughout the year.

1. Provide information on interventions that are in place to support students required to pass this high school assessment in order to graduate. In your response, and where applicable, include:

### **How students in danger of not passing are identified**

SMCPS identifies students in danger of not passing in three ways:

1. Anecdotally (based on classroom teachers and past experiences as to which subgroups and particular students should be targeted).
2. Lagging Data (longitudinal MSA data; traditional problem sub-groups, etc)
3. Leading Data (Diagnostics, Quarterly Benchmark Exams [summative in nature]; Various Formatives; Informal Assessments)

Because there is such a high correlation between MSA and HSA success, students in danger of not passing are initially identified via lagging indicators, specifically their 8th grade MSA scores. Basically, anyone with a 399 or less on their 8th grade MSA are immediately put on a watch list and remediation is initiated. Specific intervention would cater to their scores on the MSA sub strands as well as on their 8th grade benchmark data housed in our archived data warehouse, where non-performing items are rank-ordered by need for these students, germane to the 8th grade VSC.

SMCPS specifically uses two year data trends to earmark exactly throughout the benchmark process (including diagnostic exams) for whom intervention should be reserved. For instance, using consistent benchmark exams (i.e., quarterly assessments that are summative in nature) over the course of two years, the supervisor of instruction for mathematics is able to correlate likely probabilities of future HSA performance based on student performance of the aforementioned benchmarks in the here and now, based on archived student data of students that performed similarly on very consistent exams. Using that holistic data piece, teachers and administrators now have a specific basis for a needs assessment based on longitudinal, quantitative data. From there, teachers can then address specific algebraic deficiencies, by core learning goal, via their intervention.

Lastly, SMCPS uses two data metrics to analyze and quantify student performance:

- Proficiency Metric which measures student performance in relation to standard.
- Value-Added Growth Metric which measures student performance as progress over time.

Many of our interventions are going to be embedded in the school day so as to maximize instructional time and allow students to regularly attend the aforementioned intervention as much as possible, which makes sense instructionally. Supervisors, principals, and teachers collectively comb through both leading and lagging data uploaded to our warehouse (i.e., *Performance Matters*). What will help us be much more proactive as opposed to reactive is to scrutinize a student's lagging MSA data that they bring with them to Algebra. Because of the high correlation between the two exit exams, teachers will be able to discern earlier in the year those students that may have difficulty in passing the Algebra/Data Analysis exam.

SMCPS has also adopted new textbooks. With the middle school series, there are embedded three tiered responses to intervention which will allow our system to build a better mathematician when they enroll in Algebra. Coupled with our Algebra series, there are a collection of three books, differentiated to meet the needs of all levels of our learners:

- Algebra Readiness
- Algebra 1: Concepts and Skills
- Algebra 1: Correlated to MD VSC

All three texts are accompanied by a consumable note-taking guide that students can use to reinforce algebraic concepts. Moreover, with the new textbook comes a revised Algebra 1 curriculum designed to maximize discussion on HSA topics for the lower level learners while, at the same time, enrich those highly able to assimilate a more traditional Algebra curriculum.

SMCPS is also going to pilot our first extended 90 minute period of Algebra at the high school for those 8th grade students that did not score at least a 400 on the MSA. This class will be co-taught with 33% special education students and capped at 24 total students. These students will have twice as much time to learn the same material and allow the teacher more time to differentiate in the school day.

Infused in this class are SMART boards and instructional technology designed to help students interface with mathematics in multiple modalities. Technology is especially attractive for those disaggregated populations that are consistently underperforming: special education and African American students.

*Algeblocks* are also used to help move students from concrete to abstract algebraic understandings.

SMPCS also provides HSA Synthesizers, a compilation of every publicly released question on the HSA since 2000. Students can consume the resource and our county provides one for each student as well as a detailed answer key for teachers to assist them in giving immediate and direct feedback on student work.

**Include plans for students with special needs (i.e., students receiving special education services, Limited English Proficient students, and students with 504 plans) and plans for students who have taken, but not passed, the Algebra/Data Analysis HSA.**

*Special Education students-*

- All accommodations specified in IEP are met.
- Special education students are in the general education classroom to the maximum extent possible, based on decisions made by the IEP team. There is a commitment at both the district

and school level to ensure co-teaching is taking place. Grouping may take place within the classroom for specific purposes or to address specific needs.

- Special education students take all local assessments and the results are monitored through *Performance Matters*. Where challenges occur, instruction is modified to meet the challenge. This may include differentiation to address specific concepts.
- Since many of these students have reading issues, teachers have received significant training in reading in the content area. Reading strategies are regularly implemented to assist students with reading challenges. Kurzweil software is used to assist students with reading disabilities and all local assessments are available using the software.
- Some students with persistent difficulties receive smaller group instruction or occasional pull-out one-on-one instruction as needed.
- Close contact is kept with parents and communications include suggestions for home support.
- Special education teachers participate in all professional development activities, including professional development days, quarterly data meetings, professional learning communities, and the vertical articulation day. In addition, special educators participate in the Governor's Academy and other professional development opportunities offered by the Maryland State Department of Education.

#### *Limited English Proficient students -*

- All instruction is in English.
- English Second Language (ESL) teachers provide support as needed once or twice per week as indicated by the student's level of proficiency. This support consists of assistance with the text and with writing or other assignments as needed.
- *Performance Matters* is used to follow the achievement of these students providing intervention in the classroom or with the ESL teacher.
- One ESL teacher has been designated to coordinate the instructional program among the teachers. A consultant, Katie Arndt, from St. Mary's College of Maryland, is working with the teachers to increase student learning in both the English language and content areas. Student interns from St. Mary's College of Maryland worked with ELL students this year. The community liaison will expand parent/guardian outreach programs to provide additional information regarding the High School Assessments.

#### *Students with 504 Plans -*

- The 504 Plan is followed.
- Student grades and assessment data are reviewed and discussed during the PST meetings for each 504 student. The most appropriate placement and interventions are determined to meet the student's needs.
- The sequencing of the courses is critical to ensure students with 504 plans have mastered the prior knowledge necessary for success upon enrolling in a course with a High School Assessment.
- These students are often scheduled in mixed inclusion classrooms with a co-teaching model in which a full time special educator and mathematics teacher collaborate in instruction. Grouping may take place within the classroom for specific purposes or to address specific needs.
- Students who are not in inclusion classrooms are closely monitored in the regular classroom and *Performance Matters* is used to identify achievement challenges early. Differentiation may be used to address specific challenges.

- Close contact is kept with parents and communications include suggestions for home support.

*Plans for Students Who have Taken but not Passed HSA -*

- Summer school test prep is available. Mathematics certified teachers work with students who have passed the course but not the HSA in several intensive days to ensure that all content is mastered prior to the summer administration of HSA.
- Review courses are established for students who pass the course, but fail the High School Assessments in Algebra. Teachers use data to identify areas most in need of review and differentiate instruction for each student to support success in passing the High School Assessment on the retest. Students earn  $\frac{1}{2}$  credit for the course upon passing the High School Assessment.
- Three intervention courses are implemented to assist students before taking the High School Assessments while review courses are in place for students who pass the course, but not the High School Assessment. This course also addresses reading challenges with specific reading strategies beneficial to scientific text on the HSA. This course also specifically addresses skills and processes related to mathematics.
- Instructional resources are identified for interventions. Staff attended the fall 2007 training for the online resources for Algebra. These resources are used as part of instruction. Review books are provided for students as well. Ongoing assessments to monitor student learning are part of the course.
- Staffing resources were provided to support the implementation. The school system budget provided one additional staff member per high school to assist with interventions and remediation. The 10-month central office instructional resource mathematics teacher position was upgraded to supervisor of instruction elementary mathematics to provide more staff resources to coach teachers. This coming year, HSA lead teachers are in place at each high school to provide assistance with review classes or with individualized support as needed. These teachers have reduced teaching schedules to free them up to provide this support.

## Maryland School Assessment/High School Assessment (continued)

### Science

Based on the Examination of Grade 5 and Grade 8 MSA Data in Science (Tables 2.9 through 2.10):

1. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies and the corresponding resource allocations designed to ensure progress.

The majority of students successfully completed the assessment. At the fifth grade level, 75.8% of SMCPS students successfully completed the assessment with a proficient or advanced score compared to the state average of 64.1%. In grade eight, 72.6% of SMCPS students successfully completed the assessment with a proficient or advanced score compared to the state average of 61.4%.

#### *Elementary*

- Curriculum Maps with completed units have been developed and are implemented in all elementary schools PreK-5.
- Training is provided for new units at each grade level on county-wide professional days.
- Materials for specific kits aligned with the VSC have been purchased for grades 4 and 5. Training in the use of these kits was provided.
- Training has been provided on the appropriate pedagogy related to science instruction.
- County-wide science assessments have been implemented in grades 4 and 5 and will begin in grade 3 next year.
- Professional development takes place in schools related to instructional strategies, scoring of constructed responses, unit-writing, inquiry in science, and other topics throughout the year.
- Instructional resource teachers receive training related to science several times throughout the year at their monthly meetings.
- Teachers are encouraged to use the on-line Science MSA Released Test to prepare students for the Science MSA. Teachers are encouraged to have students interact with these items on the computer to familiarize students with the format of the test.
- A workshop “Success on MSA” was given prior to administration of MSA with a focus on concepts that students performed poorly on as a result of county assessments. Alignment to the VSC was also a focus. Instructional strategies for review were discussed.
- Grade 5 teachers met with Grade 6 science teachers to discuss vertical articulation on the system Articulation Day.

#### *Middle School*

- Curriculum maps have been created and are provided for each middle school grade. These are fully aligned with the MSDE Science VSC.
- Middle school teachers have been trained in scoring of constructed response items and in data analysis using *Performance Matters* at full day workshops during the past year.
- Several walk-throughs took place over the year with focus on alignment with the VSC of both instruction and assessment. Feedback was given county-wide.
- Mentoring and modeling of appropriate instructional strategies was provided by the Science Instructional Resource Teacher, a new position this year.

- Schools implemented teaming strategies which supported cross curricular collaboration and targeted specific student needs since all teachers in the team teach the same students.
  - Supervisor observations provided feedback related to preparation for MSA.
  - Grade 7 and 8 teachers met with high school teachers in related content groups to discuss specific indicators and objectives that have foundations in middle school and are developed further in high school.
  - County science assessments are provided in all middle school grades.
  - *Performance Matters* is used to analyze data as a basis for designing review in preparation for MSA.
  - County-wide professional days have provided training in inquiry, experimental design, writing assessments, use of technology, and have provided opportunities for teachers across the county to collaborate and share resources.
2. Describe where challenges are evident. In your response, identify challenges in terms of grade levels and subgroups.

Performance challenges are defined by the achievement gaps that exist among subgroups. A 32.4 percentage point gap exists between white and African American student performance at the elementary level and the gap is 37.6 percentage points at middle school. The performance of FARMS students was 30.3 percentage points lower at the elementary level and 37.2 percentage points lower at middle school than their non-FARMS peers. The performance of special education students was 44.7 percentage points lower at the elementary level and 41.1 percentage points lower at middle school than their non-special education peers. The gap between limited English proficient students and non-ESL students was 38.6 percentage points at the elementary level and 47.8 percentage points at the middle school level.

### HSA Biology

1. Provide information on interventions that are in place to support students required to pass this high school assessment in order to graduate. In your response, and where applicable, include:

#### **How students in danger of not passing are identified**

Students in danger of not passing are identified by teachers and administrators using student grades and local assessments. Appropriate interventions are implemented based on student need. Interventions are provided before, during, and after school.

St. Mary's County Public Schools implemented *eSchool* for the 2007-2008 school year to more closely monitor student learning in each course. The electronic grade book can be used beyond just the grade warehousing to permit the ongoing monitoring of individual student progress by the teacher and the school site administration. Parents/guardians have direct access to their son's/daughter's grades as well as curriculum information.

Teacher constructed unit assessments are fully aligned with the curriculum maps and make use of the High School Assessment released items. In some content areas, such as Biology, common unit assessments are implemented in each high school.

Locally developed quarterly assessments are administered in Biology. These assessments model the High School Assessment for that content area and are aligned with the curriculum map and assessment limits.

Students at risk are further identified using the data warehouse, *Performance Matters*, based on the locally developed quarterly assessments. Teachers score the constructed response sections and upload these scores directly. Scan sheets with the selected responses are sent to the central office for scanning. Item analysis of these assessments identifies how each individual student performed on each item in the assessment. This allows teachers to design instruction to meet the specific needs of each student. *Performance Matters* allows filtering of student groups to identify students within the group and analyze their performance separately. Interventions include co-teachers within special education inclusion classes, reading and writing strategies, peer review of constructed responses, use of graphic organizers, and tutoring. System resources were reallocated to provide personnel to staff this critical aspect of monitoring student learning. Technical assistance is available to teachers and principals.

**Include plans for students with special needs (i.e., students receiving special education services, Limited English Proficient students, and students with 504 plans) and plans for students who have taken, but not passed, the Biology HSA.**

*Special Education students-*

- All accommodations specified in IEP are met.
- Special education students are in the general education classroom to the maximum extent possible, based on decisions made by the IEP team. There is a commitment at both the district and school level to ensure co-teaching is taking place. Grouping may take place within the classroom for specific purposes or to address specific needs.
- Special education students take all local assessments and the results are monitored through *Performance Matters*. Where challenges occur, instruction is modified to meet the challenge. This may include differentiation to address specific concepts.
- Since many of these students have reading issues, teachers have received significant training in reading in the content area. Reading strategies are regularly implemented to assist students with reading challenges. Kurzweil software is used to assist students with reading disabilities and all local assessments are available using the software.
- Some students with persistent difficulties receive smaller group instruction or occasional pull-out one-on-one instruction as needed.
- Close contact is kept with parents and communications include suggestions for home support.
- Special education teachers participate in all professional development activities, including professional development days, quarterly data meetings, professional learning communities, and the vertical articulation day. In addition, special educators participate in the Governor's Academy and other professional development opportunities offered by the Maryland State Department of Education.

*Limited English Proficient students -*

- All instruction is in English.
- English Second Language (ESL) teachers provide support as needed once or twice per week as indicated by the student's level of proficiency. This support consists of assistance with the text and with writing or other assignments as needed.

- *Performance Matters* is used to follow the achievement of these students providing intervention in the classroom or with the ESL teacher.
- One ESL teacher has been designated to coordinate the instructional program among the teachers. A consultant, Katie Arndt, from St. Mary's College of Maryland, is working with the teachers to increase student learning in both the English language and content areas. Student interns from St. Mary's College of Maryland worked with ELL students this year. The community liaison will expand parent/guardian outreach programs to provide additional information regarding the High School Assessments.

#### *Students with 504 Plans -*

- The 504 Plan is followed.
- Student grades and assessment data are reviewed and discussed during the PST meetings for each 504 student. The most appropriate placement and interventions are determined to meet the student's needs.
- The sequencing of the courses is critical to ensure students with 504 plans have mastered the prior knowledge necessary for success upon enrolling in a course with a High School Assessment.
- These students are often scheduled in mixed inclusion classrooms with a co-teaching model in which a full time special educator and biology teacher collaborate in instruction. Grouping may take place within the classroom for specific purposes or to address specific needs.
- Students who are not in inclusion classrooms are closely monitored in the regular classroom and *Performance Matters* is used to identify achievement challenges early. Differentiation may be used to address specific challenges.
- Close contact is kept with parents and communications include suggestions for home support.

#### *Plans for Students Who have Taken but not Passed HSA -*

- Summer school test prep is available. Biology certified teachers work with students who have passed the course but not the HSA in several intensive days to ensure that all content is mastered prior to the summer administration of HSA.
- Review courses are established for students who pass the course, but fail the High School Assessments in Biology. Teachers use data to identify areas most in need of review and differentiate instruction for each student to support success in passing the High School Assessment on the retest. Students earn ½ credit for the course upon passing the High School Assessment.
- Review courses are in place for students who pass the course, but not the High School Assessment. This course also addresses reading challenges with specific reading strategies beneficial to scientific text on the HSA. This course also specifically addresses skills and processes related to science.
- Instructional resources are identified for interventions. Staff attended the fall 2007 training for the online resources for Biology. These resources are used as part of instruction. Review books are provided for students as well. Ongoing assessments to monitor student learning are part of the course.
- Staffing resources were provided to support the implementation. The school system budget provided one additional staff member per high school to assist with interventions and remediation. A central office instructional resource teacher was also funded to provide more staff resources to coach teachers. This coming year, HSA lead teachers are in place at each high school to provide assistance with review classes or with individualized support as needed. These teachers have reduced teaching schedules to free them up to provide this support.

## Maryland School Assessment/High School Assessment (continued)

### Government

1. Provide information on interventions that are in place to support students required to pass this high school assessment in order to graduate. In your response, and where applicable, include:

#### **How students in danger of not passing are identified**

Students in danger of not passing are identified by teachers and administrators using student grades and local assessments. Appropriate interventions are implemented based on student need. Interventions are provided before, during, and after school.

St. Mary's County Public Schools implemented *eSchool* for the 2007-2008 school year to more closely monitor student learning in each course. The electronic grade book can be used beyond just the grade warehousing to permit the ongoing monitoring of individual student progress by the teacher and the school site administration. Parents/guardians have direct access to their son's/daughter's grades as well as curriculum information.

Locally developed quarterly assessments are administrated in Government. These assessments model the High School Assessment for that content area and are aligned with the curriculum map and Government Voluntary State Curriculum. Teacher constructed unit assessments are fully aligned with the curriculum maps and make use of the High School Assessment released items.

Students at risk are further identified using the data warehouse, *Performance Matters*, based on the locally developed quarterly assessments. Scan sheets with the selected responses are sent to the central office for scanning. Item analysis of these assessments identifies how each individual student performed on each item in the assessment. This allows teachers to design instruction to meet the specific needs of each student and use flexible grouping to deliver the intervention. *Performance Matters* allows filtering of student groups to identify students within the group and analyze their performance separately. Interventions include reading and writing strategies, peer review of constructed responses, use of graphic organizers, and tutoring. System resources were reallocated to provide personnel to staff this critical aspect of monitoring student learning. Technical assistance provided by the supervisor of instruction for social studies is available to both teachers and principals.

**Include plans for students with special needs (i.e., students receiving special education services, Limited English Proficient students, and students with 504 plans) and plans for students who have taken, but not passed, the Government HSA.**

#### *Special Education students-*

- All accommodations specified in IEP are met.
- Special education students are in the general education classroom to the maximum extent possible, based on decisions made by the IEP team. There is a commitment at both the district and school level to ensure co-teaching is taking place. Grouping may take place within the classroom for specific purposes or to address specific student needs.

- Special education students take all local assessments and the results are monitored through *Performance Matters*. Where challenges occur, instruction is modified to meet the challenge. This may include differentiation to address specific concepts.
- Since many of these students have reading issues, teachers have received significant training in reading in the content area. Reading strategies are regularly implemented to assist students with reading challenges. Kurzweil software is used to assist students with reading disabilities and all local assessments are available using the software.
- Some students with persistent difficulties receive smaller group instruction or occasional pull-out one-on-one instruction as needed.
- Close contact is kept with parents and communications include suggestions for home support.
- Special education teachers participate in all professional development activities, including professional development days, quarterly data meetings, professional learning communities, and the vertical articulation day. In addition, special educators participate in the Governor's Academy and other professional development opportunities offered by the Maryland State Department of Education.

*Limited English Proficient students -*

- All instruction is in English.
- English Second Language (ESL) teachers provide support as needed once or twice per week as indicated by the student's level of proficiency. This support consists of assistance with the text and with writing or other assignments as needed.
- *Performance Matters* is used to follow the achievement of these students providing intervention in the classroom or with the ESL teacher.
- One ESL teacher has been designated to coordinate the instructional program among the teachers. A consultant, Katie Arndt, from St. Mary's College of Maryland, is working with the teachers to increase student learning in both the English language and content areas. Student interns from St. Mary's College of Maryland worked with ELL students this year. The community liaison will expand parent/guardian outreach programs to provide additional information regarding the High School Assessments.

*Students with 504 Plans -*

- The 504 Plan is followed.
- Student grades and assessment data are reviewed and discussed during the PST meetings for each 504 student. The most appropriate placement and interventions are determined to meet the student's needs.
- The sequencing of the courses is critical to ensure students with 504 plans have mastered the prior knowledge necessary for success upon enrolling in a course with a High School Assessment.
- These students are often scheduled in mixed inclusion classrooms with a co-teaching model in which a full time special educator and Government teacher collaborate in instruction. Grouping may take place within the classroom for specific purposes or to address specific needs.
- Students who are not in inclusion classrooms are closely monitored in the regular classroom and *Performance Matters 2* is used to identify achievement challenges early. Differentiation may be used to address specific challenges.
- Close contact is kept with parents and communications include suggestions for home support.

*Plans for Students Who have Taken but not Passed HSA -*

- Summer school test prep is available. Teachers work with students who have passed the course but not the HSA in several intensive days to ensure that all content is mastered prior to the summer administration of HSA.
- Review courses are established for students who pass the course, but fail the High School Assessments in Government. Teachers use data to identify areas most in need of review and differentiate instruction for each student to support success in passing the High School Assessment on the retest. Students earn  $\frac{1}{2}$  credit for the course upon passing the High School Assessment.
- Instructional resources are identified for interventions. Staff attended the training for the online resources for Government. These resources are used as part of instruction. Review books are provided for students as well. Ongoing assessments to monitor student learning are part of the course.
- Staffing resources were provided to support the implementation. The school system budget provided one additional staff member per high school to assist with interventions and remediation. These teachers have reduced teaching schedules to free them up to provide this support.

## Limited English Proficient Students

**No Child Left Behind Goal 2: All limited English proficient students will become proficient in English and reach high academic standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.**

**No Child Left Behind Indicator 2.1: The percentage of limited English proficient students, determined by cohort, who have attained English proficiency by the end of the school year.**

This section reports the progress of Limited English Proficient students in developing and attaining English language proficiency and making adequate yearly progress. School systems are asked to provide information on Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs):

- AMAO I is used to demonstrate the percentages of Limited English Proficient students progressing toward English proficiency.
- AMAO II is used to demonstrate the percentages of Limited English Proficient students attaining English proficiency by end of each school year.
- AMAO III represents Adequate Yearly Progress of LSSs for the Limited English Proficient student subgroup. Although progress of Limited English Proficient students in attaining proficiency or better in reading and mathematics is included in the Goal Progress section, Maryland School Assessments/High School Assessments, and in Title III, Part A, school systems not making AMAO III will be required to provide additional discussion of progress toward attaining reading and math proficiency here.

### A. Based on the Examination of Untested Students (Table 4.1):

1. Please explain the reasons students still enrolled as of March 31, 2008 (first day of testing window) **did not** complete the summative LAS test.

One hundred seven students were still enrolled on March 1, 2008. These students all **completed** the summative LAS test.

### B. Based on the Examination of AMAO I and AMAO II Data (Table 4.1 and 4.2):

1. Describe where progress is evident. In your response, identify progress in terms of grade band(s) and subgroups.

In 2007-2008, 85% of English Language Learners (ELL) who took the summative Language Assessment Scales (LAS) test made progress toward proficiency compared to 43% in 2006-2007. This increase of 42 percentage points with AMAO 1 was significant. The enrollment for English Language Learners (ELLs) in elementary grades tends to be higher than in the secondary grades; however, students in grades 3-5 and 6-8 showed similar gains in their overall test score (AMAO I). For example, 22 out of 28 students in grades 3-5 and 9 out of 12 students in grades 6-8 scored 15 scale score points higher on their overall test in spring 2008 as compared to their pre test scores on

the October 2007 data file. In 2007-2008, 73% of ELLs met or exceeded the targets for AMAO II compared to 33% in 2006-2007. In grades 3-5, 20 out of a total of 28 students met or exceeded the overall target score while 16 out of a total of 22 students in grades 9-12 met or exceeded the target score. In 2006-2007, 10 students met or exceeded the target score in grades 3-5 and only 4 students met or exceeded the target in grades 9-12. As indicated in the data, ELLs made significant progress at the end of the 2007-2008 school year in attaining English Language proficiency (AMAO II).

2. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies to which you attribute the progress of Limited English Proficient students towards attaining English proficiency.

For students who were not making progress in their academic classes, the ESL teachers increased collaboration with the mainstream teacher to ensure targeted, aligned, and direct instruction. ESL teachers received training in *Performance Matters* and were able to use the data warehouse to access achievement data for ELLs. Having access to benchmark assessment data and DIBELS, ESL teachers were able to identify areas that needed to be targeted in instruction. In addition, there was an increased focus on the utilization of before, during, and after reading strategies. ESL teachers were able to participate in a tri-county professional development session that explored various strategies for teaching vocabulary in context.

3. Describe where challenges are evident in the progress of Limited English Proficient students towards attaining English proficiency by each domain in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

Below are the challenges that still require focused attention:

- Listening-Rate of speech by the native speaker makes it difficult for ELLs to process information and to understand what they hear.
- Speaking-ELLs vocabulary specific to the different content areas is limited and interferes with their ability to express their thoughts. They are still experiencing difficulty with understanding grammar concepts and usage.
- Reading-There is difficulty with comprehension which can be attributed, in part, to a lack of knowledge about the culture of the native speaker.
- Writing-Writing activities tend to have some relationship to culture which makes it difficult to write in the same manner as the native speaker. Oftentimes, this insufficient knowledge about the culture of the native speaker interferes with the English language learners ability to write a suitable response.

4. Describe the changes or adjustments that will be made to ensure sufficient progress of Limited English Proficient students towards attaining English proficiency. Include timelines where appropriate.

Beginning September 10, 2008, ESL teachers and mainstream teachers will be trained in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) which will provide an opportunity for a push-in model for students who can benefit from having more time in their content class. ESOL and mainstream teachers will have collaborative planning time as well as opportunities for team teaching. The pull-out model will continue to be used for students who could benefit from smaller classes and more direct instruction.

The TransAct online communication resource will be available to school based staff so that translations of required documents in the ELLs native language are available to parents.

C. Based on the Examination of AMAO III Data (Table 4.3):

1. Describe where challenges are evident in the progress of Limited English Proficient students.

Still, challenges exist with LEP students in acquiring the academic language which is very much needed to meet with success on the MSA and HSA. There is a need to continue to focus on reading and writing in order for LEPs to meet the targets for AMAO III. Their difficulty in reading and writing is due in part to insufficient knowledge about and exposure to the culture of the people who speak the target language.

2. Describe the changes or adjustments that will be made to ensure sufficient progress of Limited English Proficient students in reading and mathematics. Include resource allocations and timelines where appropriate.

With the training and implementation of a push-in model (SIOP) that took place beginning in the 2007-2008 school year, LEP students have more time in their content class and ESL teachers will increase collaboration with the mainstream teacher.

## Adequate Yearly Progress

This section requires that school systems in any phase of school system improvement update progress in specific areas. Additionally, all school systems must report the percentages of all schools making Adequate Yearly Progress, the percentages of Title I schools making Adequate Yearly Progress, Schools in Improvement and Title I Schools in Improvement.

### School System Improvement

This section must be completed **ONLY** by local school systems in improvement or corrective action.<sup>1</sup>

N/A

#### Instructions:

1. Local school systems in corrective action must provide an update on how the school system has revised the applicable components of the Master Plan to execute the corrective actions taken by the State Board of Education. In the report, school systems should describe what challenges are evident and what changes or adjustments will be made so that the school system will exit corrective action status. You may refer to other sections of this update as appropriate.

### School Improvement

#### **No Child Left Behind Indicator 1.3: The percentage of Title I schools that make Adequate Yearly Progress.**

Under No Child Left Behind, local school systems must review the progress of Title I schools primarily to determine (1) if each school has made adequate progress toward all students meeting or exceeding the standards by 2013-2014, and (2) if a school has narrowed the achievement gap. In conjunction with the local school system, the State also reviews the effectiveness of each school's actions and activities that are supported by Title I, Part A funds,<sup>2</sup> including parental involvement and professional development.

#### A. Based on the Examination of School-level AYP Data (Tables 5.1 and 5.2):

1. Identify the challenges, including those specific to Title I schools, in ensuring schools make Adequate Yearly Progress. Describe the changes or adjustments and the corresponding resource allocations that will be made to ensure sufficient progress. Include timelines where appropriate.

All elementary and middle schools in St. Mary's County Public Schools made AYP in 2008.

Challenges in moving schools toward making Adequate Yearly Progress include:

- Identifying appropriate interventions and securing funding to provide the resources and related professional development.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 13A.01.04.08 of the Code of Maryland Regulations.

<sup>2</sup> This information is included in Attachment 7 of this document.

- Meeting the academic and personal needs of all students, particularly low performing economically disadvantaged students, special education students, and African American students.
- Providing additional instructional time for students needing intervention.
- Securing and retaining highly qualified teachers.
- Identifying and implementing an approved list of research based interventions in mathematics.

Changes or Adjustments:

- The implementation of research based reading interventions such as: Foundations, Read Naturally, and Rewards were targeted to increase achievement in the area of reading.
- Professional development provided by Education Trust and the Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) consultant is ongoing, job-embedded, and connected to students' needs as identified through data analysis.
- The Eleven Month School Program provides an additional month of school beyond the regular school year for identified low performing students at the Title I schools that offer school wide programs.

Resource Allocations:

- The professional development allocation for the four schools receiving Title I, Part A funding is \$144,411.
- The materials of instruction allocation to all schools receiving Title I, Part A funding totaled \$68,405.
- The cost for the Eleven Month School Program at three schools is approximately \$230,000.

B. Based on the Examination of Schools in Improvement Data (Tables 5.3 and 5.4):

1. Describe the actions that the school system is taking to ensure that the No Child Left Behind and Title I requirements for schools identified for Improvement (Year 1), Improvement (Year 2), Corrective Action, Restructuring (Planning), and Restructuring (Implementation) are being addressed.

**Actions that the school system took during the 2007-2008 school year**

Lexington Park Elementary School achieved AYP based upon the 2007 MSA; however, as a school holding in Improvement - Year 1, the School Choice Transfer Option continued to be offered to all students residing in the school's attendance area.

- Lexington Park Elementary School had an infusion of experienced staff including a successful veteran principal and assistant principal. Three of the four instructional resource positions have been re-staffed.
- Lexington Park Elementary School continued to have a parent liaison position.
- Lexington Park Elementary School continued to have two additional teachers and a full time paraeducator to reduce class size to allow for more individualized instruction.

- Lexington Park Elementary School had a mentor position for new teachers to provide support in areas such as lesson planning and modeling lessons.
- Lexington Park Elementary school conducted an extended year (eleven month) school program. This program provides an extra month of instruction in August, just prior to the start of school. The goal of this “Jump Start” program is to provide an additional month of school beyond the regular school year which focuses on increasing student success and achievement in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Students (100) are selected based on their status on MSA as well as formative measures of performance in reading and mathematics.

Spring Ridge Middle School entered Restructuring Planning based on the 2007 MSA. Spring Ridge Middle School convened a restructuring planning team comprised of school system, school, and community members and developed a restructuring plan to implement in 2008-2009, should AYP not be met in 2008. This plan was approved by the Maryland State Board of Education on June 24, 2008.

- Spring Ridge Middle School continued to have an additional administrative position, academic dean, which began with the 2005-2006 school year. One additional counselor had been assigned beginning with the 2005-2006 school year. Both positions address students’ academic needs. For the 2006-2007 school year, a very successful veteran principal was moved to this school and two administrative positions were filled with distinguished leaders in our system. The Director of Secondary Instruction, Administration, and School Improvement served as the chair of the Technical Assistance Team (TAT).
- Spring Ridge Middle School received an infusion of technology. Each classroom was equipped with SMART technology that includes keypad student response systems and interactive tablets.
- A double mathematics period in 8th grade for all students except those accelerated to algebra and geometry was implemented at Spring Ridge Middle School.
- In January 2008, there was a concern that middle school students at Spring Ridge Middle School may not make AYP due to poor reading skills. A team of supervisors and school based personnel completed in excess of 120 oral reading fluency assessments in a day, enabling the school staff to regroup and deliver an intense round of interventions (REWARDS) to enable the students to better read multi-syllabic words, increase their fluency, and improve their comprehension.
- Spring Ridge Middle School received an attendance monitor funded by the Local Management Board.

Schools in Improvement implemented the required two year School Improvement Plans with all documented requirements reviewed and approved by the St. Mary’s County Public School System Peer Review Teams.

- Technical Assistance Teams (TAT) were assigned to each school to provide timely support and intervention, as necessary, in the areas of school improvement planning, disaggregated data analysis, identification and implementation of professional development, school organization, and budget review and development.

- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Academies were implemented beginning last year in the feeder pattern for Lexington Park Elementary School, Spring Ridge Middle School, and Great Mills High School.
- Both schools in improvement continued to have 21st Century Community Learning Centers' extended day programs. The 21st Century After School Program is a cooperative community partnership serving SMCPS students with after school programs that include intensive instruction in reading and mathematics, plus enrichment activities.

**Actions that the school system will take once school improvement status is determined for the 2008-2009 school year**

Lexington Park Elementary School achieved AYP based upon the 2008 MSA and exited school improvement status. Spring Ridge Middle School made AYP and will hold in Restructuring-Planning. Spring Ridge Middle School will exit improvement status if AYP is met in 2009.

- Lexington Park Elementary School and Spring Ridge Middle School completed the required School Improvement Plans with all documented requirements which has been reviewed and approved by the St. Mary's County Public School System Peer Review Team.
- Both schools will have technical assistance teams consisting of representative members from the departments of Academic Support, Curriculum and Instruction, Special Education, and Pupil Services.
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Academies that began last year in the feeder pattern for Lexington Park Elementary School, Spring Ridge Middle School, and Great Mills High School welcomed a new cohort at each site expanding the program to the next grade level for existing students.
- A commitment to keep class sizes low at Lexington Park Elementary School was maintained for the 2008-2009.
- Spring Ridge Middle School will receive State School Improvement Grant funds which will be targeted to classroom technology and professional learning communities.
- The Department of Academic Support will monitor Spring Ridge Middle School's implementation of their Alternative Governance Plan.

## Attendance Rates

Attendance rates are an additional measure used in Maryland's Adequate Yearly Progress calculations.

### Based on the Examination of the Attendance Data (Table 5.5):

1. Describe where progress in increasing attendance rates is evident. In your response, identify progress in terms of grade band(s) and subgroups.

There is much good news about attendance. All student groups demonstrated growth in attendance for the 2007-2008 school year. Elementary and middle school rates are above the state goal in the aggregate and increased by .5 percentage points and 1.3 percentage points respectively. High school rates are at an all time high in the aggregate with an increase of 2 percentage points to 93.5%. At the elementary level, all but one student group met or exceeded the goal with only the American Indian/Alaskan Native group recording attendance below 94%. This group reached 93.3% and increased by 1.3 percentage points.

At the middle school level, all groups increased their attendance rates, with 6 of 8 reaching or exceeding the 94% state goal. The American Indian/Alaskan Native group had a 3 point increase to 93.8%. While below the 94% goal, the FARMS student data showed an increase of 2.9 percentage points to 93.4%.

At the high school level, all student groups demonstrated progress in attendance. Three student groups are at or above the 94% goal. This is an improvement over last year when just one group exceeded 94%. Five groups did not make the 94% goal (FARMS, African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, white, and special education). Our FARMS students made a 4.3 percentage point gain to 88.9%, but their data continues to be significantly discrepant from their non FARMS peers. The African American group made a 2.9 point gain to 91.5% proficient the highest to date. The American Indian/Alaskan Native group made a 3.1% gain to 92%. The white student group increased 1.9 points to 93.9 just missing the AMO. The Special Education population at high school experienced a 4.1% increase and reached above 90% for the first time in 6 years (91.5%).

Our efforts at eliminating the achievement gap depend on having students attend school regularly to access high quality instruction.

2. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies and the corresponding resource allocations to which you attribute the progress.

A consistent, targeted focus on the importance of attendance has led us to the growth we are seeing. We continue to stress the critical necessity for students to be in school every day. Differentiated staffing continues to support schools with a history of attendance concerns and our community partner agencies have provided staff at those schools to support our efforts. Counselors, nurses, and community partners act as mentors. Additional counseling staff is present at Spring Ridge Middle School. The Local Management Board funds full time attendance mentors at that school and at Great Mills High School. A part time interagency liaison was housed at the Local Management Board's office and worked directly with our most needy families in a team approach with mental health staff and family advocates to empower the families to make positive changes that included more regular school attendance.

Our school calendar was changed a year ago, adding a week of spring break, to encourage parents to take vacations during school breaks and our attendance regulations became more stringent for high school students, in particular. Anecdotal evidence indicates that there are fewer families taking vacation while school is in session and the attendance percentages demonstrate that attendance has improved for high school students.

Great Mills High School experienced the greatest increase for high school students. This can be partially attributed to the Technical Assistance Team that met regularly there to specifically address attendance and other climate data such as discipline. This focus on climate also permeated the entire system in that PBIS, character education and other school-based initiatives have resulted in a 14% reduction in suspensions. This further supports our attendance efforts in that more students are attending school without breaks in service, allowing them to benefit from high quality instruction.

Our Interagency Committee on School Attendance worked with the Sheriff's Office and the State's Attorney's Office to enforce the school attendance laws. Three families that had intervention through the legal system demonstrated significant progress toward regular and consistent attendance for their children.

Tech Connect, a new program targeted at supporting ninth grade students during that difficult transition year, met with success in that students who participated in that program had better grades, fewer discipline referrals, and more consistent attendance. The Tech Connect program offered at the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center (JAFCTC) provided an alternative hands-on learning environment for sixty first-time freshmen students. The students identified had been unsuccessful in middle school and showed, based on academic data, a great likelihood to drop out when they turn sixteen. By completing the course at the JAFCTC, students earned one technology credit and half an elective mathematics credit. Small class size, close support by dedicated counselors and support staff, and an engaging curriculum resulted in over half of those participating earning five or more credits and moving on to a successful sophomore year.

Finally, our new web based student information system, *eSchoolPlus*, was fully operational this year. Teachers entered student attendance directly into the system and parents were given real time access to track their children's progress. This helped us to monitor attendance more closely from the home and from school.

3. Describe where challenges are evident. In your response, identify challenges in terms of grade band(s) and subgroups.

Our first area of challenge is attendance for our American Indian/Alaskan Native student group. This group did not reach the 94% goal at any level. They did make significant gains to 93.3% at elementary school, 93.8% at middle school, and 92% at high school.

Our second areas of challenge are the special education and African American groups at the high school level. Both groups made solid gains from the previous year and reached into the 90% (91.5%) for the first time. Yet, they are behind the aggregate by 2 percentage points.

The most significant issue for SMCPs attendance is the discrepancy for our FARMS students. This group did not reach the state goal at either middle school or high school and experienced a steady decline as they moved from elementary to middle to high school where the attendance rate fell to 88.9%. There was an increase in attendance at every level for this group with elementary reaching above 94% for the first time. Middle school also demonstrated a 2.9 percentage point gain but at 93.4%, this group lags behind the aggregate by 1.9 points. The high school has an 88.9% attendance rate for this group which constitutes a 4.6 point gap between this group and the aggregate.

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

The adjustments planned for 2008-2009 are intended to provide school staff with a focused approach to addressing the needs of those student groups whose attendance lags behind their peers. The first adjustment is a new model for school improvement plans that focuses the work of school staff on strategies that have proven successful in our schools and in other systems. Schools will choose from several approved options for climate setting: PBIS, Asset Development and/or Character Education initiatives. Funding for asset development has been provided by the Local Management Board.

Professional development for student services staff in August and in October will focus on reducing the disproportional representation of identified student groups in our attendance, discipline and graduation rate data. Those students in the targeted groups will be identified and supported by school-based and central office student services staff, using individual student information from our state attendance reports.

In addition, two new schools are being trained as PBIS schools. One of these schools is a Title I school and will focus their energy on reducing disruption so students are not removed from class or school for misbehavior. All PBIS schools reviewed and discussed their attendance, discipline, and special education disproportionality data as a component of their returning team training this summer. This discussion will lead them to include strategies for reducing the disproportional suspension of student groups as a component of their PBIS plan for 2008-2009. PBIS funding is provided by a special education discretionary grant.

A full time attendance mentor from Tri County Youth Services will continue to work at Spring Ridge Middle School and a new person has already begun at Great Mills High School. Both of these schools have the most significant special education and FARMS populations at the secondary level.

Walden Counseling Center will support our students who are returning from alternative education programs by providing a staff person to GMHS two days a week to assist with transition. This therapist will work with students and their families to prevent absences and disciplinary infractions.

## **Graduation Rates and Dropout Rates**

**No Child Left Behind Goal 5: All students will graduate from high school**

**No Child Left Behind Indicator 5.1: The percentage of students who graduate each year with a regular diploma.**

**No Child Left Behind Indicator 5.2: The percentage of students who drop out of school.**

Graduation rate is an additional measure used in Maryland's Adequate Yearly Progress calculations.

Based on the Examination of Graduation and Dropout Rate Data (Tables 5.6 and 5.7):

1. Describe where progress in moving toward the graduation/dropout target is evident. In your response, identify progress in terms of subgroups.

In terms of graduation rate, the aggregate and five subgroups (American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, White, Hispanic, and Females) met or exceeded the AMO. One of our three high schools, Leonardtown High School (LHS), made progress from the previous year, achieving the highest graduation rate in five years (91.18%). This high school also improved in attendance and reduced their already very positive dropout rate to 1.8%. A second high school, Chopticon High School (CHS), exceeded the AMO for graduation rate (88.12%) and had a dropout rate of 1.53%. Unfortunately, the graduation rate for CHS was lower than the previous year by 2.56 percentage points.

With regard to dropout rate, two high schools, (CHS and LHS) were well within the range for the aggregate. As a system, the aggregate and 5 subgroups (Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, White, Special Education and Females) are all below the 3% state standard. Two groups made progress as compared to the previous year. FARMS students demonstrated a 1 percentage point improvement and special education students improved by .96 percentage points.

2. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies and the corresponding resource allocations to which you attribute the progress.

As mentioned above, one high school made progress (Leonardtown High School) and can attribute that progress to the dedication of the 12th grade assistant principal and several other key staff members who worked closely with identified students and their parents to encourage students to stay in school.

Other progress was made in terms of building future capacity and is explained further below.

The Tech Connect Program at the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center (JAFCTC) was created and implemented in order to assist incoming ninth graders in the difficult transition from middle school to high school. This program was created in response to our system data that shows the majority of our dropouts are 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year 9th and 10th graders. As there was existing instructional capacity at the JAFCTC, we seized the opportunity to create a course that developed technological literacy. The class was tailored to meet the requirements for the technology education credit required by the State of

Maryland and also have computational elements embedded within it so that students earn one half a credit in elective mathematics. Almost every student in the course passed it and over half of those enrolled also earned enough credit at their home school to move on to their sophomore year. Three out of four students stated that they intend to return to the JAFCTC and complete one of the myriad of programs offered there. Sixty-four percent of the Tech Connect students have enrolled in a Forrest Center program for the 2008-2009 school year.

A team also worked throughout the year to develop a plan to create a tiered approach to ninth grade transition issues which seem to be the area of concern that causes a number of our students to fall behind early and eventually drop out of school. The results of that group's work will be addressed in #4 below.

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

In terms of graduation rate, there was a decline for the aggregate and for all student groups. Limited English Proficient students had a rate of 50% with a cohort of two students. The Special Education group experienced a significant decline from 90.91% in 2007 to 79.49% in 2008. The American Indian/Alaskan Native group consisting of 15 students experienced a 14.29 percentage point decline in graduation rate.

While the dropout rate for the aggregate remains within the acceptable range at 2.8%, there was a slight increase from the previous year's rate of 2.73. Four student groups are above the 3% standard (African American, FARMS, LEP, and Males).

This graduation and dropout data is tied to the other 2008 data. Our FARMS, Males, and African American students are overrepresented in our suspension data. The FARMS group also constitutes our biggest challenge in terms of regular and consistent school attendance. If students are suspended and/or do not attend school regularly, they fall behind their peers academically and are at a greater risk for dropping out of school.

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

Our first adjustment is the implementation of a new model for school improvement plans that focuses the work of school staff on strategies that have proven successful in our schools and in other systems. Schools will choose from several approved options for climate setting: PBIS, Asset Development and/or Character Education initiatives. Funding for asset development has been provided by the Local Management Board. Great Mills High School will pilot an asset development approach for high schools. In addition, high school-based pupil services teams will meet regularly to identify students who are at risk in the areas of attendance, discipline infractions, and retention or dropping out. Individualized plans will be developed and implemented for these students that include mentoring, parent involvement, referral to school and community resources, and creative scheduling.

As we continue our focus on the transition year of ninth grade, Fairlead Academy opened this fall with 60 incoming 9th grade students who are identified as needing intervention in reading and mathematics in order to be successful at high school. This ninth grade academy draws students from all three

attendance areas but additional slots will be assigned to Great Mills High School, as that school exhibits the greatest challenge in terms of potential dropouts and graduation rate concerns.

The Tech Connect Program will also serve another 75 ninth graders in the partial day program, with a focus on reengagement to encourage on time graduation in four years. These students will have a mentor at the Forrest Center, will complete an informal vocational evaluation, and will have opportunities to explore courses available at the center.

This year the new position of transition coordinator will provide ongoing support and monitoring for students leaving ninth grade programs-Fairlead Academy and Tech Connect-as they re-enter their home high schools for their 10th through 12th grade years. The transition coordinator will meet with administrators, counselors, teachers, and other school system personnel on behalf of students' academic needs, and the coordinator will meet with students and their families to provide them with individualized support as needed. The transition coordinator will monitor students' progress, collect and maintain performance data, provide monthly updates, and collaborate with all stakeholders on educational decisions that affect transitioning students.

The Academy of Finance is being offered beginning in the 2008-2009 school year at Chopticon High School to provide interested students with a focused career pathway in the financial services industry. Students learn about careers in finance, such as banking, insurance, financial planning, business administration, sales, contract oversight, budget analysis, and advertising. The program provides field and internship opportunities to apply classroom learning. The program also incorporates extra curricular programs related to the career interests of students, such as the Future Business Leaders of America. Students from Great Mills High School and Leonardtown High School are able to transfer to Chopticon High School for enrollment in the Academy.

To get our students over the last bar, we have allocated four additional instructional positions at the high school level to coordinate the High School Assessment Bridge Plan for students who find themselves unable to pass the tests individually or through a combined score option. These teachers have mutually convenient schedules with co-planning time built in to share data and work with students. They will work closely with the building level HSA remediation teachers as well as the content supervisors and instructors from other schools. The SMCPS school calendar has built in early dismissal days each marking period to allow teachers to meet with colleagues beyond their home school.

As we have sharpened our focus on the development and refinement of middle school students' reading and mathematics skills, we are sending a better prepared student from middle to high school. But even with that, we know students must be successful the first time through ninth grade. To that end, we have in place a tiered response to those still underperforming as freshmen. Level one, we tailor their school schedule to allow up to 90 minutes for mathematics or English depending on skill development. Level 2, we offer Tech Connect as a creative hands-on approach to learning at the JAFCTC. Level 3, we place them full-time at the Fairlead Academy with small class sizes (one to ten or less), blocked classes, technology rich instruction, and a highly dedicated and supportive staff.

Finally, professional development for student services staff in August and in October will focus on reducing the disproportional representation of identified student groups in our attendance, discipline, dropout, and graduation rate data. Those students in the targeted students groups will be identified and

supported by school-based and central office staff, using individual student information from our discipline, attendance, dropout, and graduation reports.

## Highly Qualified Staff

**No Child Left Behind Goal 3: By 2005-2006, all students will be taught by highly qualified teachers.**

**No Child Left Behind Indicator 3.1: The percentage of classes being taught by “highly qualified” teachers, in the aggregate and in “high-poverty” schools.**

**No Child Left Behind Indicator 3.3: The percentage of paraprofessionals working in Title I schools (excluding those whose sole duties are translators and parental involvement assistants) who are qualified.**

Under NCLB, LSSs are required to report the percentages of core academic subject (CAS) classes being taught by highly qualified teachers, and the percentages of CAS classes being taught by highly qualified teachers in high-poverty schools compared to low-poverty schools. High-poverty schools are defined as schools in the top quartile of poverty in the State and low-poverty schools as schools in the bottom quartile of poverty in the State. The Act also requires that school systems ensure that economically disadvantaged and minority students are not taught at higher rates than other students by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers.

### Plans for Reaching the 100% Highly Qualified Teacher Goal

LSS responses in Part I and the Title II, Part A attachment in Part II will continue to serve as the district’s Highly Qualified Teacher Improvement Plan.<sup>3</sup> In this section, each LSS should address the factors that prevented the district from attaining the 100% HQT Goal.

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<sup>3</sup> Section 2141(a) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

## Highly Qualified Staff (continued)

### A. Based on the Examination of Core Academic Subject Classes Taught by Highly Qualified Teacher Data (Tables 6.1 - 6.3):

#### 1. Describe where progress is evident.

As we continue to strive to meet our goal of having 100% of Core Academic Subject Classes (CAS) taught by highly qualified teachers, we are also faced with a turnover of individuals teaching in those subject areas. This school year, we faced a number of vacancies that were a challenge to fill, including special education, mathematics, and science teaching positions. As our numbers fell from 94.2% to 92.9%, we sought to examine ways to improve our recruitment and retention efforts for such shortage areas.

#### 2. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies and the corresponding resource allocations to which you attribute the progress. What evidence does the school system have that the strategies in place are having the intended effect?

Practices and strategies that have proven successful for teachers within the St. Mary's County Public School System include:

- Training for our administrators and open lines of communication with school-based administrators pertaining to assignment of teachers in CAS with respect to the individual's certification;
- Increased awareness of administrators and applicants regarding the requirements for meeting Maryland certification requirements prior to being hired in a CAS;
- Training for another Certification Authorized Partner with MSDE to increase the number of individuals in the Human Resources Department that hold that status to two;
- Partnership with the College of Notre Dame in the Resident Teacher program in critical shortage areas and local shortage CAS, including the first year of a Tri-County agreement with neighboring counties to offer opportunities for more individuals to enroll in the Resident Teacher Program (RTC) program;
- Partnership with Towson University for direct payment of tuition for teachers in an approved program;
- Conferences with individual teachers and their administrators to develop plans to obtain full certification;
- Recruiting foreign teachers that meet the standards for highly qualified in a CAS in critical shortage areas;
- Termination of employment if certification standards are not met;
- Reimbursement for PRAXIS assessments; and,
- Providing increased tuition reimbursement.

#### 3. Describe where challenges are evident.

Challenges in increasing the percentage of CAS taught by highly qualified teachers include:

- Recruiting and retaining teachers in critical shortage areas identified locally and by MSDE;
- Recruiting and retaining special education teachers; and,

- Predicting teacher turnover due to military transfers of teachers (or transfer of spouses due to military transfers), leaves of absence due to maternity or illness, retirement, unexpected resignations, etc.
4. Describe the changes or adjustments and the corresponding resource allocations that were made to ensure sufficient progress. Include timelines where appropriate.

Overall, the strategies and practices that are currently in place and identified in question 2 have been successful in addressing significant increases in the past for the number of teachers who are highly qualified teaching CAS. Refinement of the strategies, increased and timelier notification to teachers with regard to their certification, and developing alternative certification programs will be key in making progress in this area in the future. The Resident Teacher Certification program, in partnership with the College of Notre Dame, has the potential for increasing the number of “highly qualified” teachers during the 2008-2009 school year. Expanding this program to include neighboring counties in a joint agreement, along with exploring programs with other institutions of higher learning, will enable St. Mary's County Public Schools to continuously improve in this area in the future.

**B. Based on the Examination of the Equitable Distribution of Highly Qualified Teacher Data (Tables 6.4 - 6.5):**

1. Describe where progress is evident.

In elementary classrooms identified through high poverty schools, 100% of the classes were taught by highly qualified teachers. In elementary classrooms identified as low poverty schools, 96.52% of the classes were taught by highly qualified teachers.

2. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies and the corresponding resource allocations to which you attribute the progress. Your response must include examples of incentives for voluntary transfers, the provision of professional development, recruitment programs, or other effective strategies that low-income and minority students are not taught at higher rates than other students by unqualified, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers. What evidence does the school system have that the strategies in place are having the intended effect?

Schools identified as Title I are staffed completely by highly qualified teachers. Principals of high and low poverty schools work closely with Human Resources representatives to identify teacher candidates that meet the highly qualified requirements prior to interviewing those teacher candidates. As newly hired teachers join our workforce, we are faced with the challenge of retaining those teachers in CAS in high and low poverty schools. All attempts are made to accommodate voluntary transfers to high and low poverty schools in relation to areas of greater need. At the present time, we do not offer any incentives to voluntarily transfer to high and low poverty schools. Preferential hiring was offered to all Title I elementary schools as well as one middle school that is in improvement. St. Mary's County Public Schools offers a competitive salary and continues to see that as a priority. An excellent benefits package that includes health insurance, tuition reimbursement, and life insurance is offered as an incentive as well. In order to build and improve teacher quality, SMCPS provides high quality professional development for all staff members, and partners with local colleges and universities, as well as the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center, to provide courses locally. New Teachers are

provided a variety of supports including a three-day New Teacher Orientation program, optional early-bird professional development sessions, a mentor who has been provided training in coaching and mentoring skills, and a two-year cycle of new teacher meetings. Mentors are provided meetings that occur two to three times per year to address the need for ongoing training.

3. Describe where challenges are evident.

The schools with high poverty students are usually where turnover rates are highest. The challenge facing St. Mary's County Public Schools is identifying and retaining teachers who are willing to teach at those schools without any financial stipends.

4. Describe the changes or adjustments and the corresponding resource allocations that were made to ensure sufficient progress. Include timelines where appropriate.

Increased resources in professional development for new teacher induction have been provided. Changes in the administration of the schools have led to an increase in morale at those sites and a willingness of veteran highly qualified teachers to transfer to and remain at high and low poverty schools. The placement of student teacher interns in challenging schools and PBIS schools helps to increase the abilities of new teachers and allows them to gain the skills necessary to be successful once they are fully employed teachers.

C. Based on the Examination of Highly Qualified Teacher Retention Data (Table 6.6):

1. Describe where progress is evident.

The number of teachers that retired declined by 1.06%, the number of teachers that took a leave of absence declined by 1.29%, and the number of teachers dismissed/non-renewed declined by 0.16% from 2006-2007 to 2007-2008.

2. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies and the corresponding resource allocations to which you attribute the progress. What evidence does the school system have that the strategies in place are having the intended effect?

St. Mary's County Public Schools is making progress in retaining highly qualified teachers in the areas of retirement, dismissal/non-renewal, and leaves of absence. Retirements decreased by 1.06%, leaves of absence decreased by 1.29%, and dismissal/non-renewals decreased by 0.16%.

3. Describe where challenges are evident.

With the economy being in such a variable state, it is hard to predict how teachers will react in terms of their continued employment. One minor trend this school year is of teachers wanting to teach closer to their homes. In many cases, this may mean a teacher resigns from SMCPS to work in a neighboring county where they reside.

4. Describe the changes or adjustments and the corresponding resource allocations that were made to ensure sufficient progress. Include timelines where appropriate.

As a school system, we seek to find the best match for teachers and the schools in which they work. With this in mind, we consider all requests for transfers to schools within our system that accommodate where geographically a teacher lives, or childcare concerns, or married couples when both are employed as teachers, with schools closer to each other.

### **Highly Qualified Staff (continued)**

#### **D. Describe how the school system identifies hard-to-staff schools and critical subject-area shortages.**

Schools that are hard to staff are identified by the number of individual openings throughout the school year, and late into the summer hiring season. Critical shortage areas are identified by the lack of certified applicants in the pool of applications submitted throughout the recruitment season and summer recruitment efforts.

#### **E. Based on the Examination of Qualified Paraprofessional Data (Table 6.7):**

1. Describe the strategies that the local school system will use to ensure that all paraprofessionals working in Title I schools continue to be qualified.

St. Mary's County Public Schools provides reimbursement for the Para-Pro Praxis test and tuition reimbursement for all Paraeducators to reach the standards established by MSDE to be highly qualified. Paraeducators are also provided the opportunity to participate in all professional development opportunities offered for MSDE credit and are given the opportunity to earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs). The eligibility of all of the applicants for vacancies is determined by meeting these standards prior to their being considered and hired.

## Highly Qualified Staff (continued)

### **No Child Left Behind Indicator 3.2: The percentage of teachers receiving high quality professional development.**

In this section of the 2008 Master Plan Annual Update, LSSs should present **one** plan for a comprehensive, long-term teacher professional development initiative intended to address one or more of the student learning goals identified elsewhere in the Master Plan Annual Update. **LSSs have two options for meeting this reporting requirement:**

**Option 1: Use the *Maryland Teacher Professional Development Planning Guide* to prepare and present a plan for a comprehensive professional development initiative that addresses one or more of the student learning goals specified in the Goal Progress section).** For planning and reporting purposes, 2008 Master Plan Annual Updates should focus on professional development initiatives (or components of ongoing initiatives) that will begin in summer 2009 or later.

**Option 2: Describe district plans for using the six-component planning framework to guide a school-based approach to professional development, including initiatives that rely on the deployment of school-based coaches (or staff in similar positions) and job-embedded professional development.** For planning and reporting purposes, 2008 Master Plan Annual Updates should focus on strategies to support school-based professional development planning and implementation that will begin in late-spring 2009 (or on a schedule consistent with the districts' school improvement planning cycle.)

## **St. Mary's County Public Schools elects to respond to Option 2**

High quality professional development in St. Mary's County Public Schools begins with a focus on what happens at the school level. District efforts are designed to support the needs of teachers and those closest to students, i.e., our school-based instructional staff. Therefore, there has been a tremendous push toward job-embedded professional development. The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards (2004) have been a driving force in this effort, delineating high quality professional development expectations. These standards, married with the National Staff Development Standards (Revised, 2001), provide a clear set of non-negotiable principles that guide high quality professional development across St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS).

The *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation defines professional development as “high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom focused.” In defining high quality, the standards for staff development make this quite clear in a way that aligns with the NCLB definition, where high quality professional development includes activities that are not “one-day or short-term workshops or conferences” without follow-up. School-based, job-embedded professional development is an illustrative example of teacher learning that meets this high standard.

Professional development is included as a key strand in the Superintendent's Fifteen Point Plan of Priorities, and is a key facet of school improvement. The goals of professional development are consistent with the Master Plan and ESEA goals. Specifically, professional development initiatives are based on identified needs to build capacity for improvement related to these goals. In addition, professional development is designed using student data, examining root causes, teacher observation and performance, and school improvement targets. Therefore, specific objectives for professional development are differentiated based on the needs of teachers and schools. A key goal is to ensure that high quality professional development is aligned with the Maryland Professional Development Standards, and sustained, job-embedded, and meaningful work is evaluated and monitored throughout the process. A focus on high quality professional development has been clearly articulated as an emphasis in school improvement planning across the system.

To this end, the school system has embedded high quality professional development as a priority in the school improvement planning process. Professional development continues to be a focus in terms of educational efforts to improve student achievement. Systemically, we have approached the vision of building professional development leaders, through modeling best practices, and providing learning opportunities to both administrators and teacher leaders. We have maintained a focus on the standards and a response to the data we have collected with respect to high quality professional development.

In 2004, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) commissioned a survey conducted by Policy Studies Associates, Inc., in which teachers were asked to report on their participation in five categories of professional development for that school year. In 2006 and 2008, St. Mary's County Public Schools administered the survey locally. The survey questions were structured similarly, with permission from Policy Studies Associates, Inc., to utilize the same survey questions, so results are comparative.

The five categories that represented long-term professional development activities (i.e., those that lasted more than one day) are:

1. Workshops, Institutes, and Academies
2. Coaching or Mentoring Programs
3. Job-Embedded Professional Development Activities
4. Conferences or Professional Meetings
5. Graduate Courses

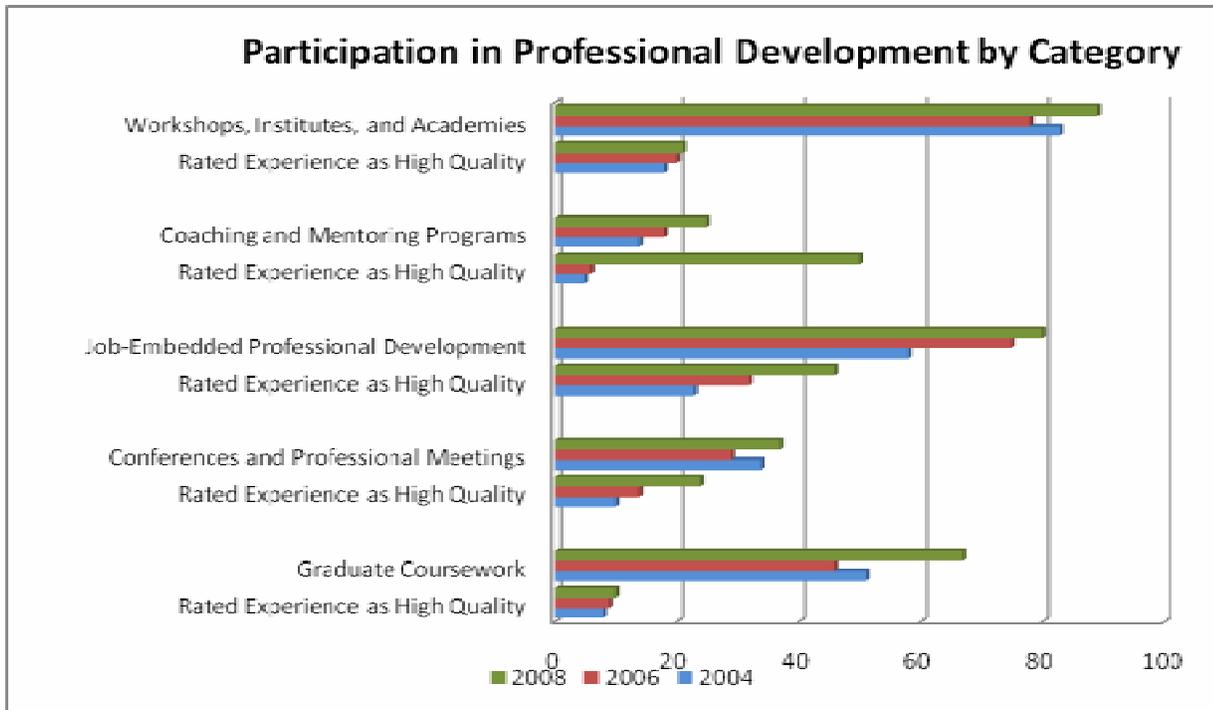
MSDE set a vigorous standard to identify teachers as participants in high-quality professional development activities. This threshold was set based on the definition stated in NCLB, the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) Standards for Staff Development, as well as the Teacher Professional Development Standards (2004). More specifically, teachers were counted as having participated in high-quality professional development in one or more of the five categories of professional development if their responses to questions fit the following patterns, meeting 14 of 16 indicators.

Key findings from the spring 2008 Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development illustrate growth across all areas.

- **The high standard of professional development is consistently illustrated in response patterns.** Teacher responses that rank experiences as high quality have increased, though the standard remained high. Of particular note:
  - Participation in *job-embedded* professional development increased by 5%.  
The percentage of teachers who participated in *job-embedded* professional development who ranked the experience as high quality increased by 14%.
  - Participation in *coaching and mentoring* programs increased by 7%.  
The percentage of teachers who participated in *coaching and mentoring programs* who ranked the experience as high quality increased by 44%.
- **Fifty-one percent of teachers reported participating in one or more of the five categories of activities that are defined as high quality activities.** This is an increase of 6% over the previous survey.
- **The quality of professional meetings and conferences improved substantially.** The percentage of teachers participating in professional meetings and conferences that lasted one day or longer who ranked the experience as high quality increased by 10%.
- **Teacher experiences that met the criteria for high quality increased in all activities.** Teacher participation in activities to increase knowledge and skills, follow-up activities, and benefits to classroom instruction increased in all areas.
- **Teachers expressed collaborative planning** was the most ideal learning format for professional development, with **67%** of respondents indicating this format as the most desirable.

Teacher participation in high quality professional development increased in all areas, yet the focus on job-embedded models, as well as school-based professional development is especially notable.

Data from the 2008 Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development for St. Mary's County Public Schools shows both an increase in participation and the percentage of teachers who rate the experiences as high quality, meeting the rigorous standards set forth by the MSDE Teacher Development Standards.



	2004	2006	2008	Four Year Trend
<b>Workshops, Institutes, and Academies</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>89</b>	+6
Rated Experience as High Quality	18	20	21	+3
<b>Coaching and Mentoring Programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>25</b>	+11
Rated Experience as High Quality	5	6	50	+45
<b>Job-Embedded Professional Development</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>80</b>	+22
Rated Experience as High Quality	23	32	46	+23
<b>Conferences and Professional Meetings</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>37</b>	+3
Rated Experience as High Quality	10	14	24	+14
<b>Graduate Coursework</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>67</b>	+16
Rated Experience as High Quality	8	9	10	+2

The data from this year's survey illustrates a consistent focus over time. Since 2004 there has been a consistent **increase in participation in the categories that represented long-term high quality professional development** activities.

- Workshops, Institutes, and Academies: **+6% since 2004; +11% since 2006**
- Coaching or Mentoring Programs: **+3% since 2004; +7% since 2006**
- Job-Embedded Professional Development Activities: **+22% since 2004; +5% since 2006**
- Conferences or Professional Meetings: **+3% since 2004; + 8% since 2006**
- Graduate Courses: **+16% since 2004; + 21% since 2006**

Further, the percentage of teachers who participated in these activities consistently **ranked those activities as high quality** professional development at an increased level.

- Workshops, Institutes, and Academies: **+3% since 2004; +1% since 2006**
- Coaching or Mentoring Programs: **+45% since 2004; +44% since 2006**
- Job-Embedded Professional Development Activities: **+23% since 2004; +14% since 2006**
- Conferences or Professional Meetings: **+14% since 2004; + 10% since 2006**
- Graduate Courses: **+2% since 2004; + 1% since 2006**

These results are by design, and are indicative of the efforts made at the school level with guidance and ongoing professional development from leaders across the school system.

### **Strategies for incorporating the six components of the planning framework and/or the planning guide into guidance and requirements for the district's school improvement planning:**

The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Planning Guide (Revised, 2007) provides a solid framework for guiding professional development. These areas have been integrated into our school improvement planning (SIP) process. The templates for our SIP process have been revised to include components of the planning guidance provided by MSDE. In 2005, the SIP process integrated professional development planning components for each specific goal, and asked schools to outline the context, content, and process, as well as the follow-up necessary to achieve the goals. This year (2008) the SIP model was modified, with specific guiding questions relative to the Professional Development Standards and the key planning components.

- **Needs Assessment:** As an integral component of the SIP process, for each identified goal area, schools were to provide a detailed analysis of their data, including root causes. This needs assessment set the priorities for the professional development.
- **Goals:** Schools were asked to identify specific professional development goals *aligned with their SIP needs assessment for each identified area* (e.g., mathematics or reading). These goals must be objectively stated, and indicate specific teacher learning outcomes. Guiding questions for this area included, but were not limited to:
  - *What are the goals for the professional development activity?*
  - *How will staff be involved in establishing learning goals?*
- **Learning Activities:** As part of this component of the SIP, school teams developed a plan for high quality learning experiences for staff. Participants for each activity were identified, and may be differentiated by the need for the professional development, the intended outcomes, and the level of student achievement that was attained by the audience in mind. Guiding questions included:
  - *What is the process and design of the professional development?*
  - *What strategies will be employed?*
- **Follow Up:** “Staff Development without follow-up is malpractice.” These words by Dennis Sparks, former executive director of the National Staff Development Council, ring in the ears of our school leaders, as follow-up has been emphasized as a critical and non-negotiable component of the SIP process. For this element, guiding questions included:
  - *What follow-up will occur?*
  - *When will it occur?*

○ *How have you matched the follow-up design with the learning activities?*

- **Evaluation:** Evaluation is a critical step in the process. Principals guide the evaluation of collaborative teams and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) through regular meetings and open dialogue with staff. This is also an embedded component of the SIP process for professional development. To this end, the evaluation extends beyond what Tom Guskey would describe as “Level 1” staff development evaluation, where participants rate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the presentation or initial participation in an activity. Instead, this key guiding question is asked:
  - *How will you evaluate the impact on instruction and student learning?*
- **Budget:** Each school is provided funding through Title II, Part A, for collaborative planning and Professional Learning Communities. The funding is specifically targeted for this form of job-embedded professional development. Funds are provided to promote effective collaborative teaming and to support the teams in working to improve instruction, share effective instructional practices, share student work, analyze data and work products, redesign the instruction based on that analysis and review all formative assessments and do the same. This year, teams at each school will create team action plans, quarterly, that reflect data discussions and target instruction to identified student need. As an in-kind cost, the master calendar for the school system also now includes four (4) early release days specifically for staff collaborative planning.

**Strategies for preparing principals, other school leaders, school-based professional development staff, and school improvement teams for using the planning guide and/or planning framework in preparing school improvement plans:**

Ongoing professional development for school leaders is evident in the results we have seen through the development of exceptional school improvement plans and the level to which high quality professional development has been attained. Continuous improvement drives our system, so we recognize that more work needs to be done. Multiple opportunities have been provided and ongoing follow-up ensues to ensure that leaders (including administrators, system leaders, and teacher leaders) have the necessary skills, competencies, and dispositions to prepare, design, deliver, and evaluate high quality professional development - and that these opportunities align and support school improvement efforts.

For all administrators and supervisors, monthly leadership seminars include a major focus on professional development. With a book study guiding the dialogue, principals and supervisors investigate ways in which they can make the most of the professional learning communities at their schools. Guidance from system leaders, as well as funding support, both through Title II, Part A, and local funding (e.g., with the addition of four early release days for collaborative planning), provide the support and accountability for schools to engage in this type of high quality professional development. The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Planning Guide offers clear guidance and detailed, supportive explanations that lead to another layer of professional development. These strategies are indicative of how SMCPs has prepared leaders, school teams, and coaches in the use of the principles and practices in the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Planning Guide.

In June 2008, two opportunities were provided to offer school leaders and school-based staff guidance and support in designing high quality professional development:

- **School Improvement Guidance:** One full day was provided for SIP guidance and professional development. As part of this day, the professional development guidance was an overt and emphasized component. Through this component, results of the 2008 Survey of Teacher Participation in High Quality Professional Development were shared, with a clear emphasis on job-embedded professional development. With the accompanying template for professional development as part of the SIP, schools had an accountability measure in place to ensure that the components of planning framework were met. Funding for follow-up days were provided to each school for planning and feedback. Detailed feedback and collaborative dialogue is built in as part of the process in our August Leadership Retreat, which is outlined below.
- **Professional Development Institute:** Through a three (3) day institute this summer (and eight follow-up sessions scheduled for the 2008-2009 school year), school leaders, system leaders, teacher leaders, and school based coaches (known locally as Instructional Resource Teachers) participated in an in-depth professional development academy designed and delivered by the SMCPS Department of Professional and Organizational Development and Cindy Harrison, national consultant and author of *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teachers and School-Based Coaches* (NSDC, 2006). In this institute, over 55 leaders actively utilized the standards for staff development and were responsible for designing a high quality experience – and receive feedback on their design. This institute set the stage for effective planning in the school improvement process, and built a cadre of highly-skilled professional developers. Embedded in this institute was training in the use of the planning guide, and the plans developed by participants were to reflect these elements of high quality professional development.
- **PLC Leader Training:** In alignment with the practices set forth in the planning guide and Teacher Development Standards, teacher leaders and Professional Learning Communities (PLC) leaders engaged in ongoing learning opportunities to understand their roles and best practices for job-embedded professional development. In July, the first part of a multi-day training for PLC leaders took place. As part of this professional development opportunity, both administrators and teacher leaders examined and practiced protocols and processes for leading effective collaborative teams and professional learning communities. Further, they were given strategies for planning effective collaborative team meetings and ongoing professional development, for which the Planning Guide is used in the follow up sessions. This effort, in which over 75 leaders participated, helped to prepare school-based individuals for their roles in facilitating engaging sessions with teams focused on critical and guiding questions for our PLCs:
  - Exactly what is it we want all students to learn?
  - How will we know when each student has acquired the essential knowledge and skills?
  - What happens in our school when a student does not learn?

**Strategies school system staff will use to review and provide feedback on school improvement plans:**

As part of the SMCPS August Leadership Retreat, a full day is built in for collaborative reviews of school improvement plans. Because the professional development planner is an integrated part of the SIP, it is reviewed actively by the group of leaders and feedback is provided consistently for every school improvement team. Our design for review and feedback includes a team approach, where four to five school leadership teams sit together with representative school system supervisors, directors, and

Instructional Resource Teachers, to review each school's plans. The group utilizes a rubric, inclusive of all components, to provide oral feedback. Notes and written feedback are provided to schools shortly thereafter, and schools have an opportunity to revise their plans. Following the finalization of the school plans, the Department of Professional Development compiles and provides a summary report to each school, offering support and delineating where commonalities are noted between schools (thereby promoting networking and sharing of resources).

As part of the systemic focus on job-embedded professional development and professional learning communities, the monthly administrative and supervisory seminars have been designed to review and revisit the work of PLCs. Action plans are developed at the school level, reflective of staff understandings, reflection, and action on student learning, and are sent to the director of curriculum and instruction one week before designated administrative and supervisory seminars on a quarterly basis. Plans will be reviewed collaboratively at these sessions and follow-up sessions with assistant principals will be provided as well to ensure that multiple layers of school leadership are included in the process of review and discussion.

### **Strategies for reviewing and reporting on progress in implementing the plans and reviewing the impact of the professional development:**

As indicated above, the regular interaction with administrators and supervisors will provide the systemic support and ongoing focus through these collaborative meetings. However, the truly impactful review sessions will occur at the school level. Each school was provided both guidance and support to design and implement collaborative teams on a regular basis. Through the PLCs, it is essential that individually designed teams review student data and professional development activities reflective of those needs. Action plans (which are essentially quarterly updates and team-level school improvement plans) include the following components:

- Identified learning challenges, connected to identified VSC indicators/objectives.
- Root cause(s), i.e., evidence of causes that staff can effectually address.
- Strategies to address learning challenges.
  - Includes identified students who will receive appropriate interventions, support, or acceleration, based on needs.
- Timeline for implementation.
- Resources, as appropriate.
- Professional development and support needed.
- Parent/Community connections, as appropriate.
- Process and timeline for evaluating effectiveness.

Quarterly, these action plans will be brought to regularly-scheduled administrative and supervisory seminars for collaborative review.

On a systemic note, the ongoing evaluation of high quality professional development continues. The survey referenced above is one indicator of the extent to which professional development quality is measured, but the narrative elements of school improvement plans, the evaluation and participation in ongoing professional development, and the high levels of student achievement St. Mary's County Public Schools is experiencing are also other indicators of progress.

A further example of high quality and job-embedded professional development in St. Mary's County Public Schools is evidenced in our new teacher induction program. Our induction program was recently awarded the 2008 Maryland Association for Curriculum and Program Development (Maryland ASCD) Program of Excellence award. The New Teacher Induction Program for St. Mary's County Public Schools is multifaceted, and includes: mentoring; support resources; pre-service professional development; demonstration classrooms; monthly seminars; online learning support; and new teacher socials. These multiple access points provide new teachers more than one method of support.

Measuring the success of the induction program is an ongoing process, and its measures are connected with the job-embedded nature of our program. Specifically, mentoring as a component of induction ensures that teachers receive on-site support and just-in-time professional development. The Department of Professional and Organizational Development has worked diligently to monitor the mentoring program and ensure that all new teachers are availed the support entitled through this program. In a survey of mentoring services conducted this past school year, new teachers (mentees) responded that 99% of them were assigned a mentor, up from 94% in previous years. Further, it is evident that mentors are working with mentees at higher rates than before. Over seventy percent of new teachers stated they met with their mentor at least once per week (55.4% in Jan 2007); and only 6.3% of new teachers stated they met with their mentor less than once per month (21.6% in Jan 2007). In addition, the survey revealed that more than two-thirds (71.7%) of mentors provided assistance to new teachers in enhancing their instruction. The greatest level of involvement was in helping the mentee understand academic content (74% agreeing or strongly agreeing). In each of the categories, it is clear that an increased amount of instructional planning is provided on a regular basis. On average, 70% of new teachers stated that this was part of the mentoring process. This is an increase of 7% over the previous year.

Further, through the 2008 Survey of Teacher Participation in High Quality Professional Development, it should be noted that participation in coaching and mentoring programs increased by 7% and the percentage of teachers who participated in coaching and mentoring programs who ranked the experience as high quality increased by 44%. These results are consistent with our mentor survey and indicate a high level of focus at the school level.

High quality professional development continues to be a focus and a priority for St. Mary's County Public Schools. The emphasis on job-embedded professional development is both clear and consistent across the schools and throughout the school system. Mechanisms have been put in place to support the efforts and accountability measures are in place to ensure consistency. With the ongoing professional development and funding to support these efforts, it is highly evident that we are making strides in moving toward a culture of high quality professional development.

## Safe Schools

**No Child Left Behind Goal 4: All students will be educated in learning environments that are safe, drug-free, and conducive to learning.**

**No Child Left Behind Indicator 4.1: The number of persistently dangerous schools, as defined by the state.**

NCLB requires states to identify persistently dangerous schools. In Maryland, a “persistently dangerous” school means a school in which each year for a period of three consecutive school years the total number of student suspensions for more than 10 days or expulsions equals two and one-half percent (2½%) or more of the total number of students enrolled in the school, for any of the following offenses: arson or fire; drugs; explosives; firearms; other guns; other weapons; physical attack on a student; physical attack on a school system employee or other adult; and sexual assault. Schools are placed into “persistently dangerous” status in a given school year based on their suspension data in the prior year.

**Note:** Information associated with Safe Schools is also included in Part II, Additional Federal and State Reporting Requirements and Attachment 11: Title IV Part A, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities.

A. Based on the Examination of Persistently Dangerous Schools Data (Table 7.1 – 7.3):

- Where first-time schools are identified, what steps are being taken by the school system to reverse this trend and prevent the identified school(s) from moving into probationary status?

N/A

B. Based on the Examination of Suspension and Expulsion Data (Tables 7.4 and 7.5):

- Identify the actions implemented by the local school system to prevent/reduce incidents of sexual harassment, harassment, and bullying.

St. Mary’s County Public Schools employs a multi-pronged approach to prevention and intervention relative to bullying and harassment. Students in grades 3-9 receive instruction in one of two research-based curriculums: Steps to Respect (elementary) and Second Step (secondary). Classroom discussion is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the lessons. Additional training was added in 2006-2007 for all secondary students and staff that outlines the difference between sexual harassment and sexual assault and the importance of reporting these infractions.

PBIS initiatives include a focus on respectful behaviors among different groups. The Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment Prevention and the Disproportionality (Special Education Discretionary) grants support PBIS school incentives.

All school system staff members, including all bus drivers, are trained annually on bullying, harassment, and sexual assault prevention and reporting requirements. Targeted professional development is provided to key prevention and intervention staff such as counselors, pupil personnel workers, and assistant principals.

Brochures are made available to all schools for distribution to students and parents relative to bullying and sexual harassment. The school system website provides strategies for prevention that parents may implement to help their children. This information includes a section on cyberbullying.

Each school implemented the bullying reporting law by providing the reporting form in the front offices and in the offices of administrators, teachers-in-charge, school counselors, school nurses, and pupil personnel workers. The form was included in the student calendar/handbook and is available on the website. The link to the form is included in the student handbook as well. The availability of forms allows parents to communicate their concerns in a concise and effective manner that encourages administrators to follow through on their investigations with complete information. Completed investigations are then reviewed by the Executive Director of Student Services and Supervisor of Student Services to ensure appropriate follow-up and intervention. This information is also used to assist in identifying appropriate professional development topics.

Every student receives a student handbook and reviews it with a staff member the first week of school or when the student registers (during the school year). A discussion of bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment is included in that discussion. Staff at the secondary schools also review the handbook with a Pupil Personnel Worker (PPW) and the president of the Education Association of St. Mary's County. During this presentation, time is spent on the identification and reporting of these infractions. Assistant principals are reminded of the seriousness of these issues at their annual training and strategies are discussed. All staff, including substitutes and bus drivers, are trained annually on bullying, harassment and sexual assault prevention and reporting requirements.

The 2007-2008 data indicates that there were 9 less suspensions (68 in 2006-2007, 59 in 2007-2008) for bullying/harassment/sexual harassment than the previous year. While bullying numbers remained exactly the same as last year (18), there were reductions in harassment and sexual harassment.

C. Based on an Examination of In- and Out-of-School Suspensions Data (Tables 7.6 – 7.8):

- Identify the system-wide strategies that are being used to prevent/reduce suspensions. If applicable, include the strategies that are being used to address the disproportionate suspensions among the race/ethnicity subgroups.

The key to a positive school climate and sound classroom management is a strong and effective instructional program. Our local and state instructional data points are indicative of a strong instructional program taught by highly qualified teachers. This is the first key to our success in terms of improving safety and reducing suspensions.

Character education is tied to school climate in each of our schools. Direct instruction in terms of character takes place in elementary schools and is married with PBIS as appropriate. The six pillars of character education are tied to our discipline codes and are used to provide a teachable moment when administrators work with students who have discipline referrals.

PBIS was fully implemented in seven schools and will be added to two schools for the 2008-2009 school year. Discipline data indicates that those schools are making progress toward reducing suspensions and in reducing the disproportionate representation of various student groups in that data.

Suspensions for males and African American males, in particular, continue to be of concern although the data indicates that there is a reduction in the number of students suspended.

Each school has a school discipline plan and the school system's code of conduct is consistent across schools. Administrators receive annual training on school climate, discipline investigations, and behavioral strategies. There is a crisis team as well as a restraint team in each school with regular training for those staff who are assigned to those teams. Five emergency drills are conducted annually.

Safety assistants are meeting regularly with the Supervisor of Safety and Security, a newly organized department and position. Their role in prevention and intervention will be expanded to ensure that they are the eyes and ears in the hallways and in the cafeteria.

In order to address the need to acknowledge the effects of community disruption on our schools, the Division of Supporting Services has assessed physical plant safety as related to disruption and has included physical changes in the general and capital improvement budgets (security vestibules, visitor check in equipment).

The Superintendent has convened a Superintendent's Safety and Security Committee under the direction of the new Supervisor of Safety and Security. This committee composed of school-based and central office staff, employee union representatives, parents, and partner agency representatives, looks at all aspects of safety, security, and school climate to assess needs and make program and enhancement recommendations to the Superintendent.

Annual professional development for assistant principals supports their ability to develop relationships with students and their families. These sessions also provide them opportunities to network and identify successful practices in other schools within the county. Finally, the assistant principals are updated annually on the discipline trends and training topics are developed based on our local data.

D. Based on the Examination of Progress Toward Establishing and Maintaining a Safe Learning Environment:

Describe the progress that the school system has made toward establishing and maintaining safe learning environments.

For the third consecutive year, SMCPS experienced numerous successes with regard to establishing and maintaining a safe learning environment.

- No schools are identified as persistently dangerous.
- No elementary schools have a suspension rate that approaches the 14% marker.
- Harassment and sexual harassment suspensions were reduced by 15% (n=59).
- Out of school suspension incidents were reduced by 15.7%.
- In school suspensions were reduced by 7%.
- The number of students suspended out of school reduced by 7%.
- The number of students who were assigned to in school suspension was reduced by 7%.
- All seven active PBIS schools earned awards for fidelity to the program and for improved academic and discipline data. Six schools earned exemplar status and one first year school earned green ribbon status.

- There was a reduction in many key offense categories that had the effect of increasing student time on task (class disruption, insubordination, refusal to obey school rules) and/or ensuring a climate of safety (disrespect, fighting, threats, attacks and other weapons).
- Six schools reduced the disproportionate representation of African American students in their suspension data.
- Eight schools reduced the number of students with an IEP who were suspended from school.
- Fourteen schools experienced a reduction in the number of out-of-school suspensions.
- Twelve of seventeen elementary schools had 10 or fewer suspensions.

1. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies and the corresponding resource allocations to which you attribute the progress.

Every student receives a student handbook and reviews it with a staff member the first week of school or when the student registers (during the school year). The handbook and code of conduct are also reviewed with all secondary staff in a joint presentation by a PPW and the president of the Education Association of St. Mary's County. The handbook, the code of conduct, and the classroom presentations are also on the system website. The use of consistent parameters for student expectations and discipline consequences ensures that all stakeholders can articulate and understand the discipline plan for SMCPS.

Each school creates a school-wide discipline plan that includes recognition for appropriate behavior, referrals for student support, and scaled consequences for repeated behavioral infractions. Assistant principals, counselors, PPW's, and psychologists provide intervention and support as do school-based and community mentors at some sites.

PBIS is utilized to set climate and address specific concerns at nine of our schools. A special education discretionary grant, the Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment Prevention grant and the SDFS grant have supported this initiative.

Professional Development is a key strategy for improving school climate and reducing disruptions to learning. New teacher orientation includes demonstration classrooms and specific sessions on classroom management. Assistant principals are trained annually by the Department of Student Services relative to policies, regulations, laws, and strategies for enhancing student behavioral success. Student services staff development is planned annually based on system data and state and local trends/issues.

Special education staff was realigned to address the behavioral needs of students during the 2007-2008 school year. A coordinator of autism services was hired to provide support to students, families, and staff so that the social needs of students can be more appropriately addressed with minimal disruption to the student's program.

Great Mills High School implemented the Department of Justice SPIRIT program during the year to get information from the students relative to school climate issues. This information was shared with the principal and is included in the plans for the School Improvement Plan for 2008-2009.

2. Describe the challenges that exist and the school system's plans for overcoming those challenges along with corresponding resource allocations.

Our greatest challenge is the disproportionate representation of some student groups in our discipline data. Male students accounted for two-thirds of the in-school and out-of-school suspensions. African American males accounted for 46% of the students suspended out of school and 37% of those students assigned to in-school suspension. FARMS students are assigned to in-school suspension (38%) and suspension (47.5%) at a higher rate than they are represented in the county data. Students with disabilities comprise approximately 12% of our population and accounted for 14% of those assigned to in-school suspension and 21% of those who were suspended out of school.

Our plan for addressing this challenge is to continue our laser-like focus of identifying our students with academic gaps/deficiencies and to match each student to the interventions that move them forward academically. Those students will then become more engaged and less likely to act out from boredom or an attempt to mask their academic weaknesses. The data-driven approach to individualized student intervention that has improved our MSA and HSA results has had an impact on our elementary and middle school discipline data. Teachers and instructional resource teachers represent the human resources that work directly with these students.

This same individualized support for students who continue to act out will be the focus of our school-based Pupil Services Team discussions. This team consists of an administrator, counselors, nurses, PPW's, and school psychologists who work with others such as parents, special educators, and instructional resource staff to assess the behavioral needs of students and the climate needs of the school. The team will identify and implement school improvement strategies and interventions for individual students as identified by school data. The resources needed here is sufficient student services and administrative staff to address the needs that are identified, particularly as two of the disciplines must serve three or more schools as part of their assignment. With the current staff, it will be critical to make differentiated assignments for the itinerant staff based on school need and team strengths at each school.

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

Our first adjustment is the implementation of a new model for school improvement plans that focuses the work of school staff on strategies that have proven successful in our schools and in other systems. Schools will choose from several approved options for climate setting: PBIS, Asset Development and/or Character Education initiatives. Funding for asset development has been provided by the Local Management Board.

Since parent and family support is critical for changing behavior, the local Drug/Alcohol Advisory Committee will fund the parent component of asset development. The program will be offered to parents in those schools in the Lexington Park area. The funds will provide stipends to counselors and other asset development trainers for running evening programs and will provide materials and supplies.

As a component of the school improvement plans, school-based pupil services teams will meet regularly to identify students who have accumulated discipline referrals and/or suspensions. Individualized plans will be developed to assist these students in changing behavioral patterns that interfere with learning. A work group composed of school-based and central office staff has revised our functional behavioral

assessment process and the accompanying behavior intervention plan. The new process and new documents will be utilized by school staff as a result of the data discussions to address the behavioral needs of identified students.

Professional development will be provided to key staff in targeted areas. School leaders and identified central office staff will participate in threat assessment training in November and will be trained in the use of the new functional behavioral assessment and behavior intervention plan and support for students with autism. Student Services staff will attend training in August, and in October will focus on reducing the disproportional representation of identified student groups in our attendance, discipline, dropout, and graduation rate data. Those students in the targeted students groups will be identified and supported by school-based and central office student services staff, using individual student information from our state attendance, dropout, and graduation reports.

With the closing of our alternative placement classrooms, Walden Counseling Center will support our students who are returning from alternative education programs by providing a staff person to GMHS two days a week to assist with transition. This therapist will work with students and their families to prevent absences and disciplinary infractions and to encourage student achievement.

## **Addressing Specific Student Groups Career and Technology Education**

1. Describe the school system's progress on the implementation and expansion of Career and Technology Education (CTE) Programs of Study within Career Clusters as a strategy to prepare more students who graduate ready for entry into college and careers.

St. Mary's County Public Schools continues its plan to identify, plan, and implement appropriate programs of study that are directly linked to our five Career Clusters used as organizers for all high school programs of study.

Local labor market data is reviewed to determine 'need' for career based programs of study in Career and Technology Education. Through the use of local DLLR, O-net and local human resource announcements from various businesses and industries in the Southern Maryland region, labor market need is established and used to guide the development of much needed CTE programs. For example, during the past two years, we have received approval for the following programs- *Telecommunications, Hospitality/Tourism, Manufacturing Technology, and Academy of Finance*.

Currently, we are pursuing a new Allied Health Academy program which will include a Dental Assisting pathway. In the past five years, numerous programs have been added using the approach described above. Our CTE programs are developed based on the growth and changes in the regional labor market. Many of the programs currently on the A list for Career and Technology Education at MSDE are directly linked to the largest employer, Patuxent River Naval Base and the regional contractors serving that facility.

These programs include comprehensive articulation agreements which 'jump start' students to a regional or local college. With students engaged in authentic industry based programs and obtaining college credit during their high school experience, students are ready to go to work, enter college, or both successfully. Our employer surveys have confirmed a high level of competence and success with students who have been placed in internships or actual jobs during school or after graduation.

2. What strategies are in place to ensure access to CTE programs and success for every student in CTE Program of Study, including students who are members of special populations?

All students are able to pursue placement in a program of interest in St. Mary's County Public Schools. Each year, a comprehensive recruitment program is launched to inform all stakeholders, parents, students, business leaders, and more about the benefits and scope of CTE programs. This intensive marketing and public relations programs includes, but is not limited to the following; print media, newspapers, websites, local cable channel 96 which is under the direction and control of staff and students in our T.V. Video Production program, and visitations to other schools as well as field trips by students to observe CTE students in action at local schools. There are several open house nights at each school with a strong emphasis on CTE programs of study, the benefits and value added by participating in such programs.

As part of the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center, a Vocational Support Team (VSST) is available to conduct vocational evaluations, assist with student placement, student information, student transition as well as academic and technical course performance. This team is comprised of core subject specialist with a strong background in special education. This expertise enables all students, especially special needs students to find an appropriate CTE program of study.

In addition, there are frequent and focused ‘check-up’ sessions conducted by VSST staff and CTE teachers to ensure every CTE student is on track with their studies, academic performance, absenteeism, and more. Our county requires a portfolio as part of graduation. VSST staff and teachers assist students with their portfolio development to ensure that this graduation requirement is met and serves to help them enter college or the workplace.

## **Addressing Specific Student Groups Early Learning**

Based on the Examination of Early Learning Data (Tables 8.1 and 8.2):

1. Describe the school system's plans for ensuring the progress of students who begin kindergarten either not ready or approaching readiness as determined by the Maryland Model for School Readiness Work Sampling system.

The following activities/strategies have been developed to ensure the progress of students who begin kindergarten either not ready or approaching readiness:

- Assessments, such as DIBELS, are administered and students' needs and individual progress tracked through the *Performance Matters* data warehouse system. Intervention programs are designed to meet the students' individual needs.
- All schools have instructional resource teachers to provide support to teachers and intervention to students based on need. At each school, an IRT is designated as the resource teacher for Early Childhood.
- A Three Tier Model for Reading Interventions has been developed which includes identifying scientifically research based reading interventions.
- The Houghton Mifflin Reading Series has been aligned with the VSC and adopted by SMCPS for use in elementary grades, including prekindergarten and kindergarten, to ensure consistency.
- Our mathematics program, *Investigations*, has been aligned with the VSC and adopted by SMCPS for use in elementary grades, including kindergarten, to ensure consistency.
- The Creative Curriculum, an MSDE approved curriculum for prekindergarten, has been adopted by St. Mary's County Public Schools. The Creative Curriculum supports the VSC and focuses on creating a language, literacy, and exploration rich environment in which children may grow and learn. Staff development for teachers and paraeducators is being provided through the MMSR Staff Development Grant.
- Intensive staff development in literacy/language development, mathematical thinking, and differentiation of instruction has been delivered and is planned for the coming year.
- The schools designated as Title I schools have technical assistance teams which include principals, school staff, supervisors, consultants, and central office staff who provide on-going assistance to improve school performance.

- After-school programs which provide tutoring are available at selected schools.
  - SMCPS has partnered with other agencies, such as the public libraries, Head Start, Southern Maryland Child Care Resource Center, and the Tri-County Youth Services Bureau, to provide collaborative workshops and programs for children and families.
2. Describe the changes or adjustments that will be made to address those challenges, along with the corresponding resource allocations. Include timelines where appropriate.
- Continue training of staff on the implementation of the MMSR and collaboration including enhancing participation of the Department of Special Education to assure participation of preschool special education teachers. Training will take place between August 2008 and February 2009. Funding will be provided through the Maryland State Department of Education MMSR Staff Development Grant.
  - Expand the number of children and families receiving support services through the Judy Center Interagency Grant which serves schools in the Lexington Park area. The program will operate year round from July 1-June 30, 2009. Funding is provided through an MSDE Judy Center Grant, county funds, agency grants, and in-kind contributions from community agencies.
  - Judy Center Program strategies include: providing classes for three-year olds, prekindergarten students, and kindergartent students; enhancing collaboration with Head Start; enhancing services for children from birth through three years of age, providing home visits, parent training opportunities, staff development, and adding play groups for parents and children birth to three.
  - Continue to identify young children needing English as a Second Language services and to collaborate with community partners to assure provision of services to meet identified needs. This year, through the Cultural Competency grant given to the St. Mary's County Public Libraries, staff from the library, Head Start, and the Judy Center will participate in joint training to enhance skills in communicating with children and families identified as needing ESL services.
  - Continue to train prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers to implement the Primary Talent Development Program strategies. Training and implementation will continue throughout the 2008-2009 year. Funding is provided through the MSDE Primary Development grant.
  - Enhance collaboration with community agencies/partners to address children and family needs through partnerships and participation on the Early Childhood Team for assuring readiness of children for kindergarten. This school year the Judy Center will build on the partnership with PNC Bank to provide increased readiness activities for children and families.
  - Continue assistance and support to schools through the instructional resource teachers, staff development program, the technical assistance teams, the mentoring programs, and implementation of the school improvement plans.

## **Addressing Specific Student Groups Gifted and Talented Programs**

1. Describe the progress that was made in 2007-2008 toward meeting Gifted and Talented Program goals, objectives, and strategies for student identification and services.

The 2007-2008 school year marked the first full year of formal Gifted and Talented (GT) identification. With full implementation of the Primary Talent Development program at all schools, teachers and schools were able to report Readiness, Emergent, Progressing, and Independent (REPI) data electronically through the use of a REPI database. This data was then merged with information available through the Stanford-10/OLSAT test administration in the spring of second grade. Information used included total reading and total mathematics national percentile rankings, total reading and total mathematics stanines, and SAI score, which serves in place of an IQ score. This data was color-coded and sent back to schools so that teams could begin to look at the data. Since blue and green colors signified advanced or above average ability, color-coding made identification of students a highly visual process. Data from the first identification round indicated that the procedures for identification needed to be revised as the pool of “identified” students was too large. The 2008-2009 procedures for identification will reflect this revision, with an emphasis on Math Problem Solving (instead of Total Math), a look at Reading subscores (instead of Total Reading), and a differentiation between school/teacher generated data, ability data, and achievement data, to help school teams identify whether students have met at least one of the criteria in each category.

In addition to progress in establishing GT identification procedures, SMCPS has made progress in providing instructional materials that provide enrichment and challenge to identified students. The Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (CTY) program has been purchased and used at the elementary level for very highly able students. In addition, the school system has reviewed several other mathematics units that can be used to supplement grade level instruction. These include Project M3 materials, and Interact mathematics simulations. Locally developed mathematics curriculum maps include acceleration options. SMCPS is unique in providing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics program opportunities at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

In reading/language arts, professional development has focused on the implementation of Junior Great Books (JGB), and the shared inquiry model of literature discussion and analysis. Level 1 training for the program was held three times, with a cohort of teachers ready to participate in Level 2 training in June 2008. A class set of these materials was purchased for the first grade at each elementary school. Grades 2-8 participate in the William and Mary curriculum for Reading/Language Arts. Grade 2 materials for JGB will be added during the 2008-2009 school year.

SMCPS continues to implement the Primary Talent Development program in prekindergarten through grade 2. This program continues to yield data regarding student strengths, as well as professional development needs, such as reaching underrepresented populations including minorities and boys.

2. Identify the strategies, including resource allocations that appear related to the progress. Include supporting data as needed.

The Primary Talent Development program has reached the end of its third year of implementation. Professional development and technical assistance provided through the grant has provided the school system with support in developing defensible identification procedures, as well as the opportunity to explore materials of instruction that provide the challenge that gifted and talented students require. Professional development in the JGB shared inquiry model has provided teachers with strategies that can be used to increase rigor through questioning. Providing young students with quality texts, that are worthy of in-depth discussion at the primary level, has been critical to teaching students to think as well as in reinforcing behaviors such as perceptive, inquisitive, and communicative.

Other strategies that have contributed to progress include a continued commitment to Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI). This type of instruction emphasizes mathematics problem solving and communication about problem solving strategies. Higher level questioning and an emphasis on investigation in the elementary grades increases rigor of instruction and allows students to learn multiple approaches to problem solving.

3. Describe where challenges are evident in meeting Gifted and Talented Program goals, objectives, and strategies.

While progress in meeting program goals, objectives, and strategies has been made, communication of this progress needs to occur. Next steps for meeting this challenge need to include the development of print media, such as a GT brochure, PTD brochure, PTD newsletter, and increased information available through the school system website. Communication with school principals, via face to face updates, e-mails, or professional development workshops will be a focus for the 2008-2009 school year.

Other challenges include the identification of students from underrepresented populations. Professional development opportunities will continue to focus on this initiative.

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

Next school year, professional development will continue to include strategies for reaching at-risk students, including boys, minorities, and students from poverty. The Supervisor of Instruction for Gifted and Talented programs will continue to monitor student identification and its alignment with overall school system demographics in order to ensure equity. While the PTD grant is coming to a conclusion, many of the initiatives to measure program implementation will continue. PTD walkthroughs will be held in February, and portfolio reviews will continue at the end of the year.

Since first grade Junior Great Books were introduced to students this school year, with much success and enthusiasm, second grade will be added during the 2008-2009 school year. It is hoped that the introduction of both JGB and William and Mary will lead to the establishment of differentiated levels of program services, with William and Mary for the highly able, and Junior Great Books having a wider scope of reach to include average to high average readers. Mathematics materials will be examined during the 2008-2009 school year to allow for the same differentiation of program services.

## **Cross-Cutting Themes Educational Technology**

**In addition to including technology strategies across the Master Plan aligned to State and local technology plans, the local school system Master Plan Update should outline specifically how it will use all sources of funding in meeting No Child Left Behind Statutory Goals:**

- Improve student academic achievement through the use of technology in elementary schools and secondary schools.
- To assist every student in crossing the digital divide by ensuring that every student is technologically literate by the time the student finishes the eighth grade, regardless of the student's race, ethnicity, gender, family income, geographic location, or disability.
- To encourage the effective integration of technology resources and systems with teacher training and curriculum development to establish research-based instructional methods that can be widely implemented as best practices by State educational agencies and local educational agencies.

Based on data from the Maryland Technology Inventory, local data and data from any other relevant sources, address the following questions:

1. Describe the progress that was made in 2007-2008 toward meeting educational technology goals.

SMCPS was effective in providing technology to meet the goals outlined in the Master Plan for both students and teachers. SMCPS provided online resources, software, and professional development for students and teachers. Key to our continued success was ongoing professional development provided for all administration and staff in year two of the use of *eSchoolPlus* Student Information System (*eSchool*) and our *Performance Matters* data warehouse.

Communication was important in building capacity among SMCPS *eSchool* and *Performance Matters*. Library Media Specialists are the technology contacts for most schools so information is disseminated through them and the SMCPS website.

SMCPS continued to require that each school has an active technology committee that is a subgroup of the School Improvement Teams. These teams are co-chaired by the principal and school library media specialists. The school teams make decisions about technology purchases as reflected in the school improvement plans.

2. Identify the key practices, programs, or strategies to which you attribute the progress. Include supporting data and evaluation results as appropriate.

**Data Warehouse:** The data warehouse is a web-based tool that allows SMCPS to delve into a wide variety of data in order to make informed decisions about students. SMCPS uses the data to identify strengths and weaknesses in student, teacher, and school performance. This year the system

administered mid-year Advanced Placement assessments in order to assess the strength of its students. We continued to assess all non-HSA courses at mid-year and end-of-the-year.

The data warehouse remains the central repository of data from various sources, e.g., MSA/HSA, CTBS, Stanford 10, DIBELS, SAT, ACT, local formative assessments, attendance and discipline, and is used for the storage, retrieval, and management of such data. It provides a snapshot of a student or class at a particular time as well as providing trend analysis. The reports allow the user to filter by various subgroups and qualifiers in order to drill down further into the data.

In 2007-2008 one of the most positive changes that occurred across the system was that most teachers took ownership of their students' data K-8 and in the HSA courses in order to articulate specific discussion of students' needs during professional learning community/grade level/department meetings and county content assessment review meetings. These data review meetings have been instituted at each building in order to create collaborative professional learning communities. (Goal 3) In order to successfully put data into the teachers' hands, professional development was provided in a variety of methods. Central office personnel visited schools during grade level/department team meetings as well as the instructional resource teachers/HSA lead teachers continued to provide direct assistance at each building.

**Cognitive Tutor:** SMCPS continued to provide *Cognitive Tutor* to Algebra 1 students in high school. (Goal 1) All new Algebra teachers were provided training opportunities in the use of the application.

**Online Access:** SMCPS continued a partnership with the local cable company and St. Mary's County government to gain access to its Internet backbone.

**Online Resources:** All SMCPS are wired and have access to a variety of sources from which to gather information. SMCPS (centrally) provided online resources for students and staff through participation with the MD K12 Online SIRS, WorldBook, DIBELS, Science Resource Center, and DiscoveryStreaming. Professional development was provided by the library media specialist or central office at various times throughout the year. Additionally, the SMCPS intranet has become an electronic repository for SMCPS curriculum maps, units, and lesson seeds. (Goal 1)

Each elementary building provided direct access for teachers to the University of Oregon DIBELS data web site. Teacher's access to this web site (<http://dibels.uoregon.edu/data>) provides detailed reports of a student's progress or deficiencies in a particular area of reading (oral reading fluency, phonemic awareness, word use fluency, etc.) Each school's IRT offers professional development to staff under the direction of the Supervisor of Reading Language Arts. Central office imports student data exported from our *eSchool* system into the DIBELS system.

**Communications:** SMCPS implemented the Home Access Center (HAC) for parents and students. It is a web based application which is tightly integrated with the Teacher Access Center; the new electronic gradebook system used by our teachers. It is designed to be easy to use and equally as easy to share information between teachers, school officials, and parents. (Goal 1 and 4)

SMCPS continued to expand its communication with the community through the *ParentLink* telephone notification system and the Channel 96 education programming channel. Schools provided additional

programming for Channel 96. One hundred percent (100%) of SMCPs administration has access to the voice broadcast system. (Goal 4) Additionally the SMCPs attempts to provide students, parents, and the community with current information.

**Electronic Grade Books/Report Cards:** SMCPs continued to provide electronic grade books for all grades. SMCPs fully implemented a new electronic primary report card (Pre-Kindergarten through grade 2) in the 2007-2008 *eSchoolPlus* student information system. (Goal 1 and 4)

**Electronic Learning Community:** St. Mary's County Public Schools in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University and a special education initiative, provided access to the Electronic Learning Community. This web based application is a repository of resources and a place for staff to communicate easily through treaded discussions.

**Professional Development:** First and foremost, the implementation of the data warehouse across the system provided a means for content area supervisors to be able to analyze data down to the individual student level in order to make data driven decisions about students and instruction/pacing. Supervisors provided differentiated professional development about the data analysis of county-wide formative assessments in order to impact instruction in a timely manner. (Goal 3) Additionally, SMCPs content area supervisors have embraced the need to integrate technology into their content area professional development. Approximately 72 percent of the staff has received focused technology integration professional development.

**TestPilot:** Professional development was provided for this online testing program in the spring of 2008. Teachers and administrators were provided an overview of the system with follow-up support offered on a request basis. SMCPs will continue to provide professional development in order to encourage staff to provide online testing for students for their assessments. It is our intent to use TestPilot as a method for allowing students to practice for the Science Online MSA, online HSA courses, and the MD Technology Literacy Assessment for seventh grade students. TestPilot data can be imported into the data warehouse so that it can be an alternative/substitute for some of the scanned assessments. (Goal 1)

**Technology Integrator Trainer:** SMCPs utilized a technology resource position that allowed the system to provide ongoing, differentiated technology training during the school day as well as after school hours. The trainer helps support SMCPs' goal to have 100 percent of all teachers and administrators "technology literate" according to the MSDE Teacher Technology Standards. (Goal 1)

**STEM:** SMCPs opened the 2007-2008 school year with its new Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics programs in grades 4, 6, and 9. The STEM program integrated the use of wireless and SMART technology in the classrooms. (Goal 1)

**Smart Technology:** Elementary and middle schools integrated the use of InterWrite Tablets and TurningPoint Response Pads received in the spring of 2007 into the classrooms. A number of schools purchased additional sets of the technology so more classrooms would have access to the technology. Additionally, SMCPs offered ten "SMART carts" to teachers who were chosen from grant applications. In the grant, teachers specifically outlined how they would collaborate on the integration of technology in their instruction to improve student learning and engagement. The winners agreed to participate in professional development as well as share their lesson learned with their staff. Each cart contained a

computer, LCD projector, InterWrite tablets and the TurningPoint Response Pads. The Title I schools and Spring Ridge Middle School used school funds to integrate the SMART technology throughout their buildings. (Goal 1)

**Special Education and Technology:** SMCPS continues to provide support for hardware and software necessary to meet a student's Individualized Education Plan and 504 plans. (Goal 1) Multiple opportunities for professional development were provided to prepare Special Education teachers for the use of the online IEP program provided by MSDE and JHU. In the high schools where co-teaching is occurring, SmartBoard professional development continued.

**eSchoolPlus:** SMCPS rolled out *eSchoolPlus* which provided access for administration, teachers, parents, and students.

3. Describe where challenges in making progress toward meeting educational technology goals are evident.

**Staffing:** SMCPS falls below the state staffing recommendations to support technology. (SMCPS Framework for Technology Objective 1 and Appendix A) Currently, SMCPS is staffed at 50 percent of the state recommended support technology personnel.

**Digital Learning:** SMCPS targeted a committee to look into the use of online learning our Home Hospital Students and summer school program. The committee was given access to some of the programs but was unable to find the funds to support the implementation of the programs. (Goal 1)

**Online Access:** SMCPS would like to have high speed at all its elementary schools and increased bandwidth to the Internet backbone. (SMCPS Framework for Technology Objectives 2-3)

**Life Cycle Replacement:** Although the SMCPS student to computer ratio is 3:1, funding to sustain adequate lifecycle replacement continues to be a challenge for life cycle replacement which is currently at a ten year cycle. (SMCPS Framework for Technology Objective 1)

**Data Warehouse:** Every teacher has access to the data warehouse by providing an upgraded computer on the teacher's desk. (Goal 1) The increase in additional assessments added strain to the central office personnel. Each content area has only one supervisor to oversee the creation of assessments although SMCPS teachers are paid to participate in item creation, review and editing of assessments. Additional human resources are needed for both the assessment creation, review and the scanning process and software/hardware will help SMCPS meet the teachers' demand.

**Primary Report Card:** SMCPS provided the electronic tool in Fall 2007 yet it is more cumbersome than the grades 3-12 report card. (Goal 1)

**Online Learning:** SMCPS continues to aggressively investigate access to digital learning. Access, cost, and alignment of the digital content with Maryland curriculum are challenges to our system. (Goal 1)

4. Describe the plans for addressing those challenges and include a description of the adjustments that will be made to the Master Plan and local Technology Plan. Include timelines where appropriate.

With each budget cycle, SMCPS continues to request additional human/financial resources targeting technology in our Master Plan. Funding continues to be a challenge.

The new Maryland Technology Literacy Assessments to be administered in the 2008-2009 school year will help identify areas for improvement for students and staff. The data will enable SMCPS to target professional development and curriculum development.

## **Cross-Cutting Themes**

### **Education That Is Multicultural**

Discuss the progress toward meeting Education That is Multicultural (ETM) goals by responding to the following questions:

1. Identify the major ETM goals that were addressed by the school system during the 2007-2008 academic year. In your response, be sure to address the following areas:
  - Curriculum,
  - Instruction,
  - Staff Development,
  - Instructional Resources, and
  - School Climate

The Superintendent's Blue Ribbon Task Force to Eliminate the Achievement Gaps was created with a direct focus which includes: Cultural Diversity, Parents-Students-Community-Business Partnerships, Interventions and Special Programs, Quality Workforce, and Quality Instruction. The implementation of the recommendations directly or indirectly addresses Education That Is Multicultural.

The Task Force has two major objectives: implement site-based, targeted interventions and acceleration programs designed to increase student achievement and eliminate achievement gaps; and maintain a process for the community and the school system to share ideas and communicate strategies to increase student achievement, especially for underperforming students. As a result of the recommendations made by the Task Force subcommittees, a number of system-wide strategies and initiatives have been implemented.

#### **National Network of Partnership Schools**

The National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) provided support and guidance for fifteen (15) schools in St. Mary's County to implement parent involvement activities to comply with the No Child Left Behind Act. Schools and teams worked together as action teams to develop school action plans and to implement some of the NNPS tools and approaches. As a result of being affiliated with this organization, St. Mary's County Public Schools receive ongoing technical assistance from the NNPS staff.

#### **Study Circles**

The school system partnered with St. Mary's College of Maryland and St. Mary's County Government to offer the Study Circle process to the St. Mary's community. The Study Circles process helped schools and school systems address racial and ethnic barriers to student achievement and parent involvement. A Study Circle consisted of a small group of approximately 12-15 stakeholders from different ethnic and racial groups in a school or community. The group met for six 2-hour sessions and they were led by two trained facilitators who are responsible for ensuring that everyone is actively involved in the process.

### **Cultural Proficiency**

St. Mary's County Public Schools continued implementing Cultural Proficiency training for principals, assistant principals, supervisors, and other school leaders through the school system's Administrative and Supervisory (A&S) meetings. Cultural proficiency is an approach to addressing issues of diversity, inclusiveness, and entitlement; it provides tools and help for a diverse school and work environment. Cultural Proficiency is a way of being that enables both individuals and organizations to respond effectively to people who differ from them.

Each A&S school leader was given a copy of the book *Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn, as well as completing Cultural Proficiency: A manual for School Leaders*. As a result, there was a book discussion at each A&S meeting. In addition, there was cultural proficiency training and updates at many of the monthly A&S meetings. School principals and leaders were expected to facilitate similar discussions and professional development at their respective schools.

### **Community Partnerships**

St. Mary's County Public Schools maintained its initiatives and partnerships with community groups and organizations. The school system, community organizations, and groups collaborated on many community initiatives. Some of the partners included: the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, the St. Mary's County Chamber of Commerce, the Local Management Board (LMB), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), St. Mary's County Faith Leaders, St. Mary's College of Maryland, the College of Southern Maryland, St. Mary's County Government, St. Mary's County Library, and the U.S. Department of Justice. These partnerships enabled the school system to collaborate with community leaders and organizations for the benefit of the children in our school system.

2. Describe the progress that was made toward meeting these goals and the programs, practices, strategies, or initiatives to which you attribute the progress.

The school system successfully continued implementing many of the Task Force's recommendations based on the objectives. The following are some of the recommendations that were implemented during the 2007-2008 school year:

### **Quality Workforce**

- A recruitment specialist was added to the Department of Human Resources. The primary responsibilities of this position is to recruit candidates of color, meet with educators of color and various community members, such as the NAACP for input, and extend recruitment efforts to include international teachers - Jamaica and the Philippines.
- The Human Resources Department continued to visit Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) for quality candidates of color.
- Each new teacher was provided with a mentor teacher who will meet with them throughout the school year to provide ongoing support.
- Professional Development changed from random professional development to job-embedded, continual professional development opportunities.

### **Instructional Quality**

- The school system targeted more African American and Economically Disadvantaged students to take the PSAT, SAT, and AP exams. In addition, more African American students were targeted to take more Advanced Placement (AP) classes.
- The MSDE/Reginald F. Lewis Museum “An African American Journey” curriculum remained on the school system’s intranet for all schools to access.
- The Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center allowed greater access to African American and Economically Disadvantaged students through the Tech Connect program. These students have an opportunity to experience courses at the Career and Technology Center in their ninth grade year.
- Professional Learning Communities provided grade level and content area teacher collaboration centered on student achievement.
- A workgroup was convened to design the Fairlead Academy which opened for the 2008-2009 school year for sixty underperforming ninth grade students. The program is designed to assist struggling freshman with the transition to high school and guide them through the first year of high school helping them to avoid obstacles to their academic achievement.

### **Cultural Diversity**

- St. Mary’s County Public Schools provided ongoing Cultural Diversity training for principals, supervisors, and other school system leaders.
- The MSDE/Reginald F. Lewis Museum “An African American Journey” curriculum remained on the school system’s intranet for all schools to access.
- Study Circles was a community-wide initiative that is providing ongoing structured discussions around race, class, and ethnic differences.

### **Intervention and Special Programs**

- The school system was awarded a three-year mentoring grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The FLOW (Future Leaders of the World) mentoring program will be in all elementary and middle schools beginning SY 2008-09.
- The Readers Are Leaders mentoring program was implemented at Great Mills High School which allowed the high school students to engage elementary students in reading.
- The Check-N-Connect Dropout Prevention Mentoring program was implemented at two high schools and one middle school. This program addresses students’ engagement with learning and promotes students’ engagement through relationship building.
- In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Justice, the SPIRIT (Student Problem Resolution Of Issues Together) Program was implemented in one high school and one middle school. This program assisted school leaders with gaining insight into student perceptions of racial problems and its impact on student achievement and school culture.
- Each school created a School Based Task Force to focus on students in need of additional academic support.
- Technical Assistance Teams (TAT), which is a collaboration of district-level supervisors and administrators and site-based school leaders, were implemented at various school sites to focus on students and teachers in need of additional support.
- Additional schools in the district initiated the Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports (PBIS) program to reward positive student behavior.
- Southern Maryland College Access Network (SoMD CAN) provided a support person at the high school level to help first generation students prepare for college/post-secondary education. The school system provided schools with an Academic Literacy program for all students reading below grade level and not performing at proficient levels on MSA reading.

### **Parent-Community-Business Partnerships**

- Through the Department of Academic Support, SMCPS met with community members and student leaders to solicit recommendations on issues confronting students in St. Mary's County.
- In collaboration with the family/school partnerships project of Teaching for Change, the Tellin' Stories Project was implemented at two elementary schools. This project offered a series of workshops that provided parents, grandparents, teachers, and administrators an opportunity to come together and share personal stories.
- The superintendent hosted several meetings and activities for various community stakeholders to solicit their support and recommendations on how we can work collaboratively to support students in St. Mary's County. Such activities/meetings included: Principal for a Day, Superintendent's Business Breakfast, Faith Community Meeting, and the Volunteer Recognition Ceremony.
- As a result of expanding community partnerships, the school system was able to collaborate with key stakeholders and influential community organizations on a number of projects. In addition, the projects created additional academic and enrichment opportunities for St. Mary's County students. The partnerships included: Patuxent Naval Air Station, the Chamber of Commerce, Local Colleges & Universities, NAACP, the Local Management Board, the Boys & Girls Clubs, the Faith-Based Community, Southern Maryland College Access Network (So. MD CAN), Business Education and Community Alliance (BECA), Johns Hopkins/NNPS, and the U.S. Department of Justice.

### **National Network of Partnership Schools**

St. Mary's County Public Schools is a member of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). This is a collaboration with Johns Hopkins University. School teams worked together as action teams to develop school action plans.

### **Study Circles**

As a result of collaborating with St. Mary's College and the St. Mary's County Government, this collaboration was able to facilitate three successful Study Circles, two school-based and one community. The three collaborating institutions were able to successfully train approximately ten facilitators who were able to coordinate and initiate this process.

3. Describe where challenges in meeting ETM goals are evident.

To effectively meet the challenges of the ETM goals, St. Mary's County Public Schools must confront the following challenges:

### **National Network of Partnership Schools**

- There is a lack of parent involvement at the middle and high school level.
- There is a need to have every school in the school system become an active member of NNPS.
- The need to organize more effective, goal-oriented partnership programs at the district level and in all of our schools.

### **Study Circles**

The school system partnered with St. Mary's College and St. Mary's County Government to offer the Study Circle process to the St. Mary's community. The challenges for the 2008-2009 school year will be as follows:

- There will be a need to continue to train additional facilitators.
- The facilitators of the Study Circle process must assist the schools with the recruitment of students, parents, and staff.

### **Cultural Proficiency**

School system leaders were provided Cultural Proficiency training during the 2007-2008 A&S monthly meetings. The following will be challenges for the 2008-2009 school year:

- Finding opportunities to continue the Cultural Proficiency work from the previous school term.
- Providing Cultural Proficiency training for new employees to the school system.
- Ensuring that school principals and ETM representatives are providing teachers at their schools with Cultural Proficiency training.

### **Community Partnerships**

School system leaders have invested significant time in building relationships with community leaders and collaborating with community organizations:

- School leaders must maintain the current partnerships that have been developed.
- School leaders must continue building relationships and partnerships with community leaders and organizations.
- School leaders must continue to assess partnerships to ensure that they are meaningful and beneficial for children.
- Ensuring that we make time to sustain the Cultural Proficiency work and maintain it as a school system priority.

4. Describe the changes, adjustments, or revisions that will be made to programs or strategies for 2008-2009 to address the identified challenges and ensure progress.

For the 2008-2009 school year, St. Mary's County Public Schools will continue to implement the following initiatives to meet the goals of ETM:

- The Superintendent's Blue Ribbon Task Force to Eliminate the Achievement Gap
- National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS)
- Study Circles
- Cultural Proficiency Training
- Community Partnerships with the business community, the County Council of Parent Teacher Associations, the St. Mary's County NAACP, the faith based community in St. Mary's County, and other community stakeholders

The work of the **Superintendent's Blue Ribbon Task Force to Eliminate the Achievement Gap** will continue into the 2008-2009 school year. The Task Force's focus will continue to be on the implementation of the recommendations from the 2005-2006 school year. In addition, the Task Force will continue to provide monitoring at the school level.

St. Mary's County Public Schools will continue to strengthen its partnership with the **National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS)** by enabling more schools to join the network. We will make it more feasible for schools to attend district level meetings by reducing the number of meetings and by holding the meetings at a time that is conducive to school representative schedules.

Given that cultural and racial differences can negatively impact student achievement, St. Mary's County Public Schools will continue to institute the **Study Circles Program**. The Study Circles process has allowed our school system and community to discuss cultural and social issues that impact student achievement.

St. Mary's County Public Schools will also continue to initiate **Cultural Proficiency** training for students and educators. In addition, we will provide intense Cultural Proficiency training for new teachers and staff members. The Cultural Proficiency approach has helped staff members understand the importance of building positive relationships with students, parents, and colleagues. It has also helped educators understand the importance of having high expectations for all students. The Cultural Proficiency training has provided our educators with the tools to respond effectively to children and adults who differ from them.

The superintendent and the superintendent's leadership team will continue to meet with and establish **Community Partnerships** with groups and organizations. There are a series of partnerships, events, and meetings scheduled for the 2008-2009 school year for Patuxent River Naval Air Station, the business community and the Chamber of Commerce, the Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), the faith based community, student groups, and many other civic and social organizations. In addition, the superintendent along with school leaders will continue to meet with community members and stakeholder groups to discuss pertinent matters that impact St. Mary's County Public Schools.

## Clarifying Questions

### Highly Qualified Staff

<b>Notes</b>
<p><b>No Child Left Behind Goal 3: By 2005-2006, all students will be taught by highly qualified teachers.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Indicator 3.1:</b> The percentage of CAS classes being taught by highly qualified teachers (as defined in section 9101(23) of the ESEA).</li><li>• <b>Indicator 3.2: The percentage of teachers receiving high quality professional development.</b></li><li>• <b>Indicator 3.3:</b> The percentage of paraprofessionals working in Title I schools (excluding those whose sole duties as translators and parental involvement assistants) who are qualified.</li></ul>
<p>The staff from the Division of Certification and Accreditation will conduct a specialized review of this section and provide a report to the panel for discussion during the caucus meeting.</p>
<b>Panel's Discussion Items</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Program Review Summary Report</li><li>• A description of the practices, programs, or strategies contributing to success or designed to overcome challenges.</li><li>• A description of the resources allocated in support of these practices, programs, or strategies.</li></ul>
<b>Panel Action</b>
<p>Panel commendation(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School system data reports 90% of high-poverty elementary schools were taught by highly qualified teachers and 96.52% of low-poverty elementary schools were taught by highly qualified teachers.</li><li>• School system data reports an overall decrease from 2006-2007 to 2007-2008 in the number of teachers that retired, took a leave of absence, and were dismissed or non-renewed.</li></ul>
<p>Panel clarifying question(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explain what specific interventions are being initiated to increase certification and highly qualified teachers status for those with invalid grade and subject and missing certification information as reported for 2007-2008. (Table 6.3)</li><li>• Explain what specific strategies or progress initiatives are currently being used to target secondary teachers to acquire HQ status in high-poverty schools within the school system. Explain the impact of vacancy and turnover challenges, primarily in the secondary schools.</li><li>• Explain what specific strategies are being used for recruitment of staff.</li></ul>
<b>Local School System Action</b>

LSS Response to Clarifying Question(s):

1. To increase the number of highly qualified teachers for those with invalid grade and subject areas, we have worked individually with teachers, school principals, grade level supervisors, and directors for those areas to schedule teaching assignments based on certification grade levels and areas. The scheduling process is further facilitated by our new *eSchool* platform and position control that ensures deliberate and accurate assignments. In addition, SMCPs offers reimbursement for PRAXIS tests to teachers who successfully pass those tests to add or increase certification areas and grade levels. SMCPs has invested resources to have two individuals in the Human Resources Department who hold Certification Authorized Partner (CAP) status with MSDE to process and approve certification requests, renewals and additional certification areas based on passing PRAXIS scores in a timelier manner. Our tuition reimbursement program continues to grow, and includes direct billing options between SMCPs and the individual college/university, which allows teachers to complete coursework increasing their certification areas. The Professional Development Office offers various coursework, including required reading courses and special education courses, for a nominal fee to teachers throughout our school system.
2. The high-poverty secondary school in our system has undergone a complete renovation as a new ninth grade academy. New teachers were assigned to the program along with new leadership. Each teacher was selected based on their certification and prior training. The impact of vacancies and turnover challenges, especially in the secondary schools, is prevalent primarily in critical shortage areas of mathematics, the sciences, and special education. Our recruitment initiatives have focused on these shortage areas. International recruitment has proven to be effective in recruitment of several foreign teachers in those shortage areas. Additionally, reimbursement of PRAXIS tests to add endorsements for current teachers has aided in meeting the need for teachers in those areas of shortage from within our school system.
3. Recruiting teachers for all areas of instruction has been aided by the addition of a Recruitment Specialist with a focus on minority recruitment. The superintendent has made it a priority to increase the number of teachers of color to align with the demographics of our student population. A comprehensive evaluation of prior recruitment trips and strategies is ongoing. Specifically, geographic areas have been identified as an area of concentration, such as the mid-west, as well as New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Recruiters are chosen based on their experiences in the school system, including instructional staff, principals, supervisors, and directors. When applicable, recruiters are chosen to represent SMCPs in areas they previously lived or where they studied. Further, SMCPs has made a concerted effort to increase the number of new and young teachers who have been hired in the last 5 years to St. Mary's County, to further connect with candidates and share their experiences in the school system and the area. Recruitment videos have been produced. The recognition of the induction program as an exemplary program by MASCD has further aided in recruitment efforts, illustrating the high level of support new teachers receive in SMCPs.

**Panel Action**

Panel Review of Clarifying Question(s):

Please include your response to the clarifying question in your final Master Plan Update.

## Gifted and Talented Programs

### Notes

#### Program Review

The staff from the Division of Instruction will conduct a specialized review of this section and provide a report to the panel for discussion during the caucus meeting.

### Panel's Discussion Items

- Program Review Summary Report

### Program Review Action

Program Review commendation(s):

#### Program Review clarifying question(s):

- 1 Please identify the Gifted and Talented Program goals, objectives, and strategies for student identification and services (#1 p. 74). Report progress on Gifted and Talented goals for each grade band, including supporting data as needed to document progress
2. Identify resource allocations that appear related to progress (#2) and resource allocations that will ensure sufficient progress (#4).

### Local School System Action

LSS Response to Clarifying Question(s):

1. It is the goal of SMCPSS to finalize and implement GT identification procedures at the end of second grade or beginning of third grade that will remain in effect until the end of fifth grade. This identification will be monitored throughout the year to check for changes in student performance that indicate that a change in services needs to occur. Identification of students will be monitored to ensure that the demographics of the GT program match those of the school system. As we implement these criteria at the elementary school level, adjustments in the criteria for placement in middle school Honors programs will be made. Currently, the school system uses results from the MLI, as well as information gained through teacher recommendations and report card grades to place students in Honors. The 2008-2009 placement data indicated gaps in Honors placement by feeder elementary school. This seems to indicate gaps and/or misalignment with what is valued in instruction, particularly in math. While elementary school math instruction places an emphasis on math processes and math problem solving, the MLI seems to be more an indicator of computational skill. The Supervisor of Instruction for Gifted and Talented Programs and the Supervisor of Instruction for Mathematics have examined these gaps and will make recommendations for changing middle school Honors placement criteria for the 2009-2010 school year. Once placed in the Honors program, these students will progress through the Honors options and will filter into Advanced Placement courses at the high school level. Advanced Placement enrollment is considered to be "open" as long as the student meets the identified prerequisites that are listed in the high school program of studies. AP opportunities for SMCPSS students begin at the tenth grade level with AP United States Government and Politics, and continue through grade twelve. SMCPSS supports AP students by requiring and paying the \$86 fee for each AP exam taken. Identification of these students is supported by SMCPSS by paying for the PSAT/NMSQT to be administered to all students in grades 10 and 11, and through the use of the AP Potential data available after the PSAT is administered.

Local school system funds support gifted and talented initiatives by providing the following funding:

Salaries and Wages = \$26,710.00

- These funds provide stipends for AP PLC participation in all three high schools, as well as substitutes for Junior Great Books and William and Mary training, and Pre-AP/AP Workshops that are held locally. During the summer, various GT workshops are held, with an emphasis on developing lessons and extensions for highly able learners. Other stipends are used to fund teachers for summer space camps held in July.

Materials of Instruction = \$36,550.00

- These funds are used to purchase Junior Great Books for the middle school level classrooms as a way of extending critical thinking in Honors Reading classes. AP released exams are purchased for each of the 22 AP courses offered in order to provide exemplary items that teachers can use to prepare Pre-AP and AP students for the rigor of the AP exams. Other AP Prep materials are purchased as necessary.
- Materials to extend mathematics instruction at the elementary school were purchased. These include Project M3: Mentoring Mathematical Minds and Interact units.
- Remaining funding provides materials for the summer space camp program.

Consultants = \$37,900.00

- These funds provide consultants for Pre-AP/AP workshops, as well as Junior Great Books Level 1 and Level 2 training. Parent Volunteer training is also offered for schools who invite parents to lead Junior Great Books reading groups.

County Inservice = \$25,000.00

- These funds allow the school system to send new AP teachers to five day institutes for their course. This training is invaluable to understanding the rigor and expectations of the AP program. Teachers are also able to attend one-day workshops held throughout the state.
- Other funds are allocated to send teachers to conferences such as the Middle States Regional Forum for the College Board and the MEGS Conference. AP teachers are also provided with binders for use in the AP PLCs.
- Other funds are used to provide lunch for JGB participants.

State funding is available through the Primary Talent Development grant in the following amounts:

Salaries and Wages = \$1,973.20

- These funds help to provide substitutes for professional development for teachers in grades PK-2 so that they may attend workshops for Junior Great Books, Primary Talent Development, Helping Boys Succeed in School, or GT/LD.

Contracted Services = \$12,366.24

- These funds are used in part to fund Junior Great Books training for primary teachers. Other funds are used to help bring a PTD course to SMCPs teachers in the summer.

Supplies and Materials = \$33,704.58

- Materials for Primary Talent Development, including supplies for instructional modules are purchased. In addition, since identification procedures have been established, materials have been purchased to use with these students. These include Junior Great Books materials for primary students, updating trade books for William and Mary, and Descartes' Cove, Project M3, and Interact materials for mathematics.

Other Charges = \$6203.24

- These funds cover other fees and purchases including conference fees, and Fixed Charges.

Other state funding is provided through the Project NEXUS grant. This grant assists the school system in identifying AP Potential and in increasing college awareness at the middle school level. Grant funding is available in the following amounts:

Salaries and Wages = \$22,467.00

- These funds provided a .5 Pre-AP Instructional Resource Teacher at the middle school level. This teacher provided support for rigor in the classroom. Embedded professional development was emphasized.

Contracted Services = \$8,400.00

- These funds provide Pre-AP training at the middle school level, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary strategies.

Supplies and Materials = \$20,408.00

- Materials for Pre-AP were provided, such as a collegiate dictionary, development of sets of high level classic and contemporary literature, and graphing calculators for math.

Other Charges = \$7,150.00

- Transportation for college visits was provided to students. They visited the College of Southern Maryland, St. Mary's College, and the University of Maryland.
- Fixed Charges and conference fees were also provided.

2. Progress at the elementary school level is considered to be a direct result of the Primary Talent Development grant and its role in supporting the school system in establishing criteria that allow a look at the whole child. Incorporating REPI data as evidence of achievement behaviors has allowed the school system a glimpse at early potential. Coupled with achievement and ability data available through the SAT-10/OLSAT tests, the school is provided with evidence of potential and information on gaps between achievement and that potential. This grant funding has allowed the school system to not only establish criteria for GT services, but also to implement instructional programs that allow these students to develop their talents. These include the purchase of Junior Great Books as well as the math program Descartes' Cove. To ensure that this progress continues, the school system will need to provide school teams to complete instructional walkthroughs and portfolio reviews to monitor implementation of PTD, as this seems to be the gateway to STEM and to other GT program services. Grant funding will no longer be available to cover these costs, so substitute money will need to be allocated. The projected cost is \$300. The school system will need to continue professional development activities, particularly Junior Great Books training in order to facilitate the implementation of shared inquiry and critical thinking strategies. Materials for Kindergarten should be purchased to provide rigor to high ability primary students and to ensure that critical thinking abilities are nurtured at a young age. At the middle school level, the school system will need to identify teacher leaders who can facilitate the implementation of Pre-AP strategies. Collaboration between the Supervisor of Instruction for Gifted and Talented Programs and content area supervisors is critical in ensuring alignment and rigor that will start in middle school and prepare students for Advanced Placement courses at the high school level. In order to ensure access to AP, the school system should continue to allocate funding to support payment of AP exam fees as well as administration of the PSAT/NMSQT to all students in grades 10-11. Increasing this funding to include PSSS administration to ninth graders would expand this initiative and provide early identification of AP Potential and increased access to the tenth grade AP course. The projected cost of this initiative is \$20,000.00.

#### Program Review Action

Program Reviewer's Review of Clarifying Question(s):

Please include your response to the clarifying question in your final Master Plan Update.

## **Data Tables**