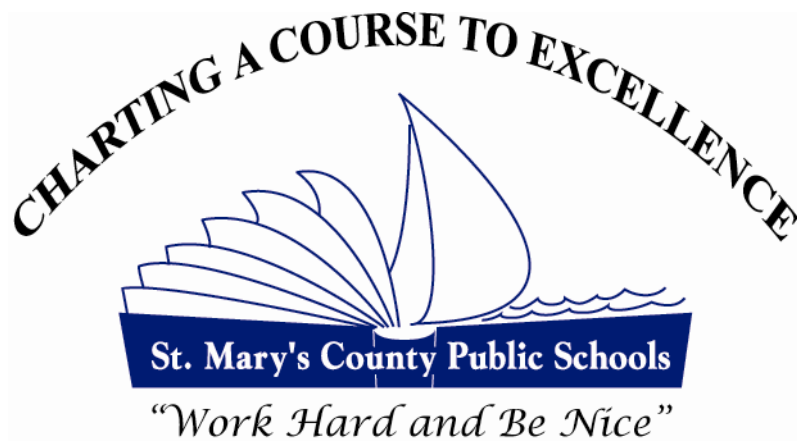


St. Mary's County Public Schools

Bridge to Excellence Master Plan 2012 Annual Update

Part I



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Integration of Race to the Top with Maryland's Bridge to Excellence Master Plan

Authorization

Section 5-401, *Comprehensive Master Plans*, Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland
Public Law 111-5, *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*

Introduction

Beginning in 2011, Maryland integrated the Race to the Top (RTTT) Local Scopes of Work with the existing Bridge to Excellence Master Plan (BTE) and reviewed and approved the Scopes of Work within the Master Plan review infrastructure in accordance with RTTT and BTE guidelines. The purpose of this integration was to allow Maryland's Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to streamline their efforts under these programs to increase student achievement and eliminate achievement gaps by implementing ambitious plans in the four RTTT reform areas. This integration also enabled the Maryland State Department of Education to leverage personnel resources to ensure that all Scopes of Work receive comprehensive programmatic and fiscal reviews.

Background

In 2002, the Maryland General Assembly enacted the *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act*. This legislation provides a powerful framework for all 24 school systems to increase student achievement for all students and to close the achievement gap. The *Bridge to Excellence* legislation significantly increased State Aid to public education and required each LEA to develop a comprehensive Master Plan, to be updated annually, which links school finance directly and centrally to decisions about improving student learning. By design, the legislation requires school systems to integrate State, federal, and local funding and initiatives into the Master Plan. Under Bridge to Excellence, academic programming and fiscal alignment are carefully monitored by the Master Plan review process.

In August 2010, Maryland was awarded one of the Race to the Top (RTTT) education grants. The grant provided an additional \$250 million in funds over four years and will be used to implement Maryland's Third Wave of Reform, moving the State from national leader to World Class. Local RTTT Scopes of Work have been developed by Maryland school systems and are closely aligned with the overall State plan to guide the implementation of educational reforms. In 2012, local Scopes of Work were integrated and reviewed as part of the BTE Master Plan.

In May 2012, the United States Department of Education approved Maryland's application for flexibility from some of the long-standing requirements of No Child Left Behind. The flexibility waiver is intended to support the education reform already underway through programs like Race to the Top. The Master Plan has been adjusted to address the demands of Maryland's new accountability structure.

2012 Master Plan Annual Update

(Include this page as a cover to the submission indicated below.)

Master Plan Annual Update Part I

Due: October 15, 2012

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

Address: 23160 Moakley Street, Leonardtown, Maryland 20650

Local Point of Contact: Mrs. Linda J. Dudderar, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction

Telephone: 301-475-5511 ext 108

E-mail: ljdudderar@smcps.org

WE HEREBY CERTIFY that, to the best of our knowledge, the information provided in the 2012 Annual Update to our Bridge to Excellence Master Plan is correct and complete and adheres to the requirements of the Bridge to Excellence and Race to the Top programs. 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.

***Only participating LEAs need to complete the Race to the Top Scopes of Work documents that will now be a part of the Master Plan.**



**Signature of Local Superintendent of Schools
or Chief Executive Officer**

10/15/12

Date



Signature of Local Point of Contact

10.15.12

Date

Local Planning Team Members

Use this page to identify the members of the school system's Bridge to Excellence/Race to the Top planning team. Please include affiliation or title where applicable.

| Name | Affiliation/Title |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Mrs. Linda J. Dudderar | Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, BTE Point of Contact |
| Mr. Gregory V. Nourse | Assistant Superintendent of Fiscal Services and Human Resources |
| Mrs. Melissa B. Charbonnet | Exec. Director of Special Education |
| Mr. James C. Corns, Jr. | Director of Informational Technology |
| Mrs. Regina H. Greely | Director of Instructional Technology |
| Mrs. Kelly M. Hall | Exec. Director of Elementary Education and Title I |
| Dr. Charna Lacey | Diversity/Equity Specialist |
| Dr. Jeffrey A. Maher | Exec. Director of Teaching, Learning, and Professional Development |
| Dr. Charles E. Ridgell, III | Director of Student Services |
| Mr. J. Scott Smith | Exec. Director of Secondary Schools and School Improvement |
| Mr. Dale P. Farrell | Coordinating Supervisor of Human Resources |
| Mrs. Rhonda K. Meleen | Coordinator of Fiscal Services |

Section A: Executive Summary

I.A

INTRODUCTION

In June 2012, St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) graduated the largest number of students *ever*. More than 1,200 seniors walked across the stage, shook hands with their Superintendent, and embarked upon their post-secondary journey. Most will enter two- or four-year colleges or begin technical training programs, while others will serve our country or start full-time employment.

To get these young men and women to this milestone, SMCPS embraced the mantra, “*whatever it takes*.” Teachers worked with students before and after school, counselors poured over transcripts and college applications, coaches worked with scouts and recruiters, administrators marshaled resources to offer online credit recovery, and community partners mentored students one-on-one. All the adults pulled together and tirelessly supported our children. We could not be more proud of our students and of those who helped them along their paths.

“Whatever it takes” became our fundamental response and bedrock principle when dealing with our students and working to meet their ever-evolving needs.

- What will we do when teacher evaluation is coupled with student achievement? *Whatever it takes*.
- What will we do when the Common Core State Standards must be fully implemented and assessed in a meaningful manner? *Whatever it takes*.
- What will we do to make sure that all of our students earn a high school diploma and that their diploma means they are college- and career-ready? *Whatever it takes*.

Whatever It Takes ... to Have Educator Evaluation Mirror Student Achievement

In the spring of 2011, St. Mary's County Public Schools volunteered to become one of the Maryland counties developing and piloting an educator-effectiveness evaluation system that based half of the final rating on student performance. This was driven by the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) need to comply with the United States Department of Education's (USDE) mandate that all teacher evaluation be 50% dependent on student growth by the 2013–2014 school year. While agencies much larger and more influential than SMCPS argued about the validity of this practice, we focused on improving education by centering on student achievement.

As we have always been a data-driven system—using student performance to drive instructional decisions—we knew we had a great deal of historical expertise to utilize during this development process. We also knew that we would prefer to design a system

ourselves to meet our students' needs, rather than rely on an outside agency to develop a tool and mandate its use.

To that end, we began by identifying five schools to pilot the program: three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. We engaged in detailed discussions with *all* of the teachers about what data we gather and how we can use it to predict performance, deliver intervention, and move achievement ever upward. This effort rewarded us with a wealth of information about all the work that is going on in all of our classrooms—from Pre-K to senior English. It also demonstrated that there is no simple way of capturing all of this data and distilling it into a simple number or rating. We ended our first round of teacher sessions with four concrete conclusions:

1. Teachers can reach and teach students in front of them; habitually truant students should not be included in teacher effectiveness calculations.
2. Teachers want recognition for student growth and acknowledgment for interventions and support given—even if the student misses the goal set.
3. Teaching assignments are different and data used must be appropriate to the course and the students taught.
4. Multiple and varied measures are essential for authentic assessments; one test should never determine achievement or effectiveness.

These four absolutes governed the rest of our work for 2012 as we developed “Domain 5, Student Performance.” This new domain will contain five different components and 16 elements that will chronicle our teachers' excellent work with their students—all of which will be underpinned by achievement data.

For the 2012–2013 school year, all of our teachers will pilot this new domain and work with their administrators to refine this powerful tool. Throughout this process, we recognize that the relationships between students and their teachers and teachers and their administrators underpin everything. Respect for the teacher and all the effort, dedication, and determination that goes into educating children is paramount. This is coupled with the foundational belief that everyone—including students, teachers, and administrators—is accountable for the success or failure of the children in our charge.

Whatever It Takes ... to Fully Move to the Maryland Common Core State Standards

In the summer of 2011 and 2012, each school in SMCPs sent a team of teachers and administrators to the Educator Effectiveness Academies (EEA) hosted by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The purposes for the EEAs were to introduce the Maryland Common Core State Standards, develop an understanding of their scope, make attendees familiar with the educational tools being developed by MSDE, and to develop and implement lessons aligned to the new standards.

For the 2011–2012 school year, SMCPs closely followed each school's Educator Effectiveness Action (EEA) plan as they educated staff, students, and stakeholders about the Maryland Common Core State Standards and the implications for instructional pacing

and academic rigor. Support for the curriculum transition was distributed across all levels of the school system—from the Division of Instruction, to the individual schools, the teacher teams, and, finally, the classroom. Each level had identified expectations and responsibilities for the transition. They were as follows:

SMCPS Central Office Support

- Curriculum mapping for transitional content
- Piloting transitional assessment items
- Providing non-fiction text resources
- Professional development

School Support

- Implementing EEA plans
- Coordinating collaborative planning for department, content, and grade-level teams
- Participating in online modules provided by MSDE

Instructional Team Support

- Developing quarterly performance tasks
- Performing data analysis of benchmark assessments
- Reviewing student work for rigor, relevance, and higher-order thinking
- Collaborative team planning

Teacher Support

- Understanding Common Core
- Embedding analytical reading and writing in instruction
- Promoting problem-solving and independence

Through each level, SMCPS identified three common learning expectations. SMCPS expects that all students will do the following:

- Demonstrate independence and perseverance
- Construct arguments, comprehend, critique, and support with evidence
- Use resources, strategies, and tools to demonstrate strong content knowledge

For the 2012–2013 school year, SMCPS took this all one step farther and incorporated the Educator Effectiveness Academy (EEA) Outcomes into our annual School Improvement Plan (SIP) template. Each school’s 2013 SIP is organized around the EEA Outcomes for English/Language Arts, Mathematics, STEM, and the Literacy Standards across all contents. With this concrete combination of School Improvement and the Outcomes from the EEA, we are confident that all staff, students, and stakeholders will actively participate in the migration to the new Maryland Common Core State Standards and understand the rationale behind this new, rigorous curriculum.

Whatever It Takes ... to Have All Students Graduate College- and Career-Ready with Their Peers

The culmination of all our efforts occurs on three special evenings in June. Decked out in flowing robes, sporting their school colors with a mortar board and tassel perched on their heads, our seniors anxiously await the sound of their name being called so they can walk up to receive their diploma and begin the transition to the next great stage of their lives.

The ultimate measure for any school system is how many students successfully complete four years of high school, meet all graduation requirements, and leave their school system ready for whatever lies ahead. In 2010, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) introduced their new “4-Year Adjusted Cohort” graduation rate—and SMCPS recorded an 82.76%. In 2011, we did slightly better, with 83.66% of our students graduating from high school in four years. While this percentage exceeded the Maryland state average and would be envied by other systems across the nation, our Superintendent was not satisfied.

SMCPS had taken a long, hard look at what was preventing students from completing high school and, in 2009, set about shutting down failed practices and promoting new initiatives to support struggling students. That year, we closed an alternative learning program, zero-based the staff, and reopened a new academy called Fairlead. Its mission was to enroll 60 rising freshman students identified as those most likely to drop out of high school by their middle school teachers, counselors, and administrators. The Fairlead Academy provided these students with immersive, supported classrooms where they benefited from a 10-to-1 student-to-teacher ratio. The classrooms were outfitted with cutting-edge instructional technologies and professional development was provided to the teachers to maximize its impact. A dedicated counselor worked with students and supporting services encircled the entire program. There was no magical “secret ingredient” to the program—just the unflagging belief that “all children can and will learn” and a dedicated staff who refused to give up on kids. In June 2012, the inaugural cohort of the Fairlead Academy posted an 84% “4-Year Adjusted Cohort” graduation rate. When the remaining active students complete their requirements in 2013, the “5-Year Adjusted Cohort” graduation rate will be 90%. Each year we have added another cohort to the Fairlead Academy and it now serves over 200 students.

Fairlead is just one bright star in the constellation of achievements garnered by the class of 2012. As a group, they have posted an 89.2% “4-Year Adjusted Cohort” graduation rate—the highest rate ever recorded in St. Mary’s County and 5.5% higher than the previous year’s rate. For the teachers and support staff working in the schools—interacting daily with students, tirelessly supporting their work, and persistently driving our school system forward—this is the greatest validation that what we are doing is working for all of the students of St. Mary’s County Public Schools.

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 345 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 315 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. After the 2011–2012 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 15:1 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. Over 260 students are 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 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 over 130 students. 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 an additional Global and International Studies course. Additional credits for high school graduation, Advanced Placement courses, 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 2012, our average class size was 19.6 in Pre-K; 21.5 in Kindergarten; 22.5 in grades 1 and 2; 23.8 in grades 3–5; 21.8 in middle schools, and 22.6 in high schools. Our projected 4-Year Adjusted Cohort graduation rate will exceed 89%.

Fiscal Outlook

For FY 2012, SMCPS realized a net asset decrease of \$11.1 million. The major components of which were an increase in our net OPEB obligation of \$6.1 million and usage of \$3.4 million of fund balance. Our unassigned fund balance fell to \$4.7 million and our OPEB obligation increased to \$25 million. We have budgeted another \$1 million to balance our general fund budget for FY 2013. Interest rates continue to remain at record lows, which prevents us from earning anything significant on our investments, while the banking sector continues to increase fees—essentially offsetting any interest income. Health insurance premiums continue to be a challenge, although we have implemented a more main stream PAYGO system with our current provider for FY 2013, as well as offering a new health insurance package to our employees that we hope will keep fee increases at bay for both the Board and staff for the next year or so. Most of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding was spent out in 2011 with some residual funds finishing in 2012. The loss of ARRA funding from 2011 was essentially picked up by our fund balance in 2012. The 2013 budget represents our efforts to deal with this “funding cliff” without relying on fund balance, which is essentially dried up. The county increased its funding to us by \$8.6 million over FY 2012 with \$2.5 million designated for the pension shift, \$2.6 million designated for OPEB, and the remainder to be used to balance our operating costs.

Climate Changes

Funding for the retirement of staff members currently enrolled in the Teacher’s Pension System is now being pushed back to the local school systems starting in 2013. Time will tell how the shifting of revenues, MOE, and other things will impact us for this new requirement, but in the long run we expect this to be a burden for the LEAs and county governments. The costs of fossil fuels can rise at any time and those costs will be passed on to the school system and impact LEAs very heavily in their transportation budgets.

This pass through cost also holds true for most of our utility fees. The State of Maryland continues to struggle with its budget. Federal ARRA, RTTT, and other programs are offering some financial relief, but only for a short time period and all have a “fund cliff” to contend with. The long-term economic health of the State will severely impact all the school systems within Maryland, including SMCPs.

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 2013

Standards and Assessments: Our most concrete work to date was over the summer of 2012 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. Two additional days (one in August and one in September) were provided to all teachers with career-based professional development as follow-up for the transition to CCSS. Our goal this year is to have all teachers transitioning to 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 over 2,000 laptops across our four middle schools and selected elementary schools. Our goal is to maintain our 3-to-1 ratio of computers to students—with a move to mobile computing technology. Coupled with this purchase, all our schools will be connected to the internet with a fiber connection so that digital content can be delivered without service interruption. To achieve this, we are making all buildings wireless, 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 upcoming year will be done as we pilot the teacher evaluation system and a leadership evaluation system that places half of its emphasis on student growth. All schools will be participating in the pilot. All teachers are included in the pilot regardless of evaluation cycle or instructional assignment. All administrators are included in the pilot. The difficult work now will be to mine testing data from several sources and field test the data to see if it really matches what is happening in the classroom and the observation data we will continue to gather.

Turning Around Lowest Achieving Schools: As MSDE implements the new rules governing school improvement and moves from Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) 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.”

Maryland’s Accountability System Components

Reading: Across grades 3–5, SMCPs posted stable results for 2012, with 87.5% of students proficient or advanced in grade 3, 91.2% in grade 4, and 92.6% in grade 5. These results varied slightly from 2011. In grade 6, proficient and advanced scores rose to 85.4%, yet dipped in grade 7 to 81.4% and 83.3% in grade 8.

Mathematics: Across grades 3–5, SMCPs posted enviable results for 2012, with 92.6% of students proficient or advanced in grade 3, 92.2% in grade 4, and 91.4% in grade 5. These results mirrored 2011 results. In grades 6 and 7, proficient and advanced scores declined to 87% and 81.0% respectively. Grade 8 rose 2% to 81.3%.

Science: The average overall score for student performance on the grade 5 Science MSA rose in 2012 by 3.3% to 80.0%. This score placed SMCPs seventh in the state. In grade 8, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced rose by 0.9% to 81.6. This score places SMCPs eighth in the state.

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-K 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 FY2012, 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 2012–2013 school year, St. Mary’s County Public Schools will provide 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, SMCPs 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 2012–2013 school year, SMCPs has hired a Diversity Specialist to lead 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 2012–2013 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.

English Language Learners: Pending.

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 2011–2012 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, 90% were fully ready for school; a significant gain from 70% 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: The Program of Acceleration, Challenge, and Talent Development (PAC-TD) 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-K and progress through the Junior Great Books program, and the William and Mary curriculum units for Reading/Language Arts. The 2012–2013 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. SMCPS continues to evaluate and revise course options for students at the secondary level, beginning with Pre-Algebra in grade 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. Prerequisites 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 2011–2012 school year 4- and 5-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate, with FARMS students failing to reach 70%. 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,” it is not possible to track 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 4- and 5-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate, with African American males trailing all other students by more than 10%. 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 2011–2012 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 10.7% of our population and accounted for 17.6% of those who were suspended out-of-school. Grade 7 Special Education students achieved a 59.8% proficiency on MSA Mathematics, up 4.7 percentage points from the previous year. 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% of all special education students assessed using the ALT MSA have achieved proficiency.

SUMMARY

Whatever It Takes

The 2012–2013 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 transition from the current Maryland State Curriculum to the new Maryland Common Core State Curriculum (MCCSC). We will 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.

Creating a Sense of Unity

So that we may all equally own this new curriculum and demonstrated student mastery of its content, we are instituting greater achievement accountability for our teachers and principals. For the 2012–2013 school year, we are piloting an evaluation system that places half of the annual rating on the performance of students. Communication and an open collaborative process has resulted in an evaluation system that respects the effort of educators, understands the intent of instruction, and ultimately weighs both against the evidence of learning gathered annually.

We are all in this together and we are all committed to doing whatever it takes.

I.B

Finance Section

Revenue and Expenditure Analysis

1. Did actual FY2012 revenue meet expectations as anticipated in the Master Plan Update for 2011?

St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) realized a lower than expected revenue for state, federal, and other local revenue, but a higher than anticipated fund balance for FY2012, which increased our net revenue base by 2%. The fund balance increase was the result of cost reduction measures and initiatives that did not compromise classroom instruction.

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.

Standards and Assessments

Under this reform area the SMCPS Race to the Top allocation was lower than anticipated by \$190.25 due to the difference between projected and actual costs for EEA.

For IDEA Part B – Grants to States-Pass-Through (84.391) St. Mary's County Public Schools spent \$158,743.17 less than anticipated in this area. The costs for educational assessment tools and hourly support staff were less than anticipated. From the time the 2012 Master Plan data was submitted to actual implementation the reported budget amount changed along with the realignment of budgeted line items to reallocate resources in the support of complimentary initiatives.

Data Systems to Support Instruction

St. Mary's County Public Schools spent \$6,649.53 less of IDEA Part B – Grants to States-Pass-Through (84.391) funding on the desktop computers for the support of intervention and monitoring due to the difference between the anticipated price and the actual price.

The Race to the Top initiative supported data systems to support instruction with the purchase of a SAN server, wireless access, and Brocade infrastructure solutions. These solutions provide needed backbone and accessibility for our growing network. A robust infrastructure is a vital component to support students and teachers with curriculum-based technologies. St. Mary's County Public Schools did not spend the total amount allocated for FY2012 by \$92,692.07. However, this amount has been

expended in FY2013 to continue our technology plan of providing laptops to students and staff through a leasing contract.

Great Teachers and Leaders

St. Mary's County Public Schools spent more on unrestricted recruitment, retention, and orientation of professional staff by \$55,752.11. SMCPS increased efforts to attract highly qualified teachers through varying recruiting initiatives while increasing teacher retention efforts through professional development and personnel support.

St. Mary's County Public Schools spent less of IDEA Part B – Grants to States-Pass-Through (84.391 and 84.392) funding for intervention materials and professional development due to the cost of providing needed support not being as originally calculated. From the time the 2012 Master Plan data was submitted to actual implementation the reported budget amount changed along with the realignment of budgeted line items to reallocate resources in the support of complimentary initiatives.

Turning Around the Lowest Achieving Schools

St. Mary's County Public Schools spent more on this reform area as actual need was identified throughout the fiscal year for IDEA Part B – Grants to States-Pass-Through funding (84.391 and 84.392). Additional assistive technologies, physical therapy, audiology, and deaf education supplies and materials were purchased.

Mandatory Cost of Doing Business

St. Mary's County Public Schools expended a net of \$750,037.43 more in mandatory cost of doing business due to an increase of contractual agreements for salaries and benefits from the reinstatement of three furlough days which were in the original FY2012. Other areas realized a decrease in spending due to cost saving measures, stabilization of diesel fuel costs, lower than anticipated heating fuel cost due to a mild winter, and a decrease in Special Education non-public placements by implementing intervention initiatives.

St. Mary's County Public Schools also utilized available funding from IDEA Part B (84.391 and 84.392) to offset restricted salaries and fixed charges. From the time the 2012 Master Plan data was submitted to actual implementation the reported budget amount changed along with the realignment of budgeted line items to reallocate resources in the support of complimentary initiatives. The relief provided by the reallocation of salaries and fixed charges helps to support the identified needs of our student population.

Other

St. Mary's County Public Schools had a decrease in other planned costs due to cost savings measures, unexpended restricted fund allocations, and a reduction in property and liability insurance premiums due to decreased claims.

St. Mary's County Public Schools also utilized available funding from IDEA Part B (84.391) to offset administrative cost by allocating \$90,037 to business support.

3. Please describe what the influx of flexible ARRA SFSF funds has allowed the school system to accomplish this year, regardless of whether or not the SFS funds were directly used to fund an initiative.

St. Mary's County Public Schools expended all ARRA SFSF funds by June 30, 2011.

4. If the State Fiscal Stabilization (SFS) funds were used for specific construction projects, please provide a list of the specific construction projects.

Not applicable.

5. Please describe, if applicable, one-time uses of SFSF funds. Include individual activities and corresponding resource allocations in your description. Since the SFSF funds have expired, is there a need for a plan of sustainability. If so, please briefly describe the plan.

St. Mary's County Public Schools utilized ARRA SFSF funds for one-time expenditures of Special Education Non-Public placements, payment of school bus contractors, electricity, employee tuition assistance, and Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB).

6. Please describe the steps that the school system proposes to take to permit students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries to overcome barriers that impeded access to, or participation in, a program or activity.
 - Improve student achievement for ALL students. Work to eliminate the achievement gap for all identified groups of students. Ensure that all subgroups meet Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO). Implement Educational Pathways.
 - Ensure that all learning environments are safe, orderly, nurturing, and healthy.
 - Teach EVERY child to read, on-grade level, by the beginning of grade 3.
 - Frequently monitor student progress (weekly, monthly, and quarterly) in READING and MATH.

- Develop and utilize local assessments that align with state standards and exams.
 - Align Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments with the state standards with an emphasis on teaching for learning with high expectations for ALL students.
 - Increase student performance at the high school level through a focus on HSA's, increased participation in Advanced Placement (AP) courses with a score of 3 or higher on the AP exams, and participation on SATs.
 - Promote, recruit, and retain a quality and diverse workforce. Foster professional learning and leadership capacity of the entire workforce.
 - Strengthen partnerships with the community, businesses, military, and local colleges.
 - Expand the use of technology to increase student learning and to analyze our student data via our data warehouse and the Home Access Center.
 - Ensure that all students graduate and ensure that each child attends school every day.
 - Ensure that early childhood and after school programs are of high quality.
 - Develop intervention plans for students not meeting state standard and not performing on grade level in reading and math. Ensure that no schools are placed in school improvement status as defined by the State of Maryland.
 - Develop extensive and meaningful parent and community relationships and communicate regularly and often with all stakeholders. Promote a customer service approach.
 - Provide strong instructional leadership that is supported by ongoing professional development with a focus on knowing the curriculum, knowing the pedagogy and knowing the learner. Focus on continuous improvement and job embedded professional development.
7. How has the potential “funding cliff” impacted current discussions and subsequent decisions regarding the most effective use of ARRA funds?

Discussions regarding the “funding cliff” were central to the development of the FY 2013 operating budget and continue as we evaluate and formulate subsequent budgets. St. Mary’s County Public Schools utilized ARRA funds to lessen the major impact mandatory expenditures had on our system. This resulted in our ability to provide resources for instruction.

Race to the Top Monitoring Questions

1. Is a balance available in any project at the end of Project Year 2? If so, please provide the reason for the balance for each project.

Race to the Top Project Year 2 realized a balance of \$128,509.20 as of June 30, 2012. St. Mary's County Public Schools has allocated RTTT funds into two initiatives, Data Systems and Academies. The Data Systems initiative had a balance of \$92,692.07 as of June 30, 2012, which has already been expended to the planned computer lease contract for student and staff support. The Academies initiative had a balance of \$35,423.21, which remains unspent. SMCPS is submitting a budget amendment to reallocate this balance to the Data Systems initiative.

2. How did the availability of unused funds at the conclusion of Project Year 2 impact the LEA's planning for Project Year 3 and beyond?

The budget amendment for the Academies unused funds will enable SMCPS to enhance the Data Systems initiative by adding additional student/teacher laptops and enhancing instructional driven decision making with data analysis and reporting through Performance Matters.

3. What programmatic changes or accelerations have been made to ensure that activities and goals are met within the grant period?

SMCPS will amend RTTT Year 3 to expend all funds and will monitor the funding and amend as necessary to support instructional activities.

4. What will the LEA do differently in Project Year 3 as a result of lessons learned in implementing Project Year 2?

St. Mary's County Public Schools will continue to monitor and plan technology initiatives in the support of instructional goals.

5. Does the LEA anticipate any challenges in implementing Project Year 3? If so, please identify the challenges at the grant and project level, if applicable.

St. Mary's Public Schools does not anticipate any challenges in the implementation of Project Year 3. Close monitoring and completion of intended projects will ensure that all funds are utilized within the specified timeframe.

Race to the Top Scopes of Work

Section A: State Success Factors

St. Mary's County Public Schools believes that Race to the Top (RTTT) has provided us a unique opportunity to improve student outcomes. It is the catalyst for comprehensive statewide reform. In St. Mary's County, we have aligned our Scopes of Work to the four assurances of the state plan. The goals in each assurance will, in and of themselves, provide opportunities for profound change, but it is the integration of the goals across the assurances that provide a substantive change in the way business is done and, in turn, in the results produced.

Scope of Work to Support the MOU

St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) will adopt the Common Core State Standards, Common Core State Curriculum, and assessments; participate in the longitudinal database; adopt the statewide teacher and principal evaluation system; and foster equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals in the lowest-achieving schools.

SMCPS will adhere to all elements of the State Reform Plan contained in the MOU. Those elements are Standards and Assessment; Data Systems to Support Instruction, Great Teachers and Leaders; and Turning Around Our Lowest Achieving Schools.

St. Mary's County Public Schools will participate in the national and statewide evaluation of the Race to the Top program.

Scope of Work to Support the Education Reform Act

SMCPS will support moving tenure from two to three years; the creation by the state of a framework for a teacher and principal evaluation system that includes student learning and growth as a significant factor in the evaluation; and the study of the initiative to consider locally negotiated incentives for teachers and principals who work in our lowest-achieving schools.

(A)(1) Ambitious Goals

The state has set ambitious goals for our schools in the areas of NAEP, MSA, graduation, and college participation. SMCPS will adopt those ambitious goals and implement our action plan to assure that we meet them by 2020. We will create a plan that allows us to meet the interim goals established by 2014. These goals, when met, will assure that we have raised our proficiency rates, closed our achievement gaps, and increased graduation and college participation rates.

To further clarify our commitment to the MOU and the Education Reform Act, SMCPS will specifically do the following:

Action Plan: Section A

Goal(s):

- Adopt the Common Core State Standards and new assessments and equip teachers and leaders with a college-ready framework for their classrooms and schools.
- Provide even better linking of data systems to enable our schools to track students more closely, identify struggling and advanced students earlier, and provide educators with additional support to help struggling students catch up. We will work with our provider, *Performance Matters*, to assure a linkage to the state longitudinal data system to allow a seamless stream of information.
- Incorporate student academic growth into teacher and principal evaluations, professional development, and other human capital needs to enable principals to focus on teachers who need assistance and match up struggling students with highly effective teachers. This strategy will also help our Executive Officers do a better job of evaluating the performance of our principals.
- Coordinate academic and student support resources to our low-achieving schools to accelerate academic progress for students in these schools.
- Expand further STEM efforts to create new opportunities for students across the spectrum and, in many cases, give students a clear road map from high school to successful careers.

(A)((3) Demonstrate Significant Progress in Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps

SMCPS will put significant focus on the four assurances that are highlighted in the application. We will also continue our focus on STEM education and the integration of technology across our school system. We will study the possibility of moving world language options to the elementary level. A significant portion of our RTTT funding will be targeted to upgrading our technology infrastructure to support the enhancements and expectations that are a part of the state plan, particularly in Assurance C – Data Systems to Support Instruction. SMCPS will make significant improvements in our ability to provide blended web-based instruction and assessment in all 27 of our schools.

Maryland's Reform Plan is broad, comprehensive, and positioned to meet the ambitious goals established to raise achievement and close gaps. SMCPS is committed to the broad requirements of the MOU as well as the specific details in all of the state's proposals. We are committed to providing the necessary professional development in all areas of the plan to assure the proficiency of our teachers and leaders in implementing the plan.

Race to the Top Scopes of Work

Section B: Standards and Assessments

Section B: Standards and Assessments

Narrative: the narrative for Section B will describe the LEA's commitment to implementing the Common Core Standards and assessments. LEAs must identify all goals and all tasks/activities that will be implemented in year three to achieve the stated goal(s).

Action Plan: directions are included on pages 7-8

Common Standards and Common High-Quality Assessment

High quality, consistent standards drive high levels of student achievement. Maryland's transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) sets the bar for student achievement based on a rigorous set of expectations across content areas. Concomitantly, providing high quality formative and summative assessments measuring student proficiency is critical. Over the past seven years, St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) has implemented a robust assessment system through which professional learning communities examine student proficiencies to make instructional decisions. This assessment system includes a combination of summative assessments (e.g., state assessments, mid-course, and end-of-course tests) and formative assessments (e.g., local diagnostic and benchmark assessments). This assessment model aligns with the PARCC assessment framework that includes a summative assessment and "through" assessments at intervals throughout the year. Each of these measures of student proficiency is designed in alignment to our curriculum pacing guides, which are in turn fully aligned with Maryland's State Curriculum. Student proficiencies, item analyses, and comparative reports through our systemic data warehouse (*Performance Matters*) are available and used as collaborative instructional teams use this information to determine student interventions, flexible grouping, re-teaching, and redesigning instruction to ensure student mastery.

As Maryland has embraced the CCSS, instructional staff members from SMCPS have been active participants in the gap analysis for the state curriculum. SMCPS content leads are providing the professional development related to the Maryland Common Core State Curriculum Frameworks. Further, content leads are working to revise local curriculum documents and syllabi to align with CCSS expectations and pacing. As statewide reviews of curriculum takes place, content leads have determined gaps with materials of instruction. Local assessments will be evaluated in light of these standards and modeled after the MSDE guidance relative to both formative and summative assessment structures.

Transitioning to Enhanced Standards and Assessments

In our plan to support the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments, SMCPs is committed to the following:

- Implementing a roll-out plan for the standards together with all their supporting components;
- Furthering collaboration with institutions of higher education to align our high school exit criteria and the college entrance requirements with the new standards and assessments;
- Developing or acquiring, disseminating and implementing high-quality instructional materials and assessments to include formative and interim assessments;
- Developing or acquiring and delivering high-quality professional development to support the transition to new standards and assessments; and
- Engaging in other strategies that translate the standards and information from the assessments into classroom practice for all students including high-need students.

SMCPs continues to translate the standards into challenging and engaging curriculum, lesson plans, classroom projects and homework assignments. As a result of the Educator Effectiveness Academies (EEAs), teacher specialists representing the areas of mathematics, reading/English language arts, and STEM have convened several times to review transitional plans and to develop both curriculum resources and related professional development. Over the summers of 2011 and 2012, the staff who attended the EEA developed a focused list that set pedagogical priorities based on the 8 mathematical practices and the 7 capacities for literate individuals. These are:

Students will—

- Demonstrate independence, perseverance
 - Make sense of problems, demonstrating precision, stamina
- Construct arguments, comprehend, critique, and support with evidence
 - Use structure in responding to audience, purpose, and in problem solving
- Use resources, strategies, and tools to demonstrate strong content knowledge
 - Apply analytical thinking

Further, EEA teams developed a set of “look fors” for instructional walkthroughs. Using these look-fors, content supervisors work with the school’s instructional team to provide coaching and support. Across multiple grades and content areas, the curriculum documents were revised to match the CCSS for full implementation.

STEM

An integral component of SMCPS instructional pathways has been providing an integrated STEM curriculum. The STEM focus is evident in two ways: (1) SMCPS has implemented a STEM Academy, an educational pathway through which a cohort of students can participate in an articulated program of study grades 4–12; and (2) SMCPS has integrated “STEM for All” throughout all schools through the curriculum and instructional programs, as well as numerous co-curricular programs (e.g., robotics teams, Destination Imagination, Maryland Mathematics Engineering and Science Achievement (MESA) programs, and partnerships with the local military and engineering community). These programs and pathways have positioned SMCPS well for expanding career-ready and STEM initiatives guided by MSDE.

As a result of the Educator Effectiveness Academies (EEA), school teams have developed quarterly cross-disciplinary STEM performance tasks. These tasks are shared across the system online via our SharePoint portal. Throughout the year, these tasks are implemented and regular meetings with the STEM EEA representatives and instructional resource teachers review these tasks for possible revisions based on identified needs.

World Languages

Four years ago, SMCPS began implementing a Chinese world language program. This program now includes Chinese I, II, and III. SMCPS will study the initiative led by MSDE to consider World Language exploratory programs at elementary school.

In Conclusion

At the heart of any reform effort is the vital professional development to ensure staff members are ready and able to make necessary changes. MSDE has led comprehensive efforts to provide high quality professional development through Educator Effectiveness Academies involving teacher leaders and administrators. SMCPS has identified these leaders to participate and lead professional development across the system, prompting a groundswell of professional learning.