

Section A: Executive Summary

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INTRODUCTION

In the 2012-2103 school year, St. Mary’s County Public Schools (SMCPS) fully embraced the Maryland Common Core State Standards and with the implementation of these rigorous education standards, we established a set of shared goals and expectations for what students should understand and be able to do in grades K-12 in order to be prepared for success in college and the workplace. The Common Core compelled us to re-sequence learning in Mathematics and Reading Language Arts, leaving some lessons behind and moving others to different grade levels. Throughout the year, our students were asked to demonstrate independence and perseverance, construct arguments, comprehend, critique, and support with evidence, and use resources, strategies, and tools to demonstrate strong content knowledge. We moved to deeper and richer lessons, replete with informational texts, analytical writing, and trans-disciplinary project based learning. All of which, we fundamentally know will end with our graduates more prepared than ever to face the challenges of a 21st century post-secondary landscape.

In implementing the Common Core State Standards, we have aligned our current work at the secondary level promoting college and career readiness, as more SMCPS graduates than ever took the SAT and posting scores better than the state and national average. Our graduates also completed record numbers of Advanced Placement courses and achieved scores of 3 or better on the culminating AP Exams at rates also outpacing the Maryland and national average.

Finally, SMCPS continued its march toward the national goal of 90% of students graduating from high school in four years or less. The first year the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) calculated this new measure, SMCPS posting a percentage of 82.8%. In the past three years, we have made this statistic our North Star – with all our efforts directed to achieving the ultimate goal of 90% by 2016. It is with great fanfare that we will post the achievement of this milestone ahead of schedule - with the highest ever projected on-time graduation rate of 90 percent for the graduating class of 2013.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

School System Priorities and Distribution of Fiscal Resources

System Priorities—Educational Pathways

Educational Pathways have been established and take priority 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 are now beginning our sixth year of STEM academies at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The academies serve students from all elementary, middle, and high schools across the county. Currently 302 students are enrolled in the program in grades 4–12. 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 inquiry, 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 provide opportunity for application of learning. Mentorships and internships are supported by our military contract community and the Patuxent River Naval Air Station engineers, scientists, and test pilots.

The Chesapeake Public Charter School (CPCS): The Chesapeake Public Charter School opened on August 22, 2007, and now accommodates 354 students. CPCS is Southern Maryland's first charter school. It has as its focus integrated instruction and environmental themes. The school now provides a program for students in grades K–8, with a waiting list in excess of 200 students. During the 2009–2010 school year, CPCS officially renewed the charter for another four-year term that continues until June 30, 2014. The school now has a full complement of programmatic options including algebra, geometry, and foreign language for the middle school students. CPCS has had consistently high academic achievement results at both the elementary and middle school levels.

Fairlead Academy: Fairlead Academy opened in 2008–2009 as a grade 9 program designed to meet the academic needs of 60 underachieving students. We realized in 2010 that support for these students must extend into their sophomore year, and in 2011, we further extended support into their junior year. The 2012 school year our commitment to our first cohort concluded when 84% of the students in the program earned their diplomas and began the next phase of their lives. This graduation rate will rise to over 90% when the students needing an additional year graduate. In all levels, the students receive extended instructional time in their core content classes, mentoring opportunities, academic and enrichment field trips, and an infusion of interactive technology, while being placed in smaller classes with a 1:15 student-to-teacher ratio. A program that commenced with a cohort of 60 grade 9 students has developed into an articulated pathway through all four years of high school that emphasizes choice and hands-on learning and encourages participation in the instructional programs at the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center (JAFCTC). Students in grades 9 and 10 attend their core content classes at the Fairlead Academy on Great Mills Road. When they move into their junior year, they can elect either to attend their home high school or to take all of their classes at the JAFCTC, a choice that is also given to them as seniors. In order to offer core content classes at the JAFCTC, we reallocated staff from the high schools and assigned math, English, social studies, and science teachers to the facility full time. Juniors and seniors taking all their classes at the JAFCTC will meet all graduation requirements while also completing one of the 24 different Career and Technology Education pathways offered at the school. There are 223 students currently being served by this initiative in all four grade levels of high school.

Academy of Finance: The Academy of Finance opened 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 opportunities to apply classroom learning and incorporates extracurricular programs related to the career interests of students, such as the Future Business Leaders of America. Students from our other two high schools (Great Mills

High School and Leonardtown High School) were able to transfer to Chopticon High School for enrollment in the academy. Working with the Program Advisory Council to guide the program, we have increased the rigor of the program for to include Advanced Placement courses and a four-year college focus.

Global and International Studies: SMCPS implemented the latest signature program, Global and International Studies, at Leonardtown High School beginning with the 2009–2010 school year. Students from our other two high schools (Great Mills High School and Chopticon High School) were able to transfer to Leonardtown High School for enrollment in the program. The program is designed to provide a rigorous, engaging educational pathway focused on an advanced study of world cultures, contemporary issues, history, and world languages. We currently have a 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade cohort serving 137 students and we graduated our first cohort of students from the program in 2013. Ninth grade students are enrolled in English Honors and Advanced Placement World History as part of the program. Tenth grade students take English Honors, Advanced Placement U.S. History, and a dedicated Global and International Studies course. Juniors and seniors take a dedicated Advanced Placement Comparative Government and Politics, Advanced Placement English Language, and additional Global and International Studies. Additional credits for high school graduation, Advanced Placement courses, an internship, and a senior capstone project are part of the program requirements.

System Priorities—Other Initiatives

Technology Enhancements: For staff, we continued to incorporate technology (Teacher Access Center and Performance Matters Data Warehouse) as administrative tools for data-driven decision making while providing students and parents with information via the Home Access Center. As a system focus, we have moved to the Google web-based suite of products – including Gmail, Google Docs, and Google Chat for staff to communicate, manage documentation, and provide a collaborative platform for information sharing via the intranet.

Maintain Our Board of Education Class Size Goals: Maintaining classes within our goal structure is 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

In 2013, our average class size was 20 in pre-kindergarten; 22 in kindergarten; 23.5 in grades 1 and 2; 23.8 in grades 3–5; 21 in middle schools, and 23 in high schools. Our projected 4-Year Adjusted Cohort graduation rate will exceed 89 percent.

Fiscal Outlook

For FY 2013, SMCPS realized a net position decrease of \$28 million in the government wide statements. The major components of which were an increase in our net OPEB obligation of \$6

million, new computer/copier lease payables of \$2.4 million, and an accrued outstanding claims liability for our new pay-go health insurance process of \$1.925 million. Our unassigned fund balance fell by \$2.7 million and our OPEB obligation increased to \$31 million. We have budgeted \$2,525,000 of fund balance in our FY 2014 operating budget to include \$2 million toward our OPEB obligation and \$525,000 in non-recurring negotiation expenses. All state revenues have been adjusted to account for cut backs due to increased wealth in the County. Based on knowledge generated by the new pay-go system, rates for employee health insurance will increase while retiree rates will remain at existing levels for the foreseeable future. ARRA funds were fully expended by FY 2012. The county increased its funding to us by \$4.2 million over FY 2013 with \$325,000 designated for OPEB, an additional \$665,000 designated for the pension shift, and the remainder to be used to balance operating costs.

Climate Changes

With additional direction from MSDE, the transition of the teacher pension costs to the local school system has been established and is working smoothly in our county. However, once the four year transition phase has been completed, this will become a burden as the county student population continues to grow. This transition, coupled with the increased movement of students from the parochial schools to the local school system, places an increased fiscal burden in these tight financial times. Long term issues include increased compensation demands by the unions to make up for past lost wages and the effects of “sequestration”. This county has a large population of federal and military workers that have been impacted by “sequestration”. It remains to be seen how this will impact the wealth and revenues of the county with a subsequent impact on the school system.

GOAL PROGRESS

Race to the Top Scopes of Work Update

During the fall of 2010 SMCPS gathered a dedicated group of system stakeholders to craft the Scopes of Work (SOW) for our implementation of the Four Assurances embedded in Race to the Top (RTTT). For each assurance, Standards and Assessments, Data Systems to Support Instruction, Great Teachers and Leaders, and Turning Around Lowest Achieving Schools, we created a multi-year plan—replete with expected costs to the system in terms of personnel, capital improvements, materials of instruction, and professional development. The Scopes of Work were presented to our Board of Education, submitted for approval to MSDE, and initiated in earnest in the late spring of 2011 and continue into 2014

Standards and Assessments: Our most concrete work to date was over the summer of 2013 as we had instructional teams from each school, composed of the building principal, a math teacher, a reading/language arts teacher, and a science teacher, attend the summer Educator Effectiveness Academy (EEA) held at North Point High School in Charles County. The three days of professional development and collegial interactions were quite productive and left us eager to start our work. We convened meetings after the academy concluded to debrief participants and explicitly communicate the expectations that each school develop, disseminate, and implement the EEA Transition Plans they created. We integrated the EEA Transition Plans to the annual

School Improvement Plan (SIP) created by each instructional site. Our goal this year is to have all teachers fully implementing as assessing student progress on the Maryland Common Core State Standards and able to demonstrate their understanding by creating aligned, rigorous, trans-disciplinary performance tasks for all students quarterly.

Data Systems that Support Instruction: We are moving forward with our technology plan by deploying an additional 2,000 laptops across our three high schools. Our goal is to maintain our 3 to 1 ratio of computers to students—with much of this being mobile computing technology. Coupled with this purchase, all our schools are connected to the internet with a fiber connection so video streaming and on-line learning can occur without service interruption. To achieve this, we have made all buildings wireless and connected to the internet by fiber, so learning and internet access can follow our students and offer untethered flexibility. All of this lays the foundation for seamless assessment of students in an online environment—where results can be quickly returned to teachers for analysis and instructional decision-making.

Great Teachers and Leaders: Some of our most engaging work this year will be done as we continue our pilot of a teacher evaluation system and a leadership evaluation system that will ultimately place half of its emphasis on student growth. All schools will be participating in the pilot. All teachers are in their second year of this pilot and began the 2013-2014 school year by setting Student Learning Objectives (SLO) that will guide their work with students. The difficult work now will be to identify data aligned to the new Common Core State Standard so we can look to the future in anticipation of the PARRC assessments.

Turning Around Lowest Achieving Schools: As MSDE implements the new rules governing school improvement and moves to site specific Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO), SMCPS will shift its work to reflect these new targets. Using this measure, we have no schools identified as “Low Achieving.”

Core Content Areas

Reading: Across grades 3-5, SMCPS posted marginally declining results for 2013 as a result of the transition in the curriculum to the Common Core, with 84.1% of students proficient or advanced in grade 3, 89.3 in grade 4, and 89.4% in grade 5. In grade 6, proficient and advanced scores dipped slightly to 84.1% and to 80.3% in grade 8, yet rose in grade 7 to 83.2%..

Mathematics: Across grades 3-5, SMCPS posted similar results for 2013, with 86.7% of students proficient or advanced in grade 3, 93.5% in grade 4, and 86.5% in grade 5. In grade 6, proficient and advanced scores were steady at to 86.5% and dipped slightly to 77.3% and 76.2 % in grades 7 and 8, respectively. In mathematics, curriculum shifts to the Common Core were particularly evident.

Science: The average overall score for student performance on the grade 5 Science MSA declined in 2013 to 74.5% In grade 8, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced declined 2% to 79.0%.

Social Studies: SMCPs recognizes the importance of developing student attitudes that encourage them to synthesize their knowledge and skills, and apply them in a responsible manner within a democratic society. Our Social Studies program outlines the knowledge and skills students must develop in pre-kindergarten to grade 12 based on the Maryland State Curriculum, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Advanced Placement College Board Standards (AP), and National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) standards.

Cross-Cutting Themes and Specific Student Groups in Bridge to Excellence

Educational Technology: In FY 2013, SMCPs targeted professional development centered on collaborative planning of curriculum aligned reading and mathematics activities. SMCPs was effective in expanding the use of MOODLE, our learning management system into both the elementary and secondary classrooms. Much of our success in building student and teacher technology literacy is attributed to our first Instructional e-Coach who worked across the school system to provide personalized professional development in both small and large groups. While data driven decision-making is a common focus in SMCPs professional development, interactive technologies and digital resources were a part of the customized professional development.

Additionally as a part of the Race to the Top funding, SMCPs furthered our network infrastructure to allow for access to rich digital content and build student and staff proficiency “in information, media, and technology literacy, knowledge and skills.” (*Investing in Instructional Technologies*) We are committed to working with MSDE’s longitudinal data system to support instruction as well as provide support for the implementation of the common core standards and assessments.

Education That Is Multicultural: For the 2013 school year, St. Mary’s County Public Schools provided Cultural Proficiency training for ALL (new and veteran) employees of the school system. In the past, 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 will provide our educators with the tools to respond effectively to children and adults who differ from them.

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 on an as-needed basis. The Study Circles’ process has allowed our school system and community to discuss cultural and social issues that impact student achievement.

For the 2013-2014 school year, SMCPs will continue the work the Diversity Specialist started with a system wide initiative to deliver classroom lessons that emphasize the strength a diverse, inclusive community adds to education. Through a partnership with the College of Southern Maryland, an acting troupe presented excerpts from “A Raisin in the Sun” to all high school students with follow up lessons in students’ English classes.

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 2013–2014 school year for Patuxent River Naval Air Station, the business community and the Chamber of Commerce, the Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), MD PIRC (Maryland Parental Information Resource Center), 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.

English Language Learners: For the 2013-2014 school year, SMCPS has seen a continued increase in the number of students identified as English Language Learners (ELL). Enrollment of ELL students increased 18% in one year, from 165 in 2012-2012 to 193 in the 2013-2014 school year. It is especially important for all classroom teachers to have the requisite skills and strategies to assist students in their classrooms. This year, we will focus on providing professional development for both our ELL and content teachers.

Career and Technology Education: The Career and Technology Education (CTE) program is an integral component of the system’s initiatives for improving student performance, eliminating achievement gaps and providing a variety of career pathways for every student. There are 23 career pathways available through our CTE program at the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center and 10 at our comprehensive high schools. We have one of only five aviation maintenance programs in the nation. Our production engineering program is the model for the state. Our health academy is a three-year program providing dual credit with the community college. Our television video production program is visited by colleagues from across the state, who hope to replicate our model.

Early Learning: The 2012–2013 Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) data shows major progress in the school readiness of St. Mary’s County kindergarten students over the past five years. Of the students entering kindergarten, 88 percent were fully ready for school; a significant gain from 70 percent in 2005–2006. Careful monitoring of enrollment indicates the availability of spaces in any program. This facilitates enrolling children in developmentally appropriate, readiness for school experiences on a continuing basis.

Gifted and Talented: SMCPS provides a continuum of Gifted and Talented Services to students at all grade levels. Students receive gifted and talented program services that begin with participation in the Primary Talent Development Early Learning Program in pre-kindergarten and progress through the Junior Great Books program, and the William and Mary curriculum units for Reading/Language Arts. The 2013- 2014 school year will continue our rigorous and standardized instruction that incorporates capstone projects each marking period for highly able students. A literacy lab model is utilized at the elementary level, which facilitates differentiation for challenge and increased rigor. Mathematics instruction is supplemented with locally developed math extension maps and supplemental materials of instruction which include the *Project M³*: Mentoring Mathematical Minds series, Interact math simulations, and the *Descartes’ Cove* program. St. Mary’s County Public Schools continues to evaluate and revise course options for students at the secondary level, beginning with Accelerated Common Core 6, and continuing through Pre-AP and the Advanced Placement pathway to ensure that all students are placed in the most challenging courses available. At the high school level, there is an explicit expectation that students will continue with rigorous coursework and “stretch up” to Advanced Placement

level courses. Pre-requisites for Advanced Placement courses have been reviewed and obstacles such as screening tests have been removed. In fact, all students taking honors level courses in grade 10 are expected and encouraged to continue to Advanced Placement courses in their junior and senior years.

Special Education: The department of Special Education is included at every level of collaboration throughout the system. Special Education teachers, general education teachers, instructional resource teachers, and content specialists meet regularly as Professional Learning Communities to discuss student performance based on data obtained in Performance Matters, formative assessments, progress on IEP goals and objectives and anecdotal records. Instructional recommendations are made and when appropriate and necessary, IEP Teams are convened to amend a student's IEP. Special Education Supervisors are included and participate in system Administrative and Support (A&S) monthly meetings.

Closing the Achievement Gap for Student Groups

FARMS: For our students receiving Free and Reduced Meal Status (FARMS), double digit gaps persist in reading and mathematics. The gap is also present in our 2012 SY Four and Five Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate, with FARMS students failing to reach 70 percent. This is mirrored in the dropout rate with FARMS students twice as likely to drop out of school. Our responses later outline our ongoing interventions, which include after-school programs, integration of engaging technology, and mentoring programs.

African American Males: As MSDE set a new baseline for African American academic performance due to the new code of "Two or more races," we enter into our second year tracking trend data. With that being stated, we still have a persistent double-digit gap between the performance of African American students and their white peers. This gap is seen at all grade levels of MSA and all HSA tests. This is also true for the Four and Five Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate, with African American males trailing all other students by more than 10 percent. This is mirrored in the dropout rate with African American students twice as likely to drop out of school. Our responses later outline our ongoing interventions, which include after-school programs, integration of engaging technology, and mentoring programs

English Language Learners: For the 2012-2013 school year, SMCPS has met AMAO I, II, and III yet double digit gaps persist for our English Language Learners (ELL) in reading and mathematics, as one might expect when students learning an additional language are held to the same standards as fluent English speakers.

Special Education: Students with disabilities comprise 9.7 percent of our population and accounted for 18.6 percent of those who were suspended out-of-school. Double digit gaps persist in reading and mathematics. Though this is the area where we have placed the greatest instructional effort, we as yet have seen little progress in student achievement. The greatest success SMCPS has had is with the most profoundly disabled students, as more than 95 percent of all special education students assessed using the ALT MSA have achieved proficiency.

SUMMARY

The 2014 school year will see St. Mary's County Public Schools focusing on what matters most – moving our students forward to the goal of graduating college and career ready. We will do this by having assessment data drive our decisions and applying creative and persistent solutions for students who historically struggle. We will harness technology to engage students in the classroom and extend their learning beyond the traditional four walls of the school.

We will do this as we move more deeply the new Maryland Common Core State Curriculum (MCCSC). We will continue to refine our assessments and reconsider what we are asking students to learn and demonstrate. New baselines will be set as we tether student achievement to teacher evaluation. And all our efforts will be bound by the Race to the Top Assurances and Scopes of Work we developed in SY 2011.