

# St. Mary's County Public Schools

## Bridge to Excellence Master Plan 2011 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 and continuing for the remainder of the Race to the Top (RTTT) grant period, Maryland will integrate the RTTT Local Scopes of Work with the existing Bridge to Excellence Master Plan (BTE) and will review and approve the Scopes of Work within the Master Plan review infrastructure in accordance with RTTT and BTE guidelines. The purpose of this integration is to allow Maryland's Local Education Agencies 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 enables 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 education grants. The grant is worth \$250 million 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 2011, local Scopes of Work will be integrated and reviewed as part of the BTE Master Plan.

## **New Master Plan Structure and Review**

To facilitate the integration of the BTE Master Plan and LEA Scopes of Work, the Master Plan Guidance, which is currently based on the five No Child Left Behind goals, has been reorganized to reflect the four RTTT reform areas. The No Child Left Behind goals – still integral to the Master Plan – are subsumed under the RTTT reform areas. Under the new Master Plan structure, local school systems will begin with an Executive Summary, which sets the stage by providing analysis of local data, highlighting academic and fiscal priorities, and summarizing local Scopes of Work under the four reform areas. The Executive Summary will be followed by sections for each reform area, each beginning with the Scope of Work narrative and detailed action plan accompanied by a detailed budget for the current implementation year. Included in each reform area section will be the local report on progress to the respective NCLB goal area.

A comprehensive review of all 24 systems' Master Plans occurs annually. The review process involves panelists from all 24 LEAs and from the Maryland State Department of Education. It requires all 24 systems to update the State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Schools on the effectiveness of federal grant programs, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds, and State Fiscal Stabilization Funds. In addition to the review of progress toward the NCLB goals, each system receives a separate financial technical review by the Maryland State Department Office of Finance to ensure fiduciary responsibility. Beginning in 2011, as part of the Master Plan review process, local Scopes of Work narratives, action plans, and respective budgets will receive the same level of intense review to ensure that the goals of BTE and RTTT are being met, the components of these programs are fully integrated, and to ensure fiscal accountability and responsibility. Ultimately, each local Master Plan must be reviewed by the State Board of Education and approved by the State Superintendent of Schools.

For 2011, the review of the local Scope of Work, which must align with Maryland's RTTT application, will focus on the approval of the narrative, action plan and budget for Year 2. Each local Master Plan and integrated Scope of Work will be unique based on the needs of the local school system.

**2011 Master Plan Annual Update**

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

**Master Plan Annual Update Part I**

**Due: November 22, 2011**

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

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

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**WE HEREBY CERTIFY** that, to the best of our knowledge, the information provided in the 2011 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**

11/17/11  
**Date**



**Signature of Local Point of Contact**

11/17/11  
**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.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation/Title</b>
Mrs. Linda J. Dudderar	Chief Academic Officer, BTE Point of Contact
Mr. Gregory V. Nourse	Chief of Fiscal Services and Human Resources
Mrs. Melissa B. Charbonnet	Exec. Director of Special Education
Mr. James C. Corns, Jr.	Director of Informational Technology
Mr. Theo L. Cramer	Director of College and Career Readiness / Principal (JAFCTC)
Mrs. Regina H. Greely	Director of Instructional Technology
Mrs. Kelly M. Hall	Director of Elementary Education, Title I, and the Judy Center
Dr. Jeffrey A. Maher	Director of Teaching, Learning, and Professional Development
Dr. Charles E. Ridgell, III	Director of Student Services
Mr. J. Scott Smith	Director of Secondary Schools and School Improvement
Mr. Dale P. Farrell	Supervisor of Human Resources
Mrs. Rhonda K. Meleen	Coordinator of Fiscal Services

## Section A: Executive Summary

### I.A

#### INTRODUCTION

In St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS), the third wave of educational reform has rolled upon our shores and shifted our sands. As a result, we find ourselves using many words beginning with the prefix "re." We have *reviewed* our work of the past ten years, *refocused* our curriculum, *refreshed* our commitment to teacher observation and evaluation, *refined* our data analysis systems, and *renewed* our relationship with our education association and community stakeholders. Our goal is to ride the wave of reform to its destination, rather than allowing it to crash over us. To accomplish this, we have actively sought participatory roles on the Maryland Council for Educator Effectiveness and volunteered to be one of seven Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to pilot a Performance Evaluation System for our teachers and principals that culls 50 percent of its value from student growth measures. Having a voice in both of these essential groups will allow us to redefine our work over the next year and reshape our vision for the future.

#### Refocus

All of our work has been underpinned by the Maryland State Curriculum, so as we transition to the Maryland Common Core State Curriculum (MCCSC), we must refocus our instructional maps, pacing guides, and assessments. There is a greater sense of urgency attached to this when we consider that all of our middle schools and several of our elementary schools failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for school year 2011, with special education being an area of notable difficulty. We have struggled with how to answer this question: "To what extent should we invest time and effort to remediate students for a curriculum we know will be heavily revised in the upcoming years?" Faced with dwindling resources and straddling the expectations of an outgoing curriculum weighed against the more rigorous standards of student mastery embedded in the MCCSC, we have decided to move boldly ahead by committing ourselves to Race to the Top and having each school fully embrace the MCCSC by implementing the Educator Effectiveness Transition Plans developed this summer during the Educator Effectiveness Academies (EEA), for this upcoming school year. These plans are an integral part of each school's annual improvement plan and have been the foundation of our orientation as teachers return to schools and students begin their work. Quarterly performance tasks, aligned to the common core and rich with interdisciplinary collaborative effort, will be assigned to each student. Their performance will be captured and analyzed using our data warehouse, Performance Matters II. This is our instructional focus for the upcoming school year.

## **Refresh**

The best news to come out of the Third Wave of Maryland Educational Reform is that much of what we have been doing for the past ten years aligns with the vision set forth by the state. We have been using Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* since 2001, when we adopted it as our primary observation and evaluation tool. Our teachers understand explicitly that great instruction comes thorough planning and preparation, a classroom environment conducive to learning, and instruction that is aligned, engaging, and flexible. They also value professional development defined by collaborative interaction with their peers and their stakeholders. All of this is predicated on constant communication and respect. These are the values that drive teaching and learning in St. Mary's County, and it is validating that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has chosen these four Danielson domains to represent 50 percent of teacher evaluation. Over the past year, we have presented our evaluation system to other educational agencies across both the state and the nation. We believe we have a model that, when followed with fidelity, yields the best instructional environment for both students and staff. For the upcoming school year, we will refresh our training sessions on those four domains with teachers, administrators, and supervisors to ensure that nothing is lost amid the rising clamor about testing and teacher effectiveness.

## **Refine**

In spite of all the positive steps we have taken, we realize that we can always do things better. To this end we will refine our data collection tools to examine student performance relative to teacher effectiveness. We will mine assessment data and the assignments given to students to make sure that all work has meaning and moves children to mastery. We have an online grade book that is closely monitored by students and parents, which we will use as the primary vehicle to communicate academic expectations and progress. We will pilot a fifth domain in five schools that evaluates student growth on summative assessments, formative assessments, performance tasks, attainment of goals, and classroom performance. This will eventually make up half of a teacher's or a principal's annual evaluation. Accomplishing this will require that hard work be done with all stakeholders at the table. To this end, we have held several meetings and convened a steering committee that is comprised of teachers, administrators, supervisors, and education association leadership. These bi-monthly meetings will ensure that all evaluative tools are balanced, supportive, and move us forward.

We will embrace this year of "re" and emerge stronger than ever before, as our work has never been more important. We will seize the opportunity to move beyond distractions and hone in on the essence of our work: *"Know the learning and the learner, expecting excellence in both—accept no excuses, educating all with rigor, relevance, respect, and positive relationships."*



## **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 fifth 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. The 2012 school year will conclude our commitment to our first cohort when they earn their diplomas and begin the next phase of their lives. 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. 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 for 2011–2012 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, and 11th grade cohort serving almost 100 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 take a dedicated Advanced Placement Comparative Government and Politics, Advanced Placement English Language, and a second year of 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.

***Tech Connect:*** Tech Connect is a program housed at the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center (JAFCTC) and aimed at engaging first year freshmen by developing their technology literacy and exposing them to potential graduation pathways at the JAFCTC. The program accepts up to 75 freshmen who struggled in middle school and showed signs that they were at risk to drop out of school. Students travel to the JAFCTC daily and receive 60 minutes of technology instruction with embedded elements of mathematical fluency and supportive

mentorship. The program contains character education to build the skills students need to be successful in school. Completion of the program provides students with their required Career and Technology Education (CTE) credit and a .5 elective mathematics credit. More than half of the Tech Connect students return to the Forrest Center and enroll in one of the 24 programs offered to grades 10–12.

### **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 rolled out the use of SharePoint 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 2010, our average class size was 17.30 in pre-kindergarten; 19.46 in kindergarten; 20.56 in grades 1 and 2; 22.74 in grades 3–5; 18.56 in middle schools, and 22.03 in high schools. Our graduation rate was 88.83 percent.

In 2011, our average class size was 19.05 in pre-kindergarten; 20.32 in kindergarten; 20.18 in grades 1 and 2; 22.71 in grades 3–5; 19.04 in middle schools; and 22.43 at high schools.

In 2012, we are assured our class sizes will increase at all levels as we have cut over 45 classroom teachers and anticipate an increase in student enrollment of over 400 students.

### **Fiscal Outlook**

For FY 2011, we realized a \$5,099,959 decrease in our general fund operating budget from FY 2010 funding, a 2.8 percent decrease. However, this funding decrease does not include the influx of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding totaling \$2,900,388. Including the additional influx of federal funds, the school system budget was reduced by \$2,199,571 for a total operating budget decrease of 1.2 percent. While this additional influx of federal ARRA funds precluded the need for draconian cuts to programs and/or personnel, it did not provide sufficient latitude for cost of living adjustments for our employees. However, negotiations did include the give back of step recovery and an additional step in FY 2011 for a

total appropriation of \$2.0 M. This set up an additional negotiation obligation of approximately \$2.4 M in FY 2012 to balance the budget. Additionally, these ARRA funds were utilized to cover ongoing expenses in the operating budget to include tuition reimbursement, contracted bus services, non-public student placements, and utility costs. With the elimination of stimulus funding, these costs must be picked up in the FY 2012 operating budget request. A net total of 6.25 new positions were added to the budget, five (5) of which were to cover grant rollover positions that could no longer be covered with the reduction of grant funds. For budgeting and tracking purposes, a separate fund was established for the charter school to better keep track of personnel and expenses. The funds are reconciled for auditing purposes each year. Fund balance totaling \$8,000,000 was utilized to balance the budget and preclude the layoff of existing employees. The school system cannot sustain the utilization of one-time funds to pay for ongoing expenses and must work to eliminate their usage in this manner. The net obligation for OPEB increased by \$7.4 M for a total unfunded obligation of \$10.6 M. Additionally, SMCPS received \$9,506,522 in the Capital Budget to support 10 capital projects.

### **Climate Changes**

For the current fiscal year, we realized a \$34,789 increase in our FY 2012 operating budget from our FY 2011 funding which is essentially a zero growth budget. However, this does not take into account the elimination of ARRA funding of \$2,900,388 from FY 2011 which was utilized for ongoing expenses. If this was taken into account, the overall budget would decrease by \$2,865,599 for a reduction of 1.6 percent. County funding represents an increase of \$750,000 over maintenance of effort and eliminated the need to cut 16 additional teaching positions to balance the budget.

Overall, 57.4 positions were eliminated from the budget through attrition or the implementation of a retirement incentive bonus payment. Eliminated positions included 34 administrative and supervisory positions, 42.8 resignations and retirements, 22 teaching positions, and an additional 11 anticipated retirements/resignations in FY 2012. A loss of 109.8 positions is offset by the addition of 52.4 positions to include 9 grant rollover positions due to the loss of funding. Negotiations did not include any cost of living adjustment or step allocation for employees.

In addition, the budget includes the utilization of 3 furlough days for all employees which have been prorated over the 26 pay periods to lessen the impact on paychecks. The budget includes the utilization of \$3,924,369 in fund balance and \$2,200,000 in health care rebates to offset decreasing revenues. Both fund balance and the health care rebate was utilized for ongoing expenses and is a strategy SMCPS will be utilizing in FY 2013 to maintain the integrity of the instructional program. This budget increases class sizes and reduces expenditures in all categories to fund incremental increases in utilities, fuel, health insurance, bus transportation, and other essential services.

This budget is simply the first step in an otherwise ongoing effort to meet the funding demands of our county and state, yet maintain a high level of program integrity for our continued success in developing the FY 2013 operating budget, the Superintendent will again use fund balance to maintain instructional program integrity trusting that additional funds will become available in future years. However, it is our hope that we can reduce the utilization of one-time revenues for ongoing expenditures by the FY 2014 budget. The new Race to the Top (RTTT) and Educational Jobs Bill funding has done little to enhance the revenue picture for SMCPS. RTTT funds are insufficient to fully meet the educational mandate from the federal government and will require additional recurring resources from the school system to meet timeline and activity requirements. The Education Jobs Bill provided onetime funding for personnel needs but set up an ongoing obligation on the part of the school system as funds were utilized to pay for health and drug plans. The ever-expanding fiscal crisis continues to affect state and local funding authority's ability to preserve current instructional efforts. The next two years represent a fiscal reality that has not been seen since the early 1990s and will present particular difficulties in maintaining our current programs and momentum.

## **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.

***Standards and Assessments:*** Our most concrete work to date was over the summer of 2011 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 attached the EEA Transition Plans to the annual School Improvement Plan (SIP) created by each instructional site which guide their work throughout the school year. Our goal this year is to have all teachers intimately familiar with 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 signing lease contracts that will get us to a 3 to 1 ratio of computers to students—with much of this being mobile computing technology. Coupled with this purchase, is our goal to have all schools connected to the internet with a fiber connection so video streaming and on-line learning can occur 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 move through the piloting of a teacher evaluation system and a leadership evaluation system that places half of its emphasis on student growth. We have selected five schools to participate in the pilot, three elementary, one middle, and one high school. All teachers are included in the pilot regardless of evaluation cycle or instructional assignment. Twice a month, a steering committee composed of teachers, administrators, supervisors, and education association leaders have been meeting to come to consensus of what this “Domain 5 Student Growth” should reflect. The committee has agreed to multiple measures; summative, formative, performance, growth, and classroom achievement. The difficult work now will be to mine this 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:*** Finally, we will be working with our five elementary and four middle schools that failed to make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) under the current goals of No Child Left Behind. One elementary school has entered its second year of improvement and one middle school has fallen back into corrective action after making AYP the previous year.

## **Core Content Areas**

***Reading:*** For grades 3–5, 89 percent of students were proficient/advanced in reading with 35 percent of that group scoring advanced. While grades 6 and 7 held steady from the previous year, grade 8 students achieved an 86.9 percent proficiency on Reading MSA, up 3.7 percentage points from the last school year.

***Mathematics:*** For grades 3–5, 90 percent of all students were proficient/advanced in mathematics with 45.4 percent of that group scoring advanced. Grade 7 students achieved 33 percent advanced on the Mathematics MSA—up 5.3 percentage points from the previous year. Grade 8 students achieved 40.3 percent advanced on the Mathematics MSA.

***Science:*** The average overall score for student performance on the grade 5 Science MSA decreased in 2011 by 2.2 percentage points from an average overall score of 78.9 percent in 2010 to an average score of 76.7 percent in 2011. This trend mirrored the overall scoring trend

for grade 5 on the reading and mathematics MSAs. The grade 5 average overall scores on the Science MSA have hovered between 76–79 percent for the last two years. In 2011, 82.7 percent of the grade 8 students in St. Mary’s County Public Schools scored proficient on the Science MSA. This was an increase of 4.3 percentage points from the previous year when 78.4 percent of grade 8 students tested scored in the proficient range.

***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 2011, SMCPs was fortunate to receive a donation of eighty Promethean Boards that were targeted for our elementary fourth and fifth classrooms. This resulted in 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 has begun to rebuild 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 2011–2012 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, 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.

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 2011–2012 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:*** In 2010–2011, 91 English Language Learners (ELLs) out of a total of 126 (72 percent) made progress based on 2011 LAS summative administration, compared to 85 percent in 2009–2010. In order to make the AMAO 1 2010–2011 target, at least 60 percent of students must have scored 15 points higher, as compared to their scale score on the previous year's administration. In both years, ELLs exceeded the targets for the previous year, and their performance documents that ELLs in St. Mary's County Public Schools continue to make progress. We will continue our efforts in the upcoming year and anticipate similar results.

***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 2010–2011 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 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:*** 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-kindergarten and progress through



the Junior Great Books program, and the William and Mary curriculum units for Reading/Language Arts. The 2011–2012 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 M<sup>3</sup>*: 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 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. During the 2011–2012 school year, the *Springboard* program will be utilized in the middle school Algebra 1 courses to facilitate instruction and ensure that all students enter high school algebra proficient. 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 the 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,” 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 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 2010-2011 school year, SMCPS has met AMAO I and II, 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 percent of our population and accounted for 17.6 percent of those who were suspended out-of-school. Grade 7 Special Education students achieved a 59.8 percent 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 percent of all special education students assessed using the ALT MSA have achieved proficiency.

## **SUMMARY**

### **Bridging the Gap**

The 2012 school year will see St. Mary's County Public Schools crossing a bridge from the current Maryland State Curriculum to the new Maryland Common Core State Curriculum (MCCSC). We will refocus our assessments and refine what we are asking students to learn and demonstrate. A decade's worth of testing trend data will become superfluous as new outcomes and pacing guides are developed, implemented, and assessed—all aligned to the new standards. Our work will be driven by the Race to the Top Assurances and Scopes of Work we developed in SY 2011.

We started on this path this past summer when each school in our district sent an instructional team to the Educator Effectiveness Academies. Each team developed an Transition Plan for the school year which will inculcate all stakeholders to the Maryland Common Core State Curriculum and yield student work that is rigorous, trans-disciplinary, and aligned to the eight standards for mathematical practice and seven competencies for students who are college and career ready in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language. Our instructional effort will be concentrated on these two goals—a complete understanding of the MCCSS and the development of quarterly student performance tasks that align to these new standards.

## **Creating a Sense of Urgency**

So that we may all equally own this new curriculum and demonstrated student mastery of its content, we are moving toward greater achievement accountability for our teachers and principals. For the SY 2012 we are one of seven LEAs piloting an evaluation system that places half of the annual rating on the performance of students. Communication and an open collaborative process will result 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.