Executive Summary

I.A

Instructions:

The Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act in accordance with the Annotated Code of Maryland §5-401, Annotated Code of Maryland §7-203.3, and the 2016 Maryland General Assembly Legislation House Bill 999, Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, requires LEAs to develop and submit a 2016 annual update to the comprehensive master plan to the Department for review. In alignment with the Annotated Code of Maryland § 5-401, Annotated Code of Maryland §7-203.3, House Bill 999, and the Maryland State Board of Education's vision to create a world class system to prepare all students for college and career, the comprehensive master plan annual update should include goals, objectives, and strategies to promote academic excellence among all students.

Reported strategies are to address any disparities in achievement for students requiring special education services, as defined in §5-209 of the Education Article, students with limited English proficiency, as defined in §5-208 of the Education Article and students failing to meet, or failing to make progress towards meeting State performance standards. In the absence of State performance standards, LEAs are required to report on any segment of the student population that is, on average, performing at a lower achievement level than the student population as a whole.

School systems are encouraged to craft the Executive Summary in a way that is meaningful and purposeful to their stakeholders and school community. The Executive Summary should serve as a stand-alone document that summarizes progress that the LEA is making in accelerating student performance and eliminating achievement gaps, as described throughout the master plan annual update. Only specified reporting requirements noted in this guidance should be included in this Executive Summary.

The Executive Summary shall include a budget narrative section that provides a detailed summary of the fiscal climate in the LEA. The budget narrative section should also describe any changes in demographics and the fiscal climate, along with a discussion of the effect of these changes on the LEA and Master Plan implementation.

The following is a suggested outline for the Executive Summary:

I.   Introduction

II.   Budget Narrative
   a. Fiscal Outlook, changes in demographics
   b. Impact of changes on the school system and the master plan goals and objectives
   c. Responses to clarifying questions (Section 1.B – Finance)

III. **Goal Progress**
- a. **Maryland's Goals, Objectives, and Strategies Regarding Performance of:**
  - i. Students requiring special education services;
  - ii. Students with limited English proficiency;
  - iii. Students failing to meet, or failing to make progress towards meeting State performance standards. In the absence of State performance standards, LEAs are required to report on any segment of the student population that is, on average, performing at a lower achievement level than the student population as a whole.

- b. **Strategies to Address any Discrepancies in Achievement of:**
  - i. Students failing to meet, or failing to make progress towards meeting State performance standards. In the absence of State performance standards, LEAs are required to report on any segment of the student population that is, on average, performing at a lower achievement level than the student population as a whole.

IV. **Assessment Administered Requirement**
- a. The requirements of §7-203.3 of Education Article for each assessment administered, the LEA must provide the following information:
  - ▪ The title of the assessment;
  - ▪ The purpose of the assessment;
  - ▪ Whether the assessment is mandated by a local or state entity;
  - ▪ The grade level or subject area, as appropriate, to which the test is administered;
  - ▪ The testing window of the assessment; and
  - ▪ Whether accommodations are available for students with special needs and what accommodations are.

Executive Summary

I. Introduction

Over the last two years, St. Mary's County Public Schools, like other districts in the State of Maryland, has administered the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment. During these two years, this assessment was administered as a no-fault test of student mastery of the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS). This year, with accountability for our results on the PARCC assessments, we looked closely at the areas which needed focus, and reflected upon our commitments that we introduced during the last school year.

Our mission statement has remained the same for the last decade, and its words are never truer:

<div align="center">

Know the learner and the learning,
expecting excellence from both.

Accept no excuses, educating all with
rigor, relevance, respect, and positive relationships.

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Coupled with our mission statement are our commitments. These commitments are the bedrock of our work. They are defined by: our commitments to students, our commitments to staff, our commitments to schools, our commitments to stakeholders, and our commitments to sustainability as we move forward over the next four years. The logo below captures how each individual element supports the others - with *students* in the center of all our work, supported by *staff, schools,* and *stakeholder*s - ultimately built upon a model of fiscal and organizational *sustainability*.

Commitments

St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) has made a commitment to work beyond the words we speak and to fully embrace the dedication to our students, staff, schools, and stakeholders. Last year we introduced these commitments, and we continue to work toward them. This year, we are not only emphasizing these commitments, but seeking to define evidence of these commitments in action.

- **Our commitment to students**
  is our focus on teaching and learning in order to support students in achieving their goals.

  1.1 Students have equitable access to rigorous and relevant learning.
  1.2 Students are engaged in learning experiences that meet their needs and interests.
  1.3 Students are safe and supported in their academic, social, and emotional growth.
  1.4 Student learning is aligned to nationally recognized standards.
  1.5 Student learning is measured in a fair, meaningful, and timely way.
  1.6 Student learning is designed to support students' preparation for a balanced lifestyle.

- **Our commitment to staff**
  is our engagement in and support of professional growth to meet the expectations of performance.

  2.1 Staff have a deep understanding of factors that impact learning.
  2.2 Staff are highly qualified, highly effective, and diverse.
  2.3 Staff are engaged in an open, trusting, and solution-oriented environment.
  2.4 Staff actively drive their learning and advancement.
  2.5 Staff are supported and accountable in meeting expectations for performance.
  2.6 Leadership is grown from within the school system.

- **Our commitment to schools**
  is to create and maintain safe, engaging, learning environments for our students and staff.

  3.1 Schools are well maintained, safe, and welcoming learning environments.
  3.2 Schools support the social and emotional safety and well being of students.
  3.3 School programs support the development of the whole child.
  3.4 Schools support learning, effectiveness, and efficiency.

- **Our commitment to stakeholders**
  is to inform and engage our parents and partners in the education of our children.

  4.1 Family and community members are welcomed as supportive partners.
  4.2 Two-way communication with stakeholders is open, honest, and timely.
  4.3 Partnerships anchor our schools and students to the community we serve.

The final set of commitment statements ties to the four areas above, with specific attention to ensuring that our work can carry forward.

- **Our commitment to sustainability**
  is to only invest in that which furthers our mission and is explicitly built into our budget.

  5.1 We invest in instructional resources.
  5.2 We invest in programs, experiences, and learning for students.
  5.3 We invest in technology to engage, educate, and communicate.
  5.4 We invest in our people.
  5.5 We invest in technology to enhance efficiency and further productivity.
  5.6 We invest in professional development, internal advancement, and growing our own.
  5.7 We develop long-range plans for the growing needs of our school system.
  5.8 We invest in our schools, classrooms, and work spaces.
  5.9 We invest in our system infrastructure.
  5.10 We invest in communication systems to tell our story.
  5.11 We develop and implement a budget that is understandable and transparent.
  5.12 We are responsible and accountable to our stakeholders.

Addressing Achievement Gaps

As is evidenced in these commitment statements, one can conclude that our work puts our students first, with a focus on equity, achievement, and the whole child. We recognize that student achievement does not simply come from academic support alone. To that end, we have redesigned school improvement to capture the tenets of educating the whole child, attending to their academic, social, and emotional development.

Aligning to the Maryland State Department of Education's vision to prepare all students for college and career, our goals, initiatives, and strategies consider all subgroups and specialized populations as we promote academic excellence. Persistent performance gaps are analyzed and addressed routinely for the system, for each school, and for each individual student. We have a variety of initiatives focused on teaching and learning to address these gaps. Specifically, we have identified a significant gap with all measurable data points (achievement, discipline, and attendance) between our economically disadvantaged students, minority students, special needs students, English Language Learners, and the rest of our population. SMCPS has experienced an increase in the number of students receiving free and reduced meals. The achievement gaps for our students living in poverty are persistent.

Coincident with our first commitment to staff, i.e., staff have a deep understanding of factors that impact learning (2.1), we have dedicated our professional development efforts throughout the year to address these needs. We are engaged in an on-going relationship with The Upside Down Organization to understand the impact of poverty on the brain and to learn, through professional development, what specific strategies can be used in the classroom to address this impact in order to maximize learning. Each month's leadership development seminar embeds an extensive look at teaching students who live in poverty, with site-based follow-up for each school as well as participate in a book study that addresses these challenges.

At the school level, principals work with their staff to develop a professional development plan consistent with the Whole Child approach, with specific attention to addressing the needs of students in

poverty. Leaders are responsible for putting into action strategies that are presented at the monthly seminars and leading the professional development plan at their site.

Understanding and intervening for our students who face challenges is our priority. This envelops our work across all areas, recognizing the impact chronic and acute stress has for our students on learning as well as behavior and that student attendance is critical to their school success.

The strategies articulated in the Goals and Objectives section of the Master Plan detail a rationale for each. The explanation of these strategies communicate the consistent approach to instruction, intervention, and support for students who are underperforming in the assessed areas.

Graduation Rate

Demonstrating our preparedness for students to be college and career ready has led to remarkable achievements in our graduation rate. The four-year cohort graduation rate continued to climb this past year, **94.3 percent** of the class of 2015. The new rate represents a continued increase over five years. At the same time, the four-year cohort dropout rate fell from 10.98 percent in 2010 to 4.1 percent in 2015. Both measures outpace the Maryland State Average.

The achievement of our students represents our work towards closing the achievement gap as graduation rates for all demographic groups have improved.
- **89%** of African American students graduated on time, an increase of **14.5%** over five years
- **94.3%** of Hispanic/Latino students graduated on time, an increase of **11%** over five years
- **>95%** of White/Caucasian students graduated on time, an increase of **10%** over five years
- The graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students has increased by **14.86%** over five years
- The graduation rate for special education students has increased by **24%** over five years

Our students are graduating college and career ready.
- 53.9 % of 2015 graduates were University System of Maryland (USM) completers
- 27.2% of 2015 graduates were Career and Technology (CTE) completers
- 17.9% of 2015 graduates met BOTH the USM and CTE completer requirements

Alignment to the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards

Over the last several years, SMCPS has fully embraced the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards/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. 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.

With the transition away from MSA and towards PARCC, the assessment schema has shifted to an emphasis on higher levels of thinking, reasoning, modeling, written expression, and conventions of language. Curriculum expectations will continue to focus on increasing the rigor and depth of assignments and the inclusion of writing in response to text across all curriculum areas. This focus emphasizes analytical and higher-level thinking and comprehension.

Furthermore, formative assessments used to drive targeted instruction will continue to be a focus in St. Mary's County Public Schools and will provide continuous measures of standard attainment as students move through the curriculum. Teacher teams are involved in ongoing professional development to lead the design of resources and providing professional development that centers on the shifts of the MCCRS as well as how to develop, analyze and then use Formative Assessments to plan and deliver their daily instruction.

Assessments for Learning

SMCPS has developed a balanced assessment plan to help guide teaching and learning. Through the use of formative and performance assessments, students can demonstrate their learning on an ongoing basis. Formative content assessment data helps to identify where students are and informs the design of instructional supports, interventions, or extensions based on where students need them most. Performance assessments across content areas are designed to offer students opportunities to apply the skills and knowledge of the curriculum. The assessments vary from content to content based on each one's standards and instruction.

Another key element in the SMCPS assessment plan is flexibility. While some county assessments are required to ensure consistency of expectations, others are offered as instructional resources for teachers to integrate as appropriate to meet the needs of their students and accommodate the schedule within which they are working. Therefore, testing windows are offered rather than rigid dates for giving an assessment. Another element of flexibility is offering the assessments through different means. Some are provided through a traditional paper/pencil administration, while others utilize an interactive online platform designed to mirror the PARCC assessment platform. Beyond those approaches, some performance assessments allow endless possibilities of how students can demonstrate their learning (e.g., through presentation, multi-media, etc.).

The purpose of assessment is to measure students' proficiency and learning in order to make instructional decisions. In that sense, assessment is a tool in the teacher's toolbox. Used appropriately, this tool is one of many used to design and build an (architectural masterpiece of learning). SMCPS also utilizes the Performance Matters/UNIFY data warehouse so that leadership and teachers alike can analyze all aspects of the assessments that students are given in order to provide focused individualized feedback and instruction. Active, problem-based learning, and critical thinking are key elements that guide the work in designing the blueprints for each class and its daily instruction.

Data EdCamps for Instructional Decision Making

In reviewing summative assessment data, SMCPS leadership employed the professional development model of EdCamps to review data and allow for differentiated, individually guided professional dialogue for each school team. The overarching objective of our EdCamp series was to build the capacity of our building leaders with regards to the 2016 PARCC Performance Data that had been shared with each LEA in July 2016. Using the framework of our Data EdCamps, system leaders assisted administrators and teacher leaders in unpacking the disaggregated PARCC data in a way that was meaningul to all stakeholders, which would include principals, teachers, parents, and even students. The goal was to review the lagging 2016 PARCC Data with respect to the following four data buckets and help schools create data teams moving forward into School Year 2016-2017: (1) System; (2) School; (3) Content; (4) Classroom.

System leaders utilized the aggregated and disaggregated PARCC English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics data to analyze trends in both System and School PARCC performance through the dual lens of proficiency and growth, respectively. Coupled with our local data warehouse (i.e., Performance Matters/UNIFY), the system was able to help schools truly analyze student PARCC performance via PARCC Levels (i.e., Level 1 through Level 5) over two years worth of data. Additionally, the system was also able to report out the associated correlations with our local system assessments from the 2015-2016 school year with various PARCC performance in each respective grade/course.

The EdCamp series continued throughout the early fall with a focus on trends of the 2016 PARCC data with respect to each school's and the overall system's Content and Classroom performance.   By triangulating the Content Standards Report; the Evidence Statement Analysis Report with the PARCC Blueprints/Informational Guides for each grade/course (for both ELA and Math), the system wanted to ensure that school leaders had the requisite capacity to take such information back to their schools so as to establish a healthy and substantive data culture in each building for the 2016-2017 school year. Undoubtedly, the common denominator throughout the series of our data EdCamps was to emphasize the various sub-claims for both ELA and Mathematics, which in turn helped to validate that the PARCC Assessment plays a vital instructional role for our students.

Standards Based Report Cards

At the elementary school level, we continue our work in transitioning to a standards-based report card to provide students and families with feedback specific to student progress on the MCCR standards. This year, students in gr. Pre-K through 2 are receiving a standards based report card. The standards-based report card articulates student progress toward mastery of the identified MCCRS standards for the grade level. Through this process, parents, students and teachers will more clearly understand what is expected, and parent and teachers are better able to work together to guide students, helping them to be successful. Families have been provided with a great deal of information to support their understanding of their child's progress. Next year, third grade will use a standards based report card, with fourth grade the following year. In the 2019-2020 school year, fifth grade will transition to the standards based report card, which will complete the elementary grades.

Virtual Learning and Recovery

St. Mary's County Public Schools continues in its partnership with America's Promise Alliance and Apex Learning® to provide comprehensive digital curriculum to students at all of our high schools. This three-year partnership has resulted in the implementation of programs for remediation, credit recovery, unit recovery, supplemental courses, Advanced Placement, and summer school. The program at each of our high schools includes a dedicated teacher running a resource room each period of the day, where students can complete work, receive tutoring, and monitor their graduation plan.

Middle School Task Force

In alignment with our work toward the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS), we continue to work to better our current practice. Last year, a Middle School Task Force (MSTF) was formed comprised of community, staff, middle school leadership, and sought student input. Subcommittees researched and provided their proposals of both short-term pilot recommendations and long-term recommendations. These proposals went into effect this year. Pilots and recommendations included expanding opportunities for students such as more Gifted and Talented options and engaging the whole middle school student through whole school enrichment activities and teaching social/organizational skills within the school day.

Behavioral Supports and Interventions

The Code of Conduct for St. Mary's County Public Schools is designed to reflect a discipline philosophy based on the goals of fostering, teaching, and acknowledging positive behavior. Additionally, we recognize the critical need to keep students connected to school so that they may graduate college and career ready. To this end, we have reviewed our discipline practices to coincide with the statewide guidance on discipline, emphasizing the effort to provide intervention and positive reinforcement through a multi-tier system of supports

Numerous Tier 2 interventions have been implemented this year to assist with challenging behaviors in an effort to not rely on out-of-school suspensions. Interventions include *Zones of Regulation*, *Check and Connect*, *Check In Check Out*, mentoring, and morning meetings. *Second Step* and *Steps to Respect* are the primary curricula used for teaching social and emotional learning. Fourteen schools are actively involved with Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.

SMCPS has partnered with the Education Association of St. Mary's County (EASMC) and the National Education Association (NEA) organization to provide professional development for staff in restorative practices. Each secondary school is working to develop a plan based on an understanding of the restorative practices model and addressing student behaviors in proactive ways. At the elementary level, schools have taken on the Responsive Classroom model, which builds upon this same premise of relationships, clear expectations, and a proactive approach.

The Student Conduct Committee meets this year to evaluate the effectiveness of the Student Code of Conduct, recommend revisions for policies, and recommend interventions to assist schools to move forward, as well as reduce disproportionality. Ongoing data analysis occurs at each meeting. The

committee includes the superintendent, deputy superintendent, administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members.

Fulfilling our Commitments

St. Mary's County Public Schools has made a commitment to our students, staff, schools, and stakeholders. Our commitment is our mission: Know the learner and the learning, expecting excellence in both - Accepting no excuses, educating ALL with rigor, relevance, respect, and positive relationships. These just aren't words, they are beliefs that drive our work. They are the very purpose to which we dedicate ourselves each day. As we embark on the 2016-2017 school year - and beyond - we commit to providing our students with opportunities and supports to prepare for the world beyond the walls of our classrooms. They are the reasons for our work. Our Students. Our Future.