

St. Mary's County Public Schools

Bridge to Excellence Master Plan 2009 Annual Update

Part I



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



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The 2009 Master Plan Annual Update

Authorization and Purpose

Authorization

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

Purpose

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

Background

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

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

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

2009 Master Plan Annual Update

Part I: The Content

Due: October 15, 2009

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

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WE HEREBY CERTIFY that, to the best of our knowledge, the information provided in the 2009 Annual Update to our Bridge to Excellence Master Plan is correct and complete. We further certify that this Annual Update has been developed in consultation with members of the local school system's current Master Plan Planning Team and that each member has reviewed and approved the accuracy of the information provided in the Annual Update.



Signature (Local Superintendent of Schools) Date 9/17/09

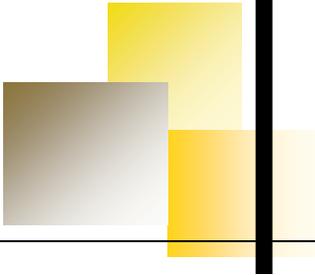


Signature (Local Point of Contact) Date Sept. 15, 2009

Local Planning Team Members

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

Name	Affiliation/Title with Local School System
Mrs. Linda J. Dudderar	Chief Academic Officer, BTE Point of Contact
Mrs. Melissa Charbonnet	Exec. Director of Special Education & Student Services
Mr. Jeffrey Maher	Director of Professional and Organizational Development
Dr. Edward Weiland	Director of Human Resources
Mr. Theo L. Cramer	Director of Student Services & Academic Support
Dr. Charles E. Ridgell, III	Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Mrs. Kelly Hall	Director of Secondary Schools
Mr. J. Scott Smith	Director of Secondary Schools
Mr. Gregory Nourse	Director of Fiscal Services
Mr. William Caplins	Director of Technology
Mrs. Regina Greely	Supervisor of Data Warehouse, Instructional Technology, and Library/Media
Mrs. Janis Taylor	Supervisor of School Improvement and Strategic Planning
Mrs. Rhonda Maleen	Coordinator of Fiscal Services



2009 Master Plan Annual Update

PART I: The Content



Executive Summary to the 2009 Annual Update

I. INTRODUCTION

Overview

St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) continues to take bold, yet measured, steps in our journey to move our school system from good to great. **Our streamlined mission statement requires that we know the learner and the learning, expecting excellence in both. We commit to educating all students, accepting no excuses, while focusing on rigor, relevance, respect and positive relationships.** All that we do is built on these commitments to our students, teachers, and community. The renewed energy in our school system continues with a focus on building relationships through clear, respectful communication. The epidemic of targeted improvement via strengthened relationships prevails.

Focus

We are focused on targeted, short term cycles of improvement via our Professional Learning Communities. Our practitioners are continuously examining, assessing, and fine-tuning their instructional practice each day based on assessment results. Our data warehouse provides immediate information regarding student achievement. Our student information system, *eSchool Plus*, allows another lens to sharpen the focus on individual student progress and to identify the barriers that hinder that progress. The momentum that we have achieved by shifting our focus to teams of teachers who have found more effective ways to reach our students is encouraging and invigorating. We have provided nearly \$70,000 for our collaborative teams to meet at the schools to assure that teachers are learning together and reflecting on and improving upon their practice. In the 2010 school year, we will provide the same level of funding. In the 2009 school year we added four early release days to our calendar dedicated to collaborative planning and professional learning communities. Our streamlined school improvement plans and process, and the more relevant emphasis on team collaborative plans, have shifted the locus of our strategic planning to the people who truly will make the difference.

II. BUDGET NARRATIVE

School System Priorities and Distribution of Fiscal Resources

Look Back

For FY 2009, we realized a \$10,722,582 increase in our operating budget over FY 2008 funding, a 6.3% increase. However, \$845,024 of the increase was allocated to the GASB 45 requirement, Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB), having an allocation of \$5,086,200. In addition, health and life care expenditure allocations were increased by \$918,586, having an allocation of \$23,063,890. Due to these additional budget allocations, the net increase in our FY 2009 operating budget over our FY 2008 funding was \$8,958,972, a 5.3% increase. A significant portion of this budget increase was targeted to honoring our negotiated agreements and continuing to assure competitive salaries for our teachers (8th in the state for beginning teacher salaries). We added 11.55 new positions, all of which were teaching positions including a 0.20 increase from reductions in other categories. No new positions were added to the budget in any other categories. All other personnel adjustments were made through the

reclassification of existing positions. Additionally, SMCPS received \$19,888,000 in the Capital Budget to support 15 capital projects.

Current Year

For the current fiscal year, we realized a \$2,173,909 increase in our FY 2010 operating budget over our FY 2009 funding, a 1.2% increase. However, \$5,200,427 of the budget was for one time payoffs of financed items utilizing SMCPS fund balance. By excluding this budget allocation, the school systems budget actually decreased by -\$3,026,518 or -1.7%. We added 45.5 new positions all of which were directly related to the instructional program and the opening of a new elementary school. The new Evergreen Elementary School accounted for 36.6 positions, four (4) teaching positions were added for the expansion of the STEM program, and 4.9 positions were added for the continued expansion of the Chesapeake Public Charter School. Additionally, SMCPS received \$8,797,720 in the Capital Budget to support 11 capital projects.

Looking Ahead

In developing the FY 2010 operating budget, the Superintendent redistributed over \$4 million of existing appropriations to meet the needs of our increasing student population and the programs and personnel that support them. In addition, one time stimulus funds were also utilized to balance the budget and will be unavailable in future years. This presents an increasing fiscal crisis with the state facing revenue shortfalls that are passed on to the counties, which in turn affects their ability to fund education. The next two years represent a fiscal reality that has not been seen since the early 1990's and will present particular difficulties in maintaining our current programs and momentum.

Funding Priorities-Educational Pathways

A variety of 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 third year of academies at the elementary, middle and high school level. The academies serve students from all elementary, middle and high schools across the county. Currently 344 students are enrolled in the program grades 4-11. This rigorous and unique program of study emphasizes the core areas of mathematics and science with an infusion of technology and engineering. The program includes extensive laboratory experiences using the most contemporary technologies for scientific inquiring, mathematical calculation, engineering design and problem solving techniques. There is an emphasis on critical and creative thinking in an interdisciplinary approach to learning. Culminating projects will provide opportunity for application of learning. Mentorships and internships 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 254 students. CPCS is Southern Maryland's first charter school with a focus on integrated instruction and environmental themes. The school now provides a program for students in grades K-7, with a waiting list of in excess of 200 students.

Fairlead Academy-Fairlead Academy, which opened in 2008-2009, is a ninth grade program that is designed to meet the academic needs of 60 underachieving incoming ninth grade students. The students received extended instructional time in mathematics and English. Fairlead Academy also offered small

class sizes with a 1:10 student to teacher ratio, a mentoring period each day, monthly academic and enrichment field trips, the infusion of interactive technology, and extensive support and training from central office for teachers. As students transition back to their home high schools for their 10th-12th grade years, they are provided with ongoing support from a transition coordinator. For the 2009-2010 school year, we increased the 9th grade enrollment to 72 students; we are also providing 30 rising 10th grade students, in need of a continuing program, a half day experience at Fairlead before returning to home school or the Career and Technology Center for the remainder of their instruction.

Tech Connect-Tech Connect is a program housed at the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center (JAFCTC) and aimed at engaging first year freshmen by developing their technology literacy. The program accepts 75 freshmen who had struggled in middle school and showed signs that they may ultimately drop out of school. Students travel to the JAFCTC daily and receive 60 minutes of 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. Another goal of the program is to have Tech Connect students return to the Forrest Center enrolled in one of the completer programs offered grades 10-12.

Academy of Finance-The Academy of Finance was implemented beginning in the 2008-2009 school year at Chopticon High School to provide interested students with a focused career pathway in the financial services industry. Students learn about careers in finance, such as banking, insurance, financial planning, business administration, sales, contract oversight, budget analysis, and advertising. The program provides field opportunities to apply classroom learning. The program also 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. Twenty-two students enrolled in the first cohort. The National Academy of Finance accredited the program in July 2009. Business and community partners serve as members of the Program Advisory Council (PAC) to guide the program.

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. The first cohort in grade 9 has 34 students enrolled. Ninth grade students are enrolled in English Honors and Advanced Placement World History as part of the program. Additional credits for high school graduation, advanced placement courses, an internship, and senior capstone project are part of the program requirements.

We also consider the following initiatives as priority for our school system:

Middle School Reform Initiative-The recommendations of the Middle School Task Force have been fully implemented with 90 minutes of math daily for all students grade 6 through 8. This additional time, coupled with concrete expectations for student learning, a well paced curriculum map, and data driven instruction, yielded the most significant student performance gains in mathematics the system has seen. Other recommendations such as collaborative planning, professional development, personalized learning

environment, and instructional consistency underpinned each school's improvement plan and ensured that all staff members actively contributed to the success of their students and school. Although only one of our four middle schools made AYP, all schools showed solid gains across all student groups and aggregate scores landed in the top ten for the state of Maryland.

The Safe Schools Initiative-SMCPS believes that one of our greatest responsibilities is to provide for the safety and security of students, staff, and visitors. Establishing a safe and orderly environment ensures the greatest opportunity for positive individual development and success in student learning. We constantly strive to enhance our safety and security initiatives through open communication, strong community partnerships, progressive policies and procedures, and proactive action by our staff. The Department of Safety and Security is responsible for the development and implementation of system wide safety and security programs and initiatives that enhance the overall safety and security of all SMCPS school campuses and supporting office sites. The department collaborates with staff, many departments, and supporting community partners to develop, refine, and implement safety and security initiatives to include emergency preparedness and response, daily school security measures, school visitor management, school employee and volunteer background screening, new facility development, and existing facility enhancements. The Supervisor of Safety and Security maintains a strategic plan prioritizing existing safety and security initiatives and enhancements. Maintaining and improving safety and security within all schools greatly increases the efficiency and effectiveness of each school. The current safety and security strategic plan has identified many primary focus areas and functions for the department.

Main Functions of the Department of Safety and Security

- Manage employee and volunteer identification badges
- Manage employee school access control cards
- Oversee automated school visitor registration management
- Ensure school based notification of known sex offenders
- Manage background screenings for all school employees and volunteers
- Oversee mandatory daily security checks and screenings of all facilities
- Identify and implement needed physical security enhancements to include security vestibules, electronic locking systems, surveillance camera systems, campus security vehicles, campus radio communication system, and alarms
- Coordinate the daily activities of campus based Safety and Security Assistants
- Oversee the Superintendent's Young Driver Safety Program
- Oversee the SMCPS Focus on Cyber Use and Safety Program
- Oversee the SMCPS Secure Your Gear Program
- Assist in the implementation of School Safety Patrols (elementary schools)
- Conduct bi-annual school safety and security site visits identifying current concerns and ensuring compliance with policies and procedures
- Conduct formal annual safety and security audits of all SMCPS sites to include follow up and after action meetings with site based management
- Monitor attendance, discipline, and arrest data at schools
- Oversee implementation of the Student Crime Solvers Program
- Oversee implementation of the Confidential School Reporting Hotline
- Oversee and monitor site based drills of emergency response protocols
- Coordinate site based professional development staff training on safety and security procedures and current trends in youth crime

- Oversee the annual review and revision of all school crisis and emergency response plans, procedures, protocols, and corresponding manuals
- Provide assistance to staff with safety and security procedures and coordination of other activities with law enforcement authorities to include site-based investigations conducted in cooperation with law enforcement authorities and other events requiring a level of emergency response

Technology Enhancements-We continued to provide enhancements to the technology at each school while meeting the goals of our life-cycle replacement program. Additionally, we have created a model for technology integration by adding interactive technology at all of our STEM Academies, Fairlead Academy, Leonardtown Elementary School, Title I schools and Spring Ridge Middle School. Principals and supervisors received laptops which provide them with wireless access in our meeting rooms. The newly constructed Evergreen Elementary School opened this fall with technology rich classrooms, which will be the norm for all new construction. Finally, SMCPs is piloting a standards based primary report card that is aligned to a grade book application.

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

In 2009, our average class size was 17.3 in PK; 19.3 in Kindergarten; 20.0 in grades 1 and 2; 21.4 in grades 3-5; 18.1 at middle school; and 19.1 at high schools. Our graduation rate was 86.27%.

High School Assessment Initiative- Through the addition of staff at each high school, we were able to identify key teachers in each content area of the High School Assessments (HSA) and flex their schedule. This additional time was embedded in a lead teacher's instructional day so that they could chair a professional learning community for that High School Assessment, oversee the testing process, and remediate students as needed - including bridge project management. These instructional leaders were also charged with mining the data generated by quarterly county created assessments and past student performance on state tests. In each high school, the HSA leaders became members of the instructional leadership team for the school and met monthly with the administrative team.

Mandarin Chinese as a high school course. Our modern world languages curriculum is designed to prepare our students to be citizens of the world. Mandarin Chinese has been added to our already rich offerings of French, German, Spanish, and Latin. American Sign Language offers another world language for our students to communicate in our diverse and changing world.

Honor all negotiated agreements

Demographics

St. Mary's County Public Schools employs 2,407 staff members; approximately 1200 of our staff are teachers. The percent of classes taught by highly qualified teachers is 93.85%. In the 2008-2009 school year, we served 16,752 students in 26 school settings. We had 16 elementary, 4 middle, 3 high schools, a career and technology center, a public charter school and a ninth grade academy. Our student population was made up of 72% white, 21% African American, 3% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and >1% Native American students. Our county average for students who are economically disadvantaged is 25%. Special education students make up 11% of the school population.

III. GOAL PROGRESS

Overview

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

School System Successes

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

Elementary School

- **All elementary schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).**
- At the elementary level, 89.8% of “all” students were proficient in reading; 88.3% of “all” students were proficient in mathematics.
- In elementary mathematics, the gap between African American and White students closed by 3 percentage points.
- Students receiving basic scores continue to decline, students receiving proficient or advanced scores continue to increase with a large percentage of students earning advanced status.

Middle School

- At the middle school level, 83% of “all” students were proficient in reading; 82.5% of “all” students were proficient in mathematics.
- At the middle school level, African American students made a 17.8 percentage point gain in mathematics.
- In middle school math, the gap between African American students and White students closed 3 percentage points.

High School

- SAT scores increased by 27 points to an all time high combined total of 1559. Performance exceeded both state and national results.
- At the high school level, attendance has improved to an all time high of 93.9%.
- The high school dropout rate is an all time low of 2.13%.

All Schools-Safe Schools

- No persistently dangerous schools.
- No elementary schools with suspension rates exceeding identified limits (12%).
- Harassment, sexual harassment, and bullying suspensions reduced by 20%.

School System Challenges

Elementary School

- Although gaps are closing, there continues to be a double digit gap between African American students and White students; between FARMS students and non-FARMS students; and between Special Education students and their non-disabled peers in both reading and mathematics.
- While all 17 elementary schools made AYP, one site was very close and relied on safe harbor status to achieve AYP in two student groups; ED for reading and Special Education for mathematics.
- It is a significant challenge to find additional time within the school day to increase intervention and academic support. Our elementary schools, with guidance and support from the central office, are working diligently to creatively “find the time and the teachers” to add an additional layer of intervention services for the most academically challenged students.

Middle School

- Three of our four middle schools did not make AYP and are in local attention.
- Although the gap has closed slightly, a 22.3 percentage point gap persists in mathematics and a 21.2 percentage point gap persists in reading between African American students and White students.
- The achievement gap is closing for all subgroups, but it is still significant. Double digit gaps persist in reading and mathematics for the FARMS, LEP, and Special Education subgroups.
- Although attendance for all students has improved significantly at the middle school level, four subgroups fall below the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) of 94%: African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, FARMS, and Special Education.

High School

- The satisfactory standard of 94% attendance was not reached at the high school level; however, the attendance rate of 93.9% exceeds the previous year. We continue to work to improve the attendance of some subgroups: African American (92.1%), Special Education (91.7%) and of particular concern, FARMS (90.4%) which is the lowest attendance for a subgroup in 2009.
- One high school did not make AYP in 2009 for graduation rate.

All Schools

- There is disproportionate representation of some subgroups in our discipline data:
 - Male students represent more than two-thirds of the in and out-of-school suspensions.
 - African American students accounted for 44.9% of the students suspended out of school and 36.2% of students assigned in-school suspensions; however they represent only 21% of our student population.

IV. HIGHLY QUALIFIED STAFF

The percent of classes taught by highly qualified teachers increased from 92.9% in 2007-2008 to 93.85% in 2008-2009. SMCPS maintains a commitment to recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers. In elementary classrooms identified as high poverty, 100% of the classes were taught by highly qualified teachers. Schools identified as Title I are staffed entirely by highly qualified teachers. Currently, SMCPS has 32 National Board Certified Teachers, with 10 more in process, with an 82% success rate for those seeking certification during their tenure with the school system.

V. CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Educational Technology-With limited funds, SMCPS was effective in providing technology to meet the goals outlined in the Master Plan for both students and teachers. SMCPS provided online resources, software, and professional development for students and teachers through county and grant funds. Key to our continued growth was ongoing professional development provided for all administrators and staff in year two of the use of the *eSchoolPlus* Student Information System and our *Performance Matters* data warehouse. As revealed by the *Maryland Measure of Student Technology Literacy* administered to every seventh grader, we must continue to build our teacher's capacity to integrate technology into the curriculum. For 2009-2010, SMCPS will also target our ARRA funds for use in closing the achievement gaps for our Special Education students in the mathematics classroom via enhanced technology.

Education That Is Multicultural-The Superintendent's Blue Ribbon Task Force to Eliminate the Achievement Gap has two major objectives: implement site-based, targeted interventions and acceleration programs designed to increase student achievement and eliminate achievement gaps; and maintain a process for the community and the school system to share ideas and communicate strategies to increase student achievement, especially for underperforming students. As a result of the recommendations made by the Task Force subcommittees, a number of system-wide strategies and initiatives were implemented. Data supports that gaps are closing. In reading, the achievement gap between African American and White students decreased by 1 percentage point at the elementary level, 2 percentage points at middle school, and 7 percentage points at high school. In mathematics, the achievement gap between African American and White students decreased 3 points at the elementary and middle school levels, and 10 points at high school.

VI. ADDRESSING SPECIFIC STUDENT SUBGROUPS

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 7 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 hoping to replicate our model.

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 and progress through the Junior Great Books program, and the William and Mary curriculum units for Reading/Language Arts. Mathematics instruction is supplemented with locally developed math extension maps, the Project M3: Mentoring Mathematical Minds series, 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. 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 tenth grade are expected to continue to Advanced Placement courses in their Junior year. SMCPS has gone so far as to automatically submit course requests for all honor level students to move to Advanced Placement courses, then offer a modeled schedule for their review. Students must "opt out" of Advanced Placement courses during their scheduling conferences with their counselors.

VII. SUMMARY

Communication and Collaboration

Collaboration has had a revolutionary impact on the conversations and the norms across our school system. We are committed to building positive and productive relationships within our organization and extended to our parents and community partners. We communicate often via our automated telephone system, enhanced web pages, educational television channel (Channel 96), the student information system, *eSchool Plus*, with a Teacher Access Center (TAC) and a Home Access Center (HAC). Our newly implemented Employee Access Center (EAC) has had a tremendous impact on our communication with staff. We have held more parent and community forums such as *What Counts* and will convene another this fall. The organizational structure of the departments in central administration have been restructured to assure a more efficient flow of information and a more effective and efficient response (time and substance) to and from our schools and our community. We have enhanced this new structure to include the Department of School Administration, Advisement and Accountability to assure our administrators a clear and direct link to the resources and information available from central office. The position of Coordinator of Parent, Business, and Military Outreach was created to serve as a liaison to promote positive relationships and increased collaboration between parents, businesses and organizations, the military and other stakeholders serving and interacting with the students of St. Mary's County Public Schools.

Commitment to our students and community

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

“Charting a Course to Excellence”
SUPERINTENDENT’S FIFTEEN POINT PLAN OF PRIORITIES

1. 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).
2. Ensure that all learning environments are safe, orderly, nurturing and healthy.
3. Teach EVERY child to read, on-grade level, by the beginning of grade 3.
4. Frequently monitor student progress (weekly, monthly, and quarterly) in READING and MATH.
5. Develop and utilize local assessments that align with state standards and exams.
6. Align Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment with the state standards with an emphasis on teaching for learning with high expectations for ALL students.
7. 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.
8. Promote, recruit, and retain a quality and diverse workforce. Foster professional learning and leadership capacity of the entire workforce.
9. Strengthen partnerships with the community, businesses, military, and local colleges.
10. Expand the use of technology to increase student learning and to analyze our student data via our data warehouse.
11. Ensure that all students graduate and ensure that each child attends school every day.
12. Ensure that early childhood and after school programs are of high quality.
13. 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.
14. Develop extensive and meaningful parent and community relationships and communicate regularly and often with all stakeholders. Promote a customer service approach.
15. 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.

Prior Year Variance Table – Analyzing Questions

Revenue Analysis

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

The Prior Year Budget Variance Table for St. Mary's County Public Schools indicates an increase in actual revenue, \$899,211, in comparison to the original FY2009 general and restricted fund budgets. The decrease in state revenue was due to Special Education Non-Public tuition for 2009. The offset to the lower than anticipated state revenue was the increase Medical Assistance, Quality Teacher Incentive, and NTBS Certification revenues. The decrease in federal revenue was the changes in actual federal grant funding to budgeted, although the federal revenue in local funding realized an increase due to an increase in Impact Aid. The increase in other local revenue was largely due to an insurance premium refund received and greater than anticipated. Other resources/transfers revenue realized a slight decrease due to actual revenue for other program funded initiatives.

Analysis of Actual Expenditures

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

Master Plan Goal 1

The total change in the budget estimate to actual expenditures for Master Plan Goal 1 was primarily the result of lower actual cost for the support of the High School Assessment (HSA) initiative. The planned 4.0 FTEs were realigned utilizing existing system resources to effectively and successfully support this program. Other lower than estimated costs were due to lower actual salary costs for Fairlead Academy, math, and science. The expenditures for support of the after school programs was less due to the unexpected award of federally funded restricted funds. The offset to the decreased expenditures to budget estimates for Student Achievement was the increase in actual salaries for the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) initiative.

Master Plan Goal 3

The actual expenditures supporting the enhancement of recruitment, retention, and orientation of teachers for St. Mary's County Public Schools was marginally lower than anticipated due to prudent and efficient spending obtaining expected results.

Master Plan Goal 4

The Safe Learning Environment initiative was projected and expended on target.

Master Plan Goal 5

Master Plan Goal 5, All Students will Graduate from High School, realized a decrease due to the actual salaries for the staffing of the Fairlead Academy.

Mandatory/Cost of Doing Business

St. Mary's County Public Schools realized an increase on mandatory/cost of doing business. The rise in expenditures was realized from the increase in actual salaries, including the addition of 11.55 FTE positions, non-public Special Education placements, and Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB) contribution. Lower than anticipated expenditures in this area were from actual employee benefits, Charter School, transportation, and utilities. These savings were due to lower than anticipated fuel and utility costs affecting transportation and operations, health insurance premiums, and efficient and prudent spending by the Charter School administration.

Maryland School Assessment

Reading

Based on the Examination of AYP Reading Proficiency Data for Elementary Schools (Table 2.1) and Middle Schools (Table 2.2):

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

Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and White student groups exceeded the AMO at the middle school level. Over the past five years, the proficient plus advanced scores have consistently and steadily risen for all students, as well as for each of the subgroups.

At the elementary level, from 2005-2009 the scores for proficient plus advanced students increased by:

- All Students-11.2 percentage points
- African American-20.9 percentage points
- American Indian/Alaskan Native-9.4 percentage points
- Asian/Pacific Islander-.04 percentage points
- Hispanic-14 percentage points
- White-9.6 percentage points
- FARMS-19.1 percentage points
- Limited English Proficiency-14.0 percentage points
- Special Education students-20 percentage points

At the middle school level, from 2005-2009 the scores for proficient and advanced students increased by:

- All Students-11.3 percentage points
- African American students-18.3 percentage points
- American Indian/Alaskan Native-47.1 percentage points
- Asian /Pacific Islander-9.4 percentage points
- Hispanic-5.5 percentage points
- White-9.6 percentage points
- FARMS-17.8 percentage points
- Special Education-19.2 percentage points

2. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies to which you attribute the progress. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations.

Students in elementary grades kindergarten through grade 5 use the core reading program, Houghton Mifflin Reading. This program covers the basic five areas of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The teachers follow the program format and also make individual decisions as to where to teach additional lessons on the objectives listed in our state curriculum. Fidelity to the core reading program in a whole group setting and consistent and rigorous guided reading in all grade levels (every child - every day) has proven effective. All

elementary students are instructed through daily small group guided reading. The students read trade books and novels at their instructional levels under the guidance of the teacher in a small group setting.

Students in grades 6 - 8 use the core literature program, *The Language of Literature*, published by McDougal Littell. This anthology is a highly challenging collection of literary selections. The literacy lab model in middle school has been an effective strategy in raising scores on MSA. This model provides students with opportunities to work on the skills and processes of reading and writing through small group guided reading and targeted writing lessons for 45 of their 90 minute Language Arts block. Immediate gains of 12 - 15 percentage points were achieved in three student groups in the first year of implementation in grade 6 across the district. (Grade 6 was the pilot grade for this model.) As new grade level teams embraced the model, the levels of “advanced” scores rose significantly as well. This was an unexpected bonus.

Additional appropriate intervention programs at elementary and middle schools are determined by the needs of individual and small groups of students. For instance, *Foundations*, a phonics program for struggling readers is used as an intensive intervention program for small groups of struggling readers, as well as a supplemental program taught in a whole class setting. *REWARDS* is another successful intervention program. It is an intensive 30 day program designed to help students read multi-syllabic (long) words. In addition, several supplemental programs are in place such as Zaner Bloser Handwriting.

Data from leading and lagging indicators is carefully examined by collaborative groups of teachers and administrators at the school and central administrative levels. *Performance Matters*, our data warehouse system, allows access to information from leading and lagging assessment data. This information is used to make instructional decisions.

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

At the middle school level, African America, FARMS, LEP, and Special Education student groups did not meet the AMO.

In analyzing six years of DIBELS data to assess the skills and processes of reading, it is clear that early reading skills have consistently risen. However, because the district average of Oral Reading Fluency in grades 3 - 5 has not significantly improved, phonics, fluency, and comprehension instruction need to be re-examined and addressed in both elementary and middle school. These components of reading impact the oral reading scores as measured by DIBELS. Oral Reading Fluency is related to comprehension which directly impacts a student’s ability to perform well on MSA.

4. Describe the changes or adjustments that will be made to ensure sufficient progress. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations, and incorporate timelines where appropriate.

The SMCPS curriculum guides for grades 3 - 8 has been reformatted and clarified so that SMCPS educators will have a clear and concise tool with which to plan instruction and to ensure that consistency across grade level teams and across schools is maintained. Prior iterations of the document included all of the objectives in the Maryland State Curriculum arranged in a readable and

easy to use format. The new version includes the St. Mary's County Public Schools instructional expectations for each part of the 135 minute reading language arts block (90 minutes in middle school); matched to the state curriculum objectives, the guide ensures that all of the objectives in the seven content standards are addressed.

The following guidelines are examples of the instructional expectations set forth in the curriculum guides:

- One objective will be chosen to be taught and assessed during the whole group lesson each day.
- Independent work will be meaningful and rigorous.
- Guided reading will take place daily for all students in all grade levels, grades 1 - 8. Guided reading is defined as instruction in the skills and processes of reading in a small group setting, using leveled texts. Instruction is matched to the needs of the students.
- Teachers will take notes on reading miscues and reading behaviors they observe during the guided reading sessions.
- Using formative assessments, students will continue to be placed in the appropriate interventions. St. Mary's County Public Schools uses interventions which are research based, systematic, explicit, and targeted to the needs of each student.
- Increase the rigor of instruction and higher order thinking.
- Eliminate "down time" when students are not engaged in learning.
- Increase the reading volume of students during guided reading.
- Increase the reading volume of students during school breaks.
- Consistent purpose-setting prior to reading to be taught and practiced by students until the concept is internalized (i.e. read the question before reading the passage).

In addition to the curriculum guides, the teachers in grades 2 - 8 have also been provided with passage maps for each of the stories taught in both core programs. The passage maps suggest several objectives that fit each reading selection, and give an example assessment item for each one in both selected response and BCR formats. There are in excess of 1,700 assessment items included in the passage maps.

Pacing guides have also been provided to middle school language teachers to ensure that students benefit from the exposure to the variety of genre provided in the core program at a brisk pace, designed to keep their interest levels high.

A newly formatted grammar program is being introduced during the 2009-2010 school year.

SMCPS focuses on differentiation based on individual needs through which subgroups are addressed. Intervention decisions are data based using the universal screening and benchmarking data. Instructional interventions are targeted and prescriptive, based on the identified deficit area. The St. Mary's County Public Schools has also partnered with the University of MD to study the motivation of middle school students. A major focus of the study is a close observation of "choice and "success" and other indicators that play a significant role in what makes a successful reader. Additional leveled book collections have been added to the Literacy Labs to support small group directed instruction, providing high interest choice to middle school students.

St. Mary's County Public Schools uses *Performance Matters* data to track and monitor all sub-group achievement and performance. Interventions are designed to be targeted and prescriptive. Instruction is provided intensively, directly, explicitly and systematically. All Middle school students who do not meet the proficient or advanced levels on MSA are identified and monitored using various measures of benchmarking and progress monitoring. All middle school students are administered the AIMSweb MAZE to assess comprehension skills and identify those students who may need additional instructional supports. Instructional interventions and progress is monitored and tracked with grade level materials using AIMSweb passages. Additional AIMSweb benchmarking also measures decoding, fluency rate and automaticity. The REWARDS Generalization test is also administered to assess the ability to read multi-syllabic words.

SMCPS uses this universal screening process to match instructional interventions to student need. Students who demonstrate deficiencies in specific reading components (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and/or word problem solving) are assigned to targeted and prescriptive interventions.

SMCPS recognized a lack of specific interventions to address decoding gaps between The Wilson Reading System and REWARDS. As a result, *Just Words*, published by Wilson, has been ordered this intervention addresses the six syllable types, and will provide an excellent bridge from Foundations, which is used in elementary school, to REWARDS.

To ensure that the above instructional practices are understood and implemented, professional development will take place for all teachers of language arts.

- All classroom teachers and special educators will be required to attend a session on the above mentioned documents during one of the fall professional days.
- Principals will be provided training in separate two-hour sessions.
- The instructional resource teachers will devise a plan during their meeting in the fall to address strategies to support the school teams in implementing the instructional plan.
- Increased communication will be provided through a biweekly newsletter, The BLAB (*Biweekly Language Arts Bulletin*).
- The reading supervisor and the Director of Elementary Schools will meet with elementary principals two – three times yearly to examine formative and summative data.

Maryland School Assessment

Mathematics

Based on the Examination of AYP Math Proficiency Data for Elementary Schools (Table 2.4) and Middle Schools (Table 2.5):

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

At the elementary level, the All Students, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, White, FARMS, and LEP student groups exceeded the AMO.

At the elementary level, from 2005-2009 the scores for proficient plus advanced students increased by:

- All Students-11.4 percentage points
- African American-21.1 percentage points
- American Indian/Alaskan Native-25.1 percentage points
- Asian/Pacific Islander-1.7 percentage points
- Hispanic-12.9 percentage points
- White-9.7 percentage points
- FARMS-18.8 percentage points
- Special Education-18.7 percentage points

At the middle school level, the All Students, African American, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, White and FARMS student groups all met or exceeded the AMO. All student groups at the middle school level increased proficiency from 2008-2009.

At the middle school level, from 2005-2009 the scores for proficient and advanced students increased by:

- All Students-27 percentage points
- African American-33.1 percentage points
- American Indian/Alaskan Native-28.6 percentage points
- Asian/Pacific Islander-27.7 percentage points
- Hispanic-17.2 percentage points
- White-26 percentage points
- FARMS-31.7 percentage points
- Special Education-36 percentage points

There was a statistically insignificant drop in the aggregate passing rate at the elementary level that is attributed to an implementation dip with the adoption of new materials. All subgroups, both at the elementary and middle school level, are making significant progress, but as the aggregate makes progress, the achievement gap continues to exist

2. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies to which you attribute the progress. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations.

At the elementary level, SMCPS believes in a balanced approach to mathematics. Students develop understanding conceptually, and move to procedural efficiency. Computational speed and accuracy are built on a foundation of conceptual understanding. *Investigations in Number, Data and Space* is our core program for grades one through three. It is supplemented by the pedagogy of *Cognitively Guided Instruction* (CGI) to form the basis for flexibility and accuracy in grades one through four. In grade four students use a combination of core programs, *Investigations in Number, Data, and Space* and *Math Connects* in order to provide a smooth transition and articulation to a more traditional, procedurally efficient program at middle school. *Math Connects* is a balanced, but traditional program that is used in grades four through eight.

Additional aspects of the math program contributing to progress include:

- Strong materials of instruction aligned with the Maryland State Curriculum (MSC)
- 90 minutes of math time in elementary school daily
- A clear articulation plan for the elementary to middle school transition that builds from conceptual understanding to procedural efficiency. *Investigations* is used in grades one to four, and *Math Connects* is used in grades four to eight. A combination of programs is used in grade four in order to provide a smooth transition for students.
- Curriculum maps, pacing guides and assessments are aligned to the MSC with embedded instructional notes including detailed guidance regarding differentiation, extensions, and concept development.
- District assessments with a high correlation to MSA success and a high predictability for individual student success. The beginning of the year and middle of the year assessment provide predictive information for MSA success. Teachers use the information from these assessments in addition to formative assessments to provide data driven intervention and enrichment for students
- Easy access to an extensive data warehouse system with data that is detailed and easy to sort. This data is used to drive instruction on a programmatic level and an individual level.
- Weekly Math Memos providing information and timely professional development regarding instruction at all grade levels.
- A collaborative mathematics community made up of instructional resource teachers, and teacher leaders at both the primary and intermediate grade levels. This collaborative community met monthly for professional development in mathematics content and pedagogy; and to work collaboratively to improve mathematics instruction.
- Math Synthesizers which provided an item bank that provided a review of material in MSA format. Each student received a hard copy of the Synthesizers. In addition teachers could access the Synthesizers electronically in word and/or in interactive *Turning Point* format in order to meet student needs. *Turning Point* technology allowed for rapid review of MSC objectives with immediate feedback.

Our middle school mathematics curriculum is acutely aligned with the Maryland State Curriculum (formerly known as the Voluntary State Curriculum – VSC) and has been, explicitly, for the last two years. In addition, curricula for elementary school mathematics foundation courses and high school

coursework have been aligned with state and national standards as well, effectively building a prekindergarten through grade 14 articulated program for our students that was forward and backward mapped from Algebra. This comprehensive approach to developing our curriculum was designed to prepare all students for success on both the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) and the High School Assessment (HSA) for Algebra/Data Analysis and culminated in the on grade level middle school mathematics students sitting for a formal Pre-algebra class.

Embedded within the aforementioned curriculum alignment was an extended period of mathematics time (i.e., 90 minute blocks) for all mathematics coursework at the middle school that was on grade level or slightly above. Basically, any mathematics class that was not Algebra 1 or Geometry, respectively, received this extended period of instructional time. While much of the focus for the 90 minute block is squarely on more time for teaching the mathematics, a tangential focus was for teachers to plan more judiciously and also focus on building strong student-teacher relationships within the classroom framework, especially with those student populations who traditionally underperform.

Also, in school year 2008-2009, SMCPs adopted new mathematics textbooks for all K-12 classrooms. Our dual focus was on “articulation” and “balance” especially when it came to curricular and instructional delivery. These were the chief reasons why at middle school we adopted the *Math Connects* series from Glencoe for our on grade level cohorts and the *Pre-Algebra*, *Algebra*, and *Geometry* series, respectively, from Holt McDougal for our above grade level learners. Additionally, with each textbook series came ancillary materials commonly known as “note-taking guides” that help students build a framework for learning, especially for our on grade level populations; and various “test generators” that give our teachers more resources to build recursive formative assessments on items that have persistently “non-performed” throughout the year.

Another strategy that SMCPs employed to a high degree of success is the navigation of our data warehouse system-*Performance Matters*-in ways that allow our teachers to plan instruction that is more data-driven. Using the results from quarterly, countywide assessments, teachers and their collaborative teams were able to drill down to the indicator level and focus explicitly on an item that was a “non-performer.” Employing a number of recursive, formative assessments, teachers and teams were able to assimilate the strengths and weaknesses of their students and juxtapose these results with those demonstrated on the countywide assessments for the purposes of separating students in one of three levels (i.e., introductory; developing; and advanced) and then differentiating their instruction to either remediate or extend said instruction in homogeneous learning levels for that non-performing item. This method was also encouraged to be employed with flexible groups with teachers that were parallel scheduled throughout the duty day.

Regarding the data analysis that was done throughout the year, teachers had been instructed to employ two specific data metrics when analyzing student performance:

1. Proficiency Metric
2. Value-Added Growth Metric

The Proficiency Metric was used to evaluate mean score proficiency on all local assessments while the Value-Added Growth Metric was applied to the same assessments to measure the learning growth, by student/class/cohort/school/district on each specific indicator found on the Maryland State Curriculum (MSC). Using both data metrics, teachers were able to gauge a much truer measure of learning in each student and were able to more accurately predict future performance on the MSA. Moreover, aggregate

(grade level) and individual (specific) MSA predictions based on lagging data were made for all students using linear regression analysis and formulated mid February so that teachers could further adjust their instruction to meet the needs of their learners.

Finally, as a consumable, “synthesizing” resource, all students were provided with a grade level *MSA Synthesizer* before Winter Break and used through the end of the year that focused on the six content strands present on the MSA. The resource allowed students to assimilate the grade level mathematics in a venue that was not indicator specific yet collated to a strand so that students were able to subtly piece together learning connections.

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

At the elementary level, African American students did not achieve the AMO. At the middle school level LEP students did not achieve the AMO. Special Education student did not attain the AMO at elementary or middle school.

At the elementary level:

- African American students did not achieve the AMO by 1.5 percentage points (72.7%).
- Special Education students did not achieve AMO by 5.9 percentage points (68.3%).

At the middle school level:

- LEP students did not achieve the AMO by 14.3 percentage points (50%).
- Special Education student did not attain the AMO by 8.5 percentage points (55.8%).

Aggregately, St. Mary's County Public Schools' biggest challenge at the middle school level resides at the 7th grade. Much of the underperformance of the aforementioned grade level (i.e., 9th out of 24 LEAs in the state) was attributed to a sub par curriculum guide and map generated by the office of mathematics for the newly adopted textbooks for our on grade level students. Notwithstanding, on the 7th grade Maryland State Curriculum (MSC), the depth of mathematical concepts expands to a much higher level for students to assimilate, focusing on integer operations of both positive and negative numbers, order of operations, and rates/ratios in a given context.

Additionally, the achievement gap (given in the following parentheses), while mitigated over a two year stretch, continues to exist for our African American (-17.1 percentage points), Free and Reduced Meals (-17.2percentage points), and Special Education (-26.7 percentage points) cohorts, respectively, as compared to the aggregate.

4. Describe the changes or adjustments that will be made to ensure sufficient progress. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations, and incorporate timelines where appropriate.

At the elementary level, Expectations for Elementary Mathematics have been explicitly laid out with expectations of accountability and support provided to address challenges in closing the achievement gap especially with our Special Education students. The changes put in place 2009-2010 to provide differentiation will benefit all of our students.

- Everyday Counts/Calendar Math Routine
 - Purchased and implemented in every classroom at every grade level Prekindergarten to grade 5 in addition to the 90 minutes of the daily math block. Everyday Counts/Algebra Readiness has also been purchased and implemented in middle school providing a powerful articulation Prekindergarten through Pre-Algebra.
 - Everyday Counts/Calendar Math is aligned to the MSC and integrates and reviews all seven content strands on a daily basis. The concepts repeat and build throughout the year creating multiple access points for students and the development of fluency.
- Differentiation
 - Research based Response to Intervention (RtI), Tier 2 Interventions will be purchased in October. The interventions were selected by a team of elementary and middle school classroom teachers, special education teachers, and supervisors (recommendation 2). A rubric based on the *USDE Clearinghouse Report on What Research Says is Effective Regarding Mathematics Response to Intervention* was used. All students will be screened for intervention using the district pre-assessment and mid-year assessment (recommendation 1).
 - *Do the Math*, by Marilyn Burns was selected because of its
 - focus on whole number operations and rational numbers (recommendation 2).
 - reliance on visual representations (recommendation 5).
 - focus on explicit, systematic instruction (recommendation 3).
 - frequent monitoring of progress, with the opportunity for the student to move in and out of the intervention as appropriate (recommendation 7).
 - *FASTT Math*, by Scholastic was selected because it
 - Provides ten minutes of fact fluency practice per day (recommendation 6).
 - Response to Intervention materials are being produced by the district to match the recommendations of the Clearinghouse Report and align with current instructional approaches.
 - Counting Profile and Assessment
 - A professional development film for the SMCPS Counting Assessment and Profile
 - An RtI Booklet to provide intervention suggestions based on needs outlined by the Counting Assessment and Profile.
 - Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI)
 - An RtI Booklet to identify appropriate levels of student strategies and provide intervention suggestions based on students' needs as determined as students solve problems using invented strategies.
 - Gifted and Talented maps are aligned with the Math Curriculum maps and posted online
- Guided Math Structure for the 90 minute math block.

- The Guided Math Structure: a whole group component and guided math instruction in small groups allowing for Tier 1 differentiation for all students
- Pat Turner, a consultant formerly of MSDE, is working with our fifth grade teachers on articulation between the programs, the Guided Math structure, and bringing up advanced scores
- Curriculum maps for *Investigations* clearly spell out the structure of the math block
- District planning sessions are offered to grade 5 teachers to collaboratively plan for the 90 minute block.
- Data Driven Decision Making
 - Non performing indicators from last year highlighted out in the curriculum maps as they are taught
 - Assessments, benchmarks and recommendations for counting skills and efficient strategy development are being developed
 - There is an emphasis on formative daily assessments and exit slips to drive instructional decisions
 - Non-performing objectives on benchmark assessments will be added to later assessments Teachers will be informed of low performing objectives and suggestions for re-teaching through the Math Memo.
- Increased Emphasis on Procedural Efficiency
 - Fact fluency benchmarks are established and will be assessed.
 - Traditional algorithms are specifically introduced in addition to and in comparison to student's invented strategies at appropriate grade levels.
 - Kindergarten maps incorporate Investigations, Calendar Math and MMSR requirements in one document

A handful of schools dropped more than 5 points on their MSA scores in grades 3 and 5. Those cohorts of students will be monitored closely regarding the challenge of the new materials.

There are a few major initiatives and changes that we are incorporating into our middle school mathematics approach for school year 2009-2010, the first of which is our revision and modification of all curricular maps and guides, especially in our 7th grade on grade level curriculum. All revisions were done by teachers for teachers by a cadre of instructional leaders in our county. Moreover, all curricula is now reflective of more of a "March to March" calendar as opposed to the traditional "August to May" instructional window. This facilitates a natural "backfilling and articulation" for grade level instruction; that is, "backfilling instruction" for persistent non-performing indicators before/after the MSA administration per a data review and "articulation instruction" for helping students prepare for their next mathematics coursework.

Secondly, there will be an acute focus on Special Education students and reaching their learning potential through a variety of mediums. Regular and Special Educators will be collaborating on core instruction through the full implementation of the *Math Triumphs* series, an RTI based curriculum that seamlessly interfaces with our *Math Connects* series. As a result, the mathematics supervisor will be regularly in-servicing instructional techniques and curricular updates pertaining to *Math Triumphs* while

conducting more frequent data analyses throughout the year and sharing the results monthly to a joint audience of both Regular and Special Educators. All the while, technology in the form of SMART boards have been purchased for all middle school mathematics, LAP, and SAIL classrooms for the sole purpose of giving traditionally underperforming students an alternative modality with which to interface.

Intervention is provided to all students in need and consequently subgroup performance is improving. There continues to be an achievement gap between all students and African American students, FARM students and Special Education students, but that achievement gap is diminishing each year following this model of instruction.

Students with identified academic needs receive mathematics intervention to accommodate the scholastic challenges they encounter which include the following strategies and structure:

- ***Performance Matters***, -allows us to analyze individual students' performance in detail and to make determinations about inclusion in intervention groups.
- ***Purposeful , Regular Meetings About Student Needs***-Teachers, Instructional Resource Teachers (content specialists) and special education teachers meet weekly as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to discuss student performance based on data in Performance Matters, formative assessments and anecdotal records. Instructional decisions are made based on that information and students are monitored closely.
- ***Mathematics Instructional Block has been extended to 90 minutes daily***-Students can be quickly and flexibly grouped daily according to need and misconceptions addressed or additional help given.
- An ***intervention structure*** is in place within the 90 minute instructional block with students grouped flexibly with additional instructional attention from classroom or instructional resource teachers. This additional small group time eliminates unproductive down time or unsuccessful independent time for at risk students. Additional intervention time is allotted outside of the 90 minute block for students who need it.
- ***Enhanced Core and Recursive Intervention Programs*** with Research Based Success are embedded into 90 minute instructional block.
 - ***Calendar Math***, a 15 minute morning math routine is in place for all classrooms grades PreK – 5, and some classrooms in grades 6 and Pre-Algebra.
 - ***Do the Math***, a number sense and computation intervention program used in grades 3-5.
 - ***FASTT Math***, a math fact fluency program in grades 3-8, uses brain research to help student develop quick fact recall.
 - ***SMCPS Counting Assessment and Counting Profile*** provide diagnostic information for primary students (or older) who are experiencing difficulty with counting concepts and help define groups for intervention.
 - ***SMCPS Cognitively Guided Instruction Booklet*** which defines students in need of developing more mathematical communication and foundational understanding skills. Students identified using these tools are grouped for more instruction within the 90 minute block.

Over the past two years, middle school students in St. Mary's County have made significant progress on the mathematics portion of the MSA using this structure to determine which students require academic intervention. While there is still an achievement gap that exists between all students and the disaggregated populations, the achievement gap is clearly diminishing and students in subgroups are making significant improvement.

Strategies and Interventions that have been put into place are as follows:

- Collaborative team planning (PLCs) with data analysis from Performance Matters, formative and summative achievement data to determine selection of students for intervention groupings
- Predictive MSA Data projected the MSA score for each student and the generation of intervention groups from this information
- 90 minutes of mathematics instruction to reallocate instructional delivery time into a “60-20-10” time allotment
 - 60 minutes of new instruction
 - 20 minutes of recursive teaching
 - 10 minutes of intensive intervention or extension
- Revised curricular maps that address the time reallocation of “60-20-10”
- Teachers have the latitude and the time to group for intervention and to address performance weakness and error patterns within the 90 minute total math structure provided
- Core Mathematics Program, *Math Connects*, includes *Math Triumphs* used in grades 4-8. The *Math Triumphs* intervention program assist students who are two or more years below grade level to provide them with the skills to learn successfully and efficiently so that they can achieve at grade level. Research has shown that *Math Triumphs* is especially effective for special education students and SMCPS anticipates similar results with implementation of the program this year.
- SMART technology to enhance instruction for class and intervention instruction

Instructional resource teachers (master content teachers) providing direct instruction to small groups of students with identified mathematics need during the 90 minute instructional block.

Maryland School Assessment

Science

Based on the Examination of 2008 Maryland School Assessment Science Data for Grade 5 (Table 2.7) and Grade 8 (Table 2.8):

1. Describe your school system's results. In your response, identify the successes in terms of grade level(s) and subgroup(s).

In grade 5:

- Among all students, 75.9% scored proficient or advanced in 2008. We consider this to be a respectable score for the first year since we are in the process of learning what is expected on Science MSA.
- Two demographic groups scored above 80% on Science MSA (Asian/Pacific Islander-84.6%, and White-82.2%)

In grade 8:

- Among all students, 72.6% scored proficient or advanced in 2008. Again, this is a respectable score for the first year.
- Two demographic groups scored above 80% on Science MSA (Asian/Pacific Islander-93%, and White-80.8%).

2. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies that are designed to ensure progress. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations.

In elementary school:

- Curriculum writing resulting in units complete with all relevant activities is ongoing. At this point there are few units that still need to be written. Unit-writing is done under the guidance of the Science Instructional Resource Teacher and/or the Supervisor of Instruction for Science. All units are fully aligned with the Science State Curriculum and follow the 5-E lesson model. Unit-writing is funded through the general fund or through Title II funds. Training on new models takes place on the August and September Professional Days. Schools provide the Materials of Instruction needed for the implementation of the units.
- County Assessments are implemented in grades 3, 4, and 5. These assessments are modeled after the Science MSA, including both SR and CR items. Data from these assessments is posted in *Performance Matters*. Teachers use the data to address academic challenges related to the assessed objectives and design review to readdress these concepts. County Science Assessments and *Performance Matters* are funded through general funds.
- New teacher orientation in August and follow-up sessions throughout the year address science pedagogy, initial units, and strategies for addressing identified needs. These sessions are funded through Title II funds.
- Walk-throughs by the Science Instructional Resource Teacher are used to identify needs and to address problems related to science instruction. Suggestions for improvement are shared with the Principal, the school Instructional Resource Teacher and the teacher observed. There is no cost to this activity beyond the salary of the Science Instructional Resource Teacher.

- Updates and science instructional strategies are shared as appropriate throughout the year at the monthly Instructional Resource Teachers meetings. The Instructional Resource Teachers then take this information back to their school and communicate it to their staff. This is accomplished in grade level teams or at staff meetings after school.
- A “Success on Science MSA” meeting is held during the third quarter in which strategies for success that can be implemented in the weeks just prior to the Science MSA are shared. These may include a discussion of identified objectives in which students performed poorly on county assessments, suggestions for review activities, clarification of objectives, review of certain released items, and discussion of final units. This workshop is held after school and funded either through Title II funds or general fund.
- The Science Supervisor meets with Principals and Assistant Principals to share suggestions and strategies for success on Science MSA. This is accomplished during the monthly Administration and Supervision Meetings and does not require additional funding.

In middle school:

- County Assessments are implemented in grades 6, 7, and 8. These assessments are modeled after the Science MSA, including both SR and CR items. Data from these assessments is posted in *Performance Matters*. Teachers use the data to address academic challenges related to the assessed objectives and design review to readdress these concepts. County science assessments and *Performance Matters* are funded through general funds.
- New teacher orientation in August and follow-up sessions throughout the year address science pedagogy, initial units, and strategies for addressing identified needs. These sessions are funded through Title II funds.
- Walk-throughs of all middle school science teachers as well as formal observations of non-tenured teachers by the Science Supervisor provide feedback to teachers related to classroom instruction and assessments. Suggestions for improvement are shared with the Principal, the school Instructional Resource Teacher and the teacher observed. There is no additional cost to this activity.
- Updates and science instructional strategies are shared as appropriate throughout the year at the monthly Instructional Resource Teachers meetings. The Instructional Resource Teachers then take this information back to their school and communicate it to their staff. This is accomplished in grade level teams or at staff meetings after school and incurs no additional cost.
- Middle School teachers receive targeted professional development county-wide on the August, September, and May Professional Days. Topics on these days include the inquiry approach to instruction, assessment writing, high level thinking questions, use of technology, differentiation, reading strategies, performance tasks, vertical alignment and other topics as needed or requested. There is no additional cost to this training.
- Additional Professional Development has been targeted at each grade level.
 - At grade 8, training has included unit-writing, assessment-writing, using data to identify objectives in need of review prior to Science MSA, and identification of activities that could provide needed review for students.
 - At grades 6 and 7, training has included unit-writing, alignment of activities with the Science State Curriculum, and assessment-writing.

Products from these workshops are compiled and posted for teachers to access electronically. These workshops are supported through general funds or Title II funds.

- The Science Supervisor meets with Principals and Assistant Principals to share suggestions and strategies for success on Science MSA. This is accomplished during the monthly Administration and Supervision Meetings and does not require additional funding.

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

In elementary school:

- Subgroups with low achievement include African American (49.8%), Economically Disadvantaged (52.6%), Limited English Proficient (37.5%), and Special Education (44.7%). Limited English Proficient is a very small group of only 8 students county-wide.

In middle school:

- Subgroups with low achievement include African American (43.2%), American Indian/Alaska Native (57.1%), Economically Disadvantaged (43.9%), Limited English Proficient (25.0%), and Special Education (35.8%). American Indian/Alaska Native is a small group of only 7 students and Limited English Proficient is a small group of only 4 students county-wide.

4. Describe the changes or adjustments that will be made to ensure sufficient progress. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations, and incorporate timelines where appropriate.

In elementary school:

- Curriculum writing will continue with the implementation of at least twelve additional units over the course of this school year. Funding will be provided through Title II and general funds.
- Formation of committees for the examination of text materials for adoption in the 2010-2011 school year will take place. These committees will review text materials throughout the year in terms of alignment and format to best meet the needs of students in science. These materials may include texts, kits, electronic resources and/or readers that are specifically aligned with the state curriculum in science.
- Specific materials for Title I schools have been identified and purchased for this year. In science these include triple beam balances for grades 4 and 5. These are supported through Title I funds. They will be distributed to schools in September and training in the use of these balances will be provided during planning periods at the request of the school. Additional funding will not be necessary.
- A new kit “Investigating the Changing Earth” has been purchased for all grade 4 classrooms and will be implemented this fall. This kit addresses weathering and erosion, one indicator that has been an area of concern for the past two years on county assessments. This kit was provided through general funds. Training on the use of this kit is being provided through Title II funds and general funds.

In middle school:

- A workshop will be held in October for grade 8 teachers on the use of PASCO technology equipment related to investigations of force and motion. A consultant will be funded through a STEM grant and teacher substitutes will be funded through Title II funds.
- County assessments in grades 6, 7, & 8 will be modified based upon previous data and teacher input. A new grade 7 Mid-Course Assessment will be written and reviewed by teachers this fall to be administered in January.
- Instructional strategies will be provided to individual middle schools to address the needs of demographic groups that have lower levels of achievement. This will be done through department meetings, grade-level meetings, and/or with individual teachers using appropriate data in *Performance Matters*. This will be done during regularly scheduled duty times and will not require additional funding. First meetings will take place following the Grade 8 1st Quarter Assessment in November. Additional meetings will take place after the Grades 6, 7, and 8 Mid-Course Assessments in January. A final meeting will take place after the Grade 8 3rd Quarter Assessment in April. Should additional concerns arise during the year professional development may take place in addition to these meetings. If funding is required for additional PD, it will be supported through Title II and/or general funds.

High School Assessments

English

Based on the Examination of AYP Proficiency Data for English (Table 2.3):

1. Describe where progress is evident. In your response, identify progress in terms of subgroups.

We have experienced considerable and consistent progress in most of our student subgroups. African American student scores have increased 40 points since 2005, and their scores increased from 60.2% to 71.9% from 2007 to 2008, which equates close to a 12 point increase in just one year. FARMS student scores have increased 35.6 points since 2005, and their scores increased from 55.8 to 70.1 from 2007-2008, which is a significant 14 point single year increase. Special Education students have also made significant progress since 2005, experiencing a 41 point increase over the three year span. From 2007 to 2008, Special Education student scores rose from 40.2% to 52.6%, which represents a 12 point increase. While the overall percentage passing rate for this particular subgroup is still not where we would like it to be, their progress has been consistent over the past three years, and we will continue to focus our efforts to ensure that this is a trend that continues next year. Finally, we have experienced significant gains in our White student scores. Between 2005 and 2008, this group showed a 22.5 point increase; their scores increased from 83.2% to 88.1% from 2007 and 2008, which equates to almost a five point increase. While this group showed the smallest amount of growth last year, their scores have also consistently increased since 2005, and we expect this to be a trend that will continue.

2. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies to which you attribute the progress. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations.

The St. Mary's County Public Schools have been providing professional development to enhance teachers' skills in their ability to move beyond data review to the analysis of data for targeted and focused data-driven instructional recommendations. First quarter benchmarks support that effective grammar instruction in particular, for indicator 3.1.3, in 10th grade, have resulted in improvements as indicated with scores that have risen from to 62% in 2007 to 78% in 2009. Other professional development activities include professional development in revising and editing texts. The first quarter benchmark scores for indicator 2.2.3 rose from 73% in 2007 to 80% in 2009. At risk ninth graders were indentified and scheduled into the 9/90 instructional periods for English and Algebra. Content supervisors organized this period into instructional times. This organization provides for extended instruction/remediation/re-teaching and extensions.

Much of our success can be attributed to the system-wide implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs). Teachers worked collaboratively over the past year to use benchmark and classroom data in order target specific indicators and objectives for instruction and re-teaching. Special Education teachers played an integral role in the PLCs, offering their expertise in the areas of differentiating instruction and adjusting instructional practices to meet the needs of at-risk student subgroups. The procurement of additional resources and teacher stipends were funded by a grant,

which allowed for the assistance the PLCs needed to provide the most effective support for Special Education students.

In order to assist teachers with collecting summative data, quarterly county benchmarks were administered in grades 9 and 10, and mid-course and end-of-course benchmarks were administered in grades 11 and 12. Utilizing *Performance Matters*, our data warehousing system, teachers were able to sort data in order to identify specific areas where student learning was not evident. While most of the data analysis was done in PLC meetings, targeted central office support was provided to 10th grade teachers in March. At a full-day session, these teachers analyzed the data from three previous county benchmark assessments to design a “practice” HSA-style assessment which was administered in early April and used to further target instruction in the weeks prior to the HSA in May.

In order to support our emerging teacher leaders, an English Leadership Team (ELT), consisting of PLC leaders and English Department Chairpersons, was established. This group met five times throughout the year to collaborate on matters that included data analysis, instructional planning, and strategies for increasing collaboration with members of their PLC and department. This group provided the link between central office and the classroom teachers that was critical in improving communication and ensuring implementation with fidelity of system-wide initiatives, such as professional learning communities. Teachers received stipends for their participation in after school ELT and PLC meetings.

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

As mentioned above, our Special Education student scores are still lower than we would like to see them. Although this subgroup has demonstrated consistent improvement over the past three years, we would like to see the scores of Special Education students be more equitable to our other student subgroups. Our Asian/Pacific Islander subgroup is the only group that experienced a decrease in scores between 2006 and 2008. Their pass rate in 2006 was 89.3% and in 2008 it was 86.2%. Their scores, however, were pretty consistent from 2007 to 2008 with only a slight .5 percentage point decrease. Our Hispanic students have experienced neither a decrease nor an increase in scores over the past three years; their scores have remained consistently around 84% since 2006.

4. Describe the changes or adjustments that will be made to ensure sufficient progress. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations, and incorporate timelines where appropriate.

At our quarterly data analysis meetings with teachers, increased attention will be given to the performance of these subgroups on county benchmark assessments, and this data will be used to make decisions regarding instruction and professional development relating to differentiation. Special Education teachers will continue to be an integral part of the PLC. PLCs will be required to specifically identify (in their quarterly action plans) the strategies and support they intend to provide Special Education students. In addition, weekly formative assessments will be required of all classroom teachers in order to more frequently monitor the learning of all students. Instructional and administrative walk-thoughts will occur regularly in an effort to identify best practices and provide feedback for improving the quality of classroom instruction. The feedback and subsequent

professional development will be conducted through monthly PLC meetings, bi-monthly English Leadership Team meetings, quarterly data analysis sessions, and designated system-wide professional development days.

We will look very closely at the HSA performance of 11th grade students and subsequent subgroups in order to provide support for individual students prior to the January administration of the HSA. This support will be provided to classroom teachers by the HSA lead/bridge teachers in each building as well as from the IRT for English. These teachers will design several products (by the end of October) to assist eleventh grade teachers with providing individualized support for eleventh grade students who still have not passed the HSA; this will include parallel bridge projects and HSA practice activities using public release items. For those students who were not able to pass the HSA in their junior year, a bridge plan has been fully implemented for seniors; bridge teachers in each building will provide instruction that is targeted to the needs of each bridging senior in order to support their success not only on their bridge projects, but also in their future attempts at taking the HSA in the fall and spring. At the other end of the spectrum, an English 9/90 class has been put into place at each high school in order to ensure the future success of our 9th grade struggling readers; 45 minutes of the 90 minute class will be dedicated to providing individualized reading interventions. These classrooms have been equipped with interactive technology including SMART boards with LCD projectors, SMART document cameras, Airliner tablets and the *Turning Point* response systems.

Based on the Examination of 2008 High School Assessment (HSA) Results for English (Tables 3.1 and 3.2):

1. Identify any additional challenges that are evident.

While we experienced significant gains among our tenth grade students, the eleventh grade pass rate on the HSA continues to be a challenge. Even though 87% of our juniors have already passed the HSA, the group that has not yet passed continued to struggle on the HSA last year. 128 of our juniors have attempted the test twice and not yet passed, which equals 13% of the students in the class of 2011. Of this 13%, almost half of them are Special Education students (46.4%) and a quarter of them are African American (26%). Another challenge for us is in the number of students who have not yet taken the test. 35 tenth graders and 21 eleventh graders have not yet attempted to take the test, which could present problems for us as these students approach their senior year; the concern would be in qualifying for the bridge plan.

2. Describe the interventions that the school system has in place to support students in passing the English HSA. How effective are they? What evidence do you have of their effectiveness? Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations.

A concerted effort is being made this year to identify eleventh grade students who have not passed the HSA. Administrators and HSA lead teachers worked together to determine the best way to provide support to this particular group of students. In some schools, students will receive additional enrichment in a designated class, while in other schools a pull-out model is being implemented. In order to strengthen the pull-out model, which was difficult to implement last year, new support materials will be developed. This will include parallel bridge projects for each of the four HSA

reporting categories as well as HSA practice activities using public release items. Additionally, money has been made available (via a grant) to purchase other resources and several schools took advantage of this money last year by purchasing additional workbooks to be used in the pull-out sessions and in regular classroom settings.

The targeted needs of special education students beyond the IEPs are being met in several ways. An English 9/90 course was designed to provide students with 45 minutes of English 9 instruction, as well as an additional 45 minutes for reading instructional intervention. Special education students also have access to advanced technology and programs in their English classrooms, including SMART boards and Study Island. In grades 10 and 11, classroom intervention projects are being developed for both special education and regular education students to provide further assistance and alternative assessments for targeted indicators and reporting categories. Twilight High School also provides additional instructional support for students to seek assistance in HSA content classes. The HSA Special Education discretionary grant allows teams of staff from each high school to provide afterschool support in English, Government, Biology and Algebra. Teams consist of three general educators and one special educator, a counselor and administrator.

Our bridge program, which supports seniors who still need to pass the HSA or earn the combined score required for a diploma, is firmly in place. Each content area has a bridge teacher who has time designated in his/her day to work specifically with seniors who are working on bridge projects as well as with assisting teachers and students with other means of remediation. At each school, this team of teachers has met regularly to discuss the individual needs of seniors and to strategically map out a plan for completing the necessary bridge projects. This was a very effective model last year, and it is in place again this year. Our students successfully completed 107 bridge projects last year, 30 of them being English projects. Not one SMCPs student was denied a diploma last year because he/she did not meet the HSA requirement in any of the testing areas.

Additional curriculum materials are in place this year in order to assist our classroom teachers. Quarterly pre-assessments, specifically in the area of language usage and conventions, were designed by teachers in summer curriculum workshops. These assessments will allow teachers to specifically target language indicators and grammar skills and, in turn, plan instruction to address the specific needs of their students. Model units were also revised for grades 11 and 12 which provide teachers with lessons and activities that are aligned to our first quarter curriculum map and are reflective of best practices.

In terms of the ninth and tenth grade teachers, our interventions have been mainly in the form of support and professional development in the areas of data analysis, data-driven decision making, and best practices. In the past, we have pulled teachers for full day sessions following the county benchmark assessments to analyze data and plan instruction according to the results. We did not do this last year; instead we relied more on PLCs to organize their own data discussions and collaboratively plan instruction. Using the PLC model English teachers met monthly to analyze data and plan instruction. Due to the time it takes to complete the process of data-driven decision making and instructional planning, we are going to once again implement the data-driven decision making days using substitutes. Instead of only including ninth and tenth grade teachers, however, this year we will work with eleventh and twelfth grade teachers as well. We will have data to discuss with the eleventh and twelfth grade teachers due to the implementation of new quarterly benchmark

assessments this year. Our steady increase in HSA scores in all sub-groups over the past three years is proof that our efforts with collaborative planning are paying off. We hope the combined success of the data analysis sessions with full implementation of professional learning communities will allow us to continue to make significant progress in HSA scores across the board this year. New quarterly benchmarks in grades 11 and 12 will provide more data for teachers to make informed decisions.

3. Describe what, if anything, the school system will do differently than in past years to address the challenges identified. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations.

Now that our curriculum materials and summative assessments are firmly in place and PLCs are widely being implemented, the biggest change for English will be in targeting our efforts on professional learning that will directly impact student learning. While instructional walk-throughs have been conducted in the past, we will increase their frequency and adjust the feedback provided to teachers in order to make it more effective in impacting instructional practice and, in turn, student learning. We will also conduct a book study (*Ahead of the Curve*) with the leadership team, focusing on the area of assessment. Since this is the first year we are requiring, at a minimum, weekly formative assessments from classroom teachers, we will need to support them in this area. The book study is one way of doing this, and further support will be provided in professional development sessions throughout the year. Additional (optional) professional development will also be designed and provided based on needs identified by teachers via an end-of-year survey from 2009. Finally, a peer coaching model will be piloted at each of the schools in a continued effort to improve professional learning that will positively impact instructional practice.

High School Assessments

Algebra/Data Analysis

Based on the Examination of AYP Proficiency Data for Algebra/Data Analysis (Table 2.6):

1. Describe where progress is evident. In your response, identify progress in terms of subgroups.

The overall performance of our high school population reached an all-time proficiency percentage high of 90.1% on the 2008 Algebra/Data Analysis HSA with an increase of 7.7 percentage points over aggregated 2007 HSA results and has increased 18.7 percentage points over two years. 55.1% of Special Education students made proficiency with an increase of 10.3 percentage points over 2007 disaggregated HSA results and have increased 23.1 percentage points over two years. 76.1% of FARM students made proficiency with an increase of 5.7 percentage points over 2007 disaggregated HSA results and have increased 29.4 percentage points over two years. 80.3% of African American students made proficiency with an increase of 15.9 percentage points over 2007 disaggregated HSA results and have increased 35.8 percentage points over two years. The achievement gap is narrowing for Special Education, FARM, and African American students in comparison to their White counterparts.

Over the past two years, students taking the HSA Algebra/Data Analysis in the St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) have made significant progress on the assessment. On the 2008 HSA, the aggregate increase in proficiency from 2007 to 2008 was 7.7%. At the same time, our disaggregated populations have followed suit with African American students (16.9%), Free/Reduced Meals (FARMS) students (5.7%), and Special Education students (10.3%), all following the general trend with increased proficiency. Although the achievement gap remains, data supports that achievement for these three subgroups have made more progress in the last two years, when compared to general population (see above and Table 2.5).

2. Identify the practices, programs, or strategies to which you attribute the progress. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations.

Our Algebra curriculum is acutely aligned with the Core Learning Goals of the Maryland State Curriculum (MSC). In addition, curricula for elementary school mathematics foundation courses and high school coursework have been aligned with state and national standards as well, effectively building a prekindergarten through grade 14 articulated program for our students that was forward and backward mapped from Algebra. This comprehensive approach to developing our curriculum was designed to prepare all students for success on both the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) and the High School Assessment for Algebra/Data Analysis and culminated in the 8th grade on grade level middle school mathematics students sitting for a formal Pre-algebra class (in preparation for their 9th grade Algebra experience).

Embedded within the aforementioned curriculum alignment was an extended period of mathematics time (i.e., 90 minute blocks) for some Algebra coursework piloted at a few schools. While much of the focus for the 90 minute block is squarely on more time for teaching the Algebra, a tangential focus was for teachers to plan more judiciously for the block and focus on building stronger student-

teacher relationships within the classroom framework, especially with those disaggregated populations who traditionally underperform.

Also, in school year 2008-2009, SMCPS adopted new mathematics textbooks for all K-12 classrooms. Our dual focus was on “articulation” and “balance” especially when it came to curricular and instructional delivery. These were chief reasons why we adopted the *Pre-Algebra* and *Algebra* series, respectively, from Holt McDougal. Additionally, with each textbook series came ancillary materials commonly known as “note-taking guides” that help students build a framework for learning, especially for our on grade level populations; and various “test generators” that give our teachers more resources to build recursive formative assessments on items that have persistently “non-performed” throughout the year.

Another strategy that SMCPS employed to a high degree of success is the navigation of our data warehouse system-*Performance Matters*-in ways that allow our teachers to plan instruction that is more data-driven. Using the results from quarterly, countywide assessments, teachers and their collaborative teams were able to drill down to the indicator level and focus explicitly on an item that was a “non-performer.” Employing a number of recursive, formative assessments, teachers and teams were able to assimilate the strengths and weaknesses of their students and juxtapose these results with those demonstrated on the countywide assessments for the purposes of separating students in one of three levels (i.e., introductory; developing; and advanced) and then differentiating their instruction to either remediate or extend said instruction in homogeneous learning levels for that non-performing item. This method was also encouraged to be employed with flexible groups with teachers that were parallel scheduled throughout the duty day.

Regarding the data analysis that was done throughout the year, teachers had been instructed to employ two specific data metrics when analyzing student performance:

- Proficiency Metric
- Value-Added Growth Metric

The Proficiency Metric was used to evaluate mean score proficiency on all local assessments while the Value-Added Growth Metric was applied to the same assessments to measure the learning growth, by student/class/cohort/school/district on each specific Core Learning Goal. Using both data metrics, teachers were able to gauge a much more true measure of learning in each student and were able to more accurately predict future performance on the HSA. Moreover, aggregate (grade level) and individual (specific) HSA predictions based on lagging data were made for all students using linear regression analysis and formulated mid April so that teachers could further adjust their instruction to meet the needs of their learners so that they, in turn, could meet proficiency on the HSA.

Throughout the year, SMCPS has taken a variety of approaches to professional development so that we can help teachers more effectively address the learning needs of our students. Several calculator workshops were conducted for both middle school and high school teachers. The focus of these trainings was to increase the Algebra teachers’ knowledge of and familiarity with the TI-83 or TI-84 graphing calculators and their application in Algebra I so that they could help students more seamlessly apply this technology. In addition, a large majority of our Algebra teachers have attended the Governor’s Academy for Algebra/Data Analysis and will be expected to share some of the

strategies and information that they learned during scheduled staff development activities throughout the 2009-2010 school year.

Finally, as a consumable, “synthesizing” resource, all students were provided with a grade level *HSA Synthesizer* before Winter Break and used through the end of the year that focused on the six content strands present on the HSA. The resource allowed students to assimilate the grade level mathematics in a venue that was not indicator specific yet collated to a strand so that students were able to subtly piece together learning connections.

The majority of students pass algebra in middle school. This has the unintended benefit of increased availability of instructional resources at high school, to focus instructional intervention on those students who haven’t yet mastered Algebra.

The following is intended to help decrease the gap:

- To specifically address the achievement gap, at the beginning of the school year, each school identifies the “greatest area of need” (GAN) using lagging and anecdotal data. The mathematics departments collectively work to identify strategies to specifically address and mitigate the GAN in both the site and within individual classrooms.
- These strategies are reviewed and monitored quarterly to progress monitor. The special education sub group continues to be identified as the GAN for each school across each grade level.
- Algebra maps for each of our cohorts have been revised with an intense focus on back mapping and alignment,
- Each map has been differentiated (in terms of its presentation) to allow the teachers to glean information that is most conducive to their own teaching style and includes the following elements:
 - The creation of a daily pacing guide that is used to interface with the more holistic quarterly map.
 - The addition of a column entitled “embedded assessment” that allows “4-square quizzes” – drilled down to core learning goals
 - The “4-square quiz results are to be downloaded by staff on our intranet/SharePoint with the intent that Algebra teams use that data to seamlessly flex-group and recursively teach.
 - The column entitled “SMART resources” allows SMART board pre-algebra and algebra lessons to be immediately available to staff within each algebra unit on our intranet/SharePoint.
 - The addition of a column entitled “vocabulary” highlights specific content vocabulary providing pre-teaching/concept development as well as material for re-teaching and clarification.
- Algebra courses have been differentiated to align instructional supports for students and H.S. credit requirements. (Algebra 1 Certificate of Merit, Algebra 1 CTE completer, Algebra Comprehensive at-risk populations, Algebraic Foundations, students who are non computational)

- *The Algebra Comprehensive* course which targets the GAN population provides 90 minutes of instruction, divided into a daily “60-20-10 split”. This split is reflected in the revised curricular maps (60 minutes instruction, 20 minutes recursive teaching and 10 minutes of intensive, focused intervention/extension.
- Teachers have also been instructed to view this framework from a weekly perspective (300 minutes of time for new instruction 100 minutes of weekly recursive teaching; and 50 minutes of weekly intensive intervention/extension.
- The additional instructional time provides teachers with the flexibility to squarely address performance weakness and error patterns.
- The Algebra Comprehensive teams (general educators and special educators) collaborate to create flex groupings across classrooms for more discrete differentiation based on student performance on weekly, common, and formative assessments that are built by each school’s Algebra PLC.
- The *online Algebra Intervention* (Pearson) The 50 minute period of intensive intervention/extension provides the time for interface with our *Pearson* without pullouts which, as we know, can be occasionally disruptive and withholding for special education students

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

Although progress was made, the African American, FARMS and Special Education student groups’ performance is below that of the other students groups.

Our major challenge resides in the subgroup of Special Education where only 55.1% of students were proficient. Additionally, the achievement gap (given in the following parentheses), while mitigated over a two year stretch, continues to exist for our African American (-9.8 percentage points), Free and Reduced Meals (-14.0 percentage points), and Special Education (-35.0 percentage points) cohorts, respectively, as compared to the aggregate.

4. Describe the changes or adjustments that will be made to ensure sufficient progress. Include a discussion of the corresponding resource allocations, and incorporate timelines where appropriate.

There are a few major initiatives and changes that we are incorporating into our Algebra approach for school year 2009-2010, the first of which is our revision and modification of all curricular maps and guides coursework which will reflect more of traditional Algebra flavor, specifically highlighting non-linear exposure for students with a focus on rigor. All revisions were done by teachers for teachers by a cadre of instructional leaders in our county.

Moreover, all middle school curricula are now reflective of more of a “March to March” calendar as opposed to the traditional “August to May” instructional window. This facilitates a natural “backfilling and articulation” for grade level instruction; that is, “backfilling instruction” for persistent non-performing indicators before/after the MSA administration per a data review and “articulation instruction” for helping students prepare for their next mathematics coursework. This instructional paradigm shift will be especially helpful for those rising high school Algebra students presently sitting in an 8th grade Pre-algebra class.

Additionally, there will be an acute focus on Special Education students and reaching their learning potential through a variety of mediums. Regular and Special Educators will be collaborating on core instruction through the full implementation of the *Math Triumphs* series through the 8th grade at all sites and the adoption of an eclectic mix of algebraic resources at the high schools. As a result of the collaboration, the mathematics supervisor will be regularly in-servicing both the Regular and Special Education cohorts while conducting more frequent data analyses throughout the year and sharing the results monthly to a joint audience.

Lastly, students who enter high school not yet ready for the rigor of our Algebra 1 CM course enroll in our Algebra Comprehensive course. This class meets every day for two consecutive 45 minute periods. This gives students more time to process the mathematics and thus a greater opportunity to learn. All the while, stronger student-teacher classroom relationships are forged. Students are selected for this course based on two criteria: their performance grade in 8th grade Pre-algebra and their 8th grade MSA score. The MSA scores are used for placement, in conjunction with grades, as there exists a strong correlation as students that demonstrate proficiency on the 8th grade MSA (i.e., higher than a 412) have a pass rate of 96% the Algebra/ Data Analysis HSA in 9th grade. To further support the instructional delivery of the extended time period for Algebra, technology in the form of SMART boards have been purchased for all middle school mathematics, LAP, and SAIL classrooms for the sole purpose of giving traditionally underperforming students an alternative modality with which to interface.

Based on the Examination of 2008 High School Assessment Results for Algebra/Data Analysis (Tables 3.3 and 3.4):

1. Identify any additional challenges that are evident.

In the class of 2010, 16.3 percent of African American students, 37 percent of Special Education students and 18.8 percent of FARMS students have not passed the HSA. In the class of 2011, the same student groups are of concern.

Primarily, the biggest challenge is moving the HSA Algebra/Data Analysis and all of its curricula and testing to the 9th grade. SMCPS is in the process of doing just this for the 2009-2010 school year as we attempt to collapse our two-year Algebra 1 course and enroll our most challenged students in the two-period Algebra course entitled “Algebra Comprehensive” during their 9th grade year. This curriculum shift in Algebra would mitigate the percentage of students (5.8% - 63 total) that have not taken the HSA by the end of their 10th grade year (per Table 3.3). Of the 5.8% of 10th grade students that have not sat for the HSA as of yet, 6.7% of these students are African-American; 5.3% are White (non-Hispanic); 12.4% are Special Education students; and 8.1% are FARMS.

What is more challenging is the number of students that populate these subgroups (sometimes multiple times) that have taken the HSA and failed. A glaring 14.5% of our 10th graders have taken and not passed the HSA by the end of their 10th grade year. Of the 14.5% of these students, 33.5% are African-American; 10.6% are White (non-Hispanic); 41% are Special Education students; and 30.2% are FARMS. These results speak to a breakdown in both instruction and student responsibility and these will be jointly addressed over the course of this school year.

As we move to Table 3.4, 23 students of our 11th graders (or 2.3%) have yet to sit for the Algebra/Data Analysis HSA and 76 eleventh graders have taken and not passed the HSA. What is most alarming is that 20 out of the aforementioned 76 students (or 12.9%) are Special Education students.

2. Describe the interventions that the school system has in place to support students in passing the Algebra/Data Analysis HSA. How effective are they? What evidence do you have of their effectiveness? Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations.

Students who fail both the Algebra I course and the Algebra/Data Analysis HSA are re-enrolled in Algebra 1, and the Pearson Algebra Intervention self-paced computer program will be a new initiative for helping our county reach these students. The program is aligned to the ACT College Readiness Standards and is cross-referenced to Maryland's Core Learning Goals. Embedded in the program are three levels of intervention, each with up to three intervention passes, and each different from the other. The three levels of intervention include Basic Math Skills; Pre-Algebra Intervention; and Algebra Intervention.

Students who pass our Algebra 1 course but fail the Algebra/Data Analysis HSA will be asked to enroll in a one semester course called the Algebra/Data HSA Review Course. This course's curriculum was revised this past spring and summer and focuses on the Core Learning Goals. Since this course is just for one semester, it will be rather fast paced. Approximately 10 of the 18 weeks will be devoted to the indicator and objectives in Goal 1: Algebra and Functions and the remaining eight weeks will be dedicated to teaching the indicators and objectives in Goal 3: Data Analysis and Probability. Since these classes will be quite small, approximately 10 – 15 students per section, teachers can tailor the instruction to the individual needs of their students. Students in the aforementioned HSA Review Course will sit for the HSA in January.

Another program, a grade-recovery program entitled "Twilight School," provides additional Algebra instructional time after the regular school day. Each school's program varies somewhat. Generally, Twilight School begins about 10 weeks prior to the test administration and meets from one to three times a week for an hour or two. The Algebra teachers re-address the topics that were covered previously. The instruction is very focused and drilled down to non-performing indicators/Core Learning Goals. HSA public release items are a primary source of material used during the program. Students are allowed to improve their previous quarter(s) grades based on their achievement in Twilight School.

3. Describe what, if anything, the school system will do differently than in past years to address the challenges identified. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations.

Our school system is making three major changes in how to address our challenges. First, all high schools are making a major effort to highly recommend the enrollment of the HSA Review Course for those students who have passed Algebra 1 and have failed the HSA. As previously stated, the instruction will be highly focused on algebraic weakness and student-centered for the sole purpose of helping students achieve proficiency on the HSA.

Secondly, summer school protocol for HSA coursework will be slightly modified so that Algebra credit can be recovered with a few more tie-ins to HSA proficiency. That is, summer school Algebra credit will not be awarded to students unless they sit for the HSA and score higher than a 412 during the July administration. This slight change in credit recovery will, hopefully, allow students to pay more acute attention throughout the year and not wait for our summer school to recover a year's worth of curriculum/instruction.

Finally, the office of Special Education has acquired grant monies for helping their cohort of students become more proficient on the HSA. This has facilitated collaboration between our offices so that our message to teachers of both Regular and Special Education becomes more streamlined and focused. The procurement of these monies will be allocated for collaborative planning (with a focus on common assessment, drilled down to Core Learning Goal), the implementation of a "Twilight School" at each site, and the purchasing of interactive classroom technology to engage students in the hopes of finding the right mix for students to make sense of the Algebra. The algebra 9/90 course provides 90 minutes of instruction for struggling 9th graders has been infused with interactive technology to engage learners

As a final aside, our high schools are all making concerted efforts to place the most effective teachers in HSA classrooms. Heretofore, many teachers would opt out of these classes for a myriad of reasons—and principals would allow this to occur. Recently, many highly skilled teachers who would normally be slated for teaching Honors or AP coursework are being tapped to not only teach the HSA Algebra/Data Analysis curriculum but to also take the lead in facilitating collaborative planning and intervention/remediation groups. By this time next year, every one of our highest-able teachers will be teaching at least one HSA class.

High School Assessments

Biology

Based on the Examination of 2008 High School Assessment Results for Biology (Tables 3.5 and 3.6):

1. Identify the challenges that are evident.

In the class of 2010, 19.2 percent of African American Students, 36.8 percent of Special Education students and 24 percent of FARMS students have not passes the Biology HSA. In the class of 2011 the same student groups are of greatest concern.

2. Describe the interventions that the school system has in place to support students in passing the Biology HSA. How effective are they? What evidence do you have of their effectiveness? Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations.
 - Biology Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are highly effective. Teachers meet biweekly or more often to plan lessons, write common assessments, discuss instructional strategies, analyze data from classroom and county assessments, design review, discuss differentiation strategies and other relevant activities targeting student needs. These meetings occur during the duty day and do not require additional funding.
 - Biology PLC leads have reduced teaching schedules and use the extra time to analyze data, support other teachers, and address individual or small groups of students who have specific needs. These students may be scheduled with this teacher or may be occasionally pulled from other classes. This has resulted in additional teachers being hired to maintain reasonable class sizes. Biology PLC leads met regularly throughout the year with the supervisor following bridge scoring to address needs and to share strategies between schools.
 - New teachers receive an immense amount of support from the Office of Professional Development in the form of ongoing New Teacher Workshops, mentor support throughout the year, PLC support, and administrative support which includes school administrators as well as supervisor support. This ensures that these teachers are proficient from the beginning. This support has been highly successful and in nearly all cases, there are very few differences in student achievement among new teachers as compared to veteran teachers. Title II funds are used for professional development of new teachers.
 - Review following assessment is designed to address the challenges identified by the assessment data. This occurs during the school day throughout the year, but is most intense prior to the quarterly county assessments and prior to Biology HSA. In some cases students are hand-selected to temporarily move to another classroom for targeted review.
 - Review outside of the school day includes several approaches:
 - credit recovery after school during the second semester for students who failed the first semester
 - after school review sessions which may happen any time during the year with specific teachers, but consistently occur in the weeks just prior to Biology HSA.
 - use of Biology HSA review materials individually or with certain groups of students during class, after school, or for homework

- Saturday school in which targeted review is provided for students who are specifically invited to attend
 - Funding is provided to support review outside of the school day from a Special Education grant and from school funds
 - Students passing Biology class, but failing the Biology HSA are expected to retake this assessment at every possible administration. Prior to the reassessment review is implemented in one or more of the ways mentioned above.
 - Fairlead Academy was opened in the fall of 2008 for the purpose of addressing the needs of incoming grade 9 students who were below grade level in reading and mathematics. In science, they took a pilot class (Explorations in Science). This course introduced students to all Core sciences with a specific focus on biology and the connections between the sciences. Development of skills and processes were also a focus. The goal was to provide the needed support for these students who would take biology as sophomores. This program was highly successful with all students passing this course. Most have moved back to their home school and some will remain to take biology at this school in grade 10.
 - PLC Leads met over several weeks in the spring of 2009 to write review curriculum for biology. This work was supported through a Special Education grant. The activities identified and designed were specifically targeted for the challenged learner. Strategies for reading, development of skills and processes, and close alignment to the assessment limits were included. This review curriculum was designed to be completed in approximately 15 student sessions of 90 minutes. Therefore, it is suitable for after school sessions as well as for summer school.
 - Vertical alignment with middle school continues to be a focus ensuring that students enter high school with the foundational knowledge and skills that they need to be successful in high school science courses. This is accomplished through three county-wide professional days in which all secondary teachers meet with the supervisor. Training based upon observed need and teacher request is provided related to science instruction. At one of the professional days, the focus is vertical alignment and middle school teachers are grouped with high school teachers in content strands. During this past year higher level thinking was addressed with a focus on assessments appropriate to each level. Training was held with middle school teachers during the school day on alignment with the Science State Curriculum and aligned assessment items were written. Substitutes were provided through Title II funds.
3. Describe what, if anything, the school system will do differently than in past years to address the challenges identified. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations.
- Additional biology teachers have been hired this year to address increase in enrollment and to ensure that class sizes remain small. In all but one case these have been funded through reallocation of teaching staff within each high school.
 - Two new biology sections have been created at Fairlead Academy. This required the hiring of a teacher that spends part of the day at this school and part of the day at Great Mills High School. This is a new position requiring funding from the general budget. It also required the funding for texts, materials and equipment for a new biology classroom, and the structural changes needed to convert a classroom into a science lab. All of these funds were from the general budget.

- Implementation of the new review curriculum will occur this year. Additional funding through a new Special Education grant is available for further development of this curriculum and for the implementation in sessions outside of the school day.
- Explorations in Science which was piloted at Fairlead Academy last year has been expanded to all high schools this year. Students enrolled in this course are those who have been identified as below grade level in mathematics (do not meet the criteria for enrollment in Algebra I). It is being taught by teachers certified in Biology. Throughout this course, students will be exposed to all Core sciences with specific focus on Biology and how it is linked to the other sciences. This will give a much better foundation to Biology which they will take in the sophomore year than the previous grade 9 course, Earth/Space Science, which will now be available for upperclassmen. General budget funding was provided for new texts and for materials and equipment for this new course. The Special Education grant is available to support curriculum and assessment writing as well as other needs that may arise with this new course.
- Supervisory support will continue with all Biology PLCs. However, additional support in the form of classroom visitation, additional meetings based upon need, work with individual teachers and other support as needed, will be provided to Chopticon High School. A new PLC lead has been identified. Analysis of root causes and challenges will result in specific action plans and implemented changes that result in increased achievement on Biology HSA.
- In terms of vertical alignment, a focus this year will be middle school science unit-writing including the development of rigorous activities that are aligned with the Science State Curriculum. This will be accomplished through PLC work on Professional Days and additional training after school and/or during the school day with substitutes. Resources will be provided through Title II funds or General Budget funds.

High School Assessments

Government

Based on the Examination of 2008 High School Assessment Results for Government (Tables 3.4 – 3.8):

1. Identify the challenges that are evident.

In the class of 2010, 14.8 percent of African American students, 30.4 percent of Special Education students and 15.9 percent of FARMS students have not passed the Government HSA. In the class of 2011, the same student groups are of concern.

2. Describe the interventions that the school system has in place to support students in passing the Government HSA. How effective are they? What evidence do you have of their effectiveness? Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations.

SMCPS implements a comprehensive intervention system to ensure students are learning and earning a passing score on the Government assessment. The intervention system designed for Government is an integrated process consisting of assessments and data-driven instruction. The detailed components of the system are locally developed benchmarks, Professional Learning Community (PLC) formative assessments, synthesizing activities, locally developed review course materials, and co-taught classes. In addition, the intervention system also focuses on the different student groups.

One important component of the intervention system is identifying students' strengths and challenge areas by using locally developed benchmarks. These assessments are aligned to the learning targets that are provided by the Maryland State Curriculum. These formative assessments model the High School Assessment as well as align with the local curriculum maps and assessment limits. For example, Government administers four assessments as well as a pre-assessment to assist with monitoring student progress and identifying learning targets that need to be re-taught within the classroom. Even though the four assessments are based on the pacing of the curriculum map, these assessments are enhanced to include the addition of poor performance items based on the results of previous assessments. This will drive instruction based on student need in relation to the Maryland State Curriculum and provide targeted interventions for students.

An important element of the locally developed benchmarks is that each student's performance data is collected on the data warehousing system, *Performance Matters*. This allows the PLCs to design instruction to meet the specific needs of each student and use flexible grouping to deliver the intervention. In addition, the *Performance Matters 2* data that is collected for the county-level benchmarks, allows filtering of student groups to identify students within the group and analyze their performance separately. Interventions include reading and writing strategies, peer review of constructed responses, use of graphic organizers, and tutoring.

Another facet to the intervention system is PLC assessments that check for student learning. Using an Assessment Planning Guide and reviewing the locally developed curriculum maps based on the Maryland State Curriculum, PLCs draft and administer common assessments. This process allows teachers to collaborate and address essential questions that focus on determining power standards and the most appropriate method to assess student progress on understanding the designated learning targets. For example, PLCs develop “quick-checks” which are assessments of learning. They consist of four drafted selected response items consisting of current learning targets as well as poor performing items. This type of assessment allows the PLCs to make data-driven instructional decisions.

In addition to the development of the assessments, another component of the intervention system is the implementation of the co-teaching model. This instructional model includes Special Education students within the general education classroom as well as the social studies teacher and the Special Education teacher who is certified in social studies. These classrooms are also equipped with the interactive technology. This allows these classes to utilize the Turning Point student response system to chart student progress on the different assessment limits and engage students in the assessment process. In addition, the SMART board increases the level of classroom engagement with the interactive technology and access to online Government course material.

The fourth component is the development of synthesizing and outsourcing activities that align with locally developed curriculum maps and are integrated in the classroom instruction. This is an important segment of the system because it allows students to process and transfer the knowledge in a meaningful manner. It also provides students an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding by using the information they have been learning in some manner. Examples of synthesizing and outsourcing activities include: Pairs to Squares, Expert Groups, and Mindmaps, Thinking at Right Angles, Fishbone, and Venn diagrams. These activities are designed to promote comprehension of the declarative knowledge by clustering. This means providing strategies to help organize the pieces of information into meaningful units. It also includes helping students to actively transfer the knowledge and become more aware of themselves as learners by actively monitoring their learning as they complete the various activities.

Another key component to the intervention system is the review Government course. This course is established for students who pass the course but fail the High School Assessments (HSA) in Government. HSA Lead Teachers use data to identify areas most in need of review and differentiate instruction for each student to support success in passing the assessment on the re-test. These teachers use instructional resources that are identified for interventions and online resources for Government. In addition, the students are provided with review books and assessments that are administered to monitor student learning.

In addition to the different factors that are outlined above, this intervention system has several additional components that are targeted for the Special Education and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. Special Education students are in the general education classroom based on the decisions made by the IEP team. Since many students within this student group face challenges with reading, classroom teachers have received significant training in reading in the content area. Reading strategies are regularly implemented to assist students with reading challenges.

Kurzweil software is used to assist students with reading disabilities and all local benchmarks are available using the software. Special Education teachers participate in all professional development activities, including professional development days, quarterly data meetings, professional learning communities, and the vertical articulation day. In addition, special educators participate in the Governor's Academy and other professional development opportunities offered by the Maryland State Department of Education. To assist Limited English Proficient students within the classroom, English As A Second Language (ESL) teachers provide support as needed once or twice per week as indicated by the student's level of proficiency. This support consists of assistance with the text and with writing or other assignments as needed.

3. Describe what, if anything, the school system will do differently than in past years to address the challenges identified. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations.

One approach that will be added to improve the intervention system and address the challenges facing the school system is classroom modules. They are locally developed formative assessments that will be administered to assist students who are not demonstrating proficiency on the quarterly benchmarks. Students are selected to complete the classroom modules based on data from the classroom and *Performance Matters*. The classroom modules include the following elements:

- The classroom modules are aligned to the Maryland State Curriculum.
- Essential questions are derived from the learning targets. These questions ask about the big ideas and concepts in the learning targets. These questions are answered by using a variety of instructional strategies.
- The essential declarative knowledge of the classroom module is the content needed to address the essential questions. The classroom modules provide the declarative knowledge to assist with the discussion of the essential questions as well as other content information that is useful in discussing these essential questions.
- The classroom modules encompass a variety of skills. There is a conscious attempt to emphasize reading and writing within the classroom modules.
- The summative assessment is a performance assessment because students have to apply what they have learned in the module to an authentic situation. It is designed to provide evidence of student understanding of the essential questions. The evidence collected is also to allow students an opportunity to do higher level thinking. These modules ask students to demonstrate their understanding by writing or creating a product. The summative assessment is scored by a rubric that encompasses the essential questions.
- Each of the activities within the classroom module is aligned to an essential question. The declarative and procedural knowledge gained by the students in completing the activity contribute to an understanding of the essential questions.
- Each of the activities consists of a formative assessment allowing the classroom teacher to provide constructive feedback to students on a regular basis. This assessment allows insight on how well students are progressing towards an understanding of the essential questions.
- The instructional strategies are connected to the best practices that are connected research.

High School Assessments

HSA Graduation Requirement

Class of 2009

Based on the Examination of Data for 2009 Graduates Who Met the High School Assessment Graduation Requirement by Option and Bridge Projects Passed (Tables 3.9 and 3.10):

1. Describe your school system's results. In your response, please report on the implementation of the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation.

The Bridge Plan for Academic Validation was coordinated through the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. A total of 59 Bridge Projects were completed by graduates in the Class of 2009 (Algebra - 19, Biology - 9, English - 15, and Government - 16). Each high school staffed one .5 FTE for each High School Assessment content area to serve as Bridge Project Monitors. Bridge Project Monitors coordinated the Bridge Planner and Agreement forms, developed and adjusted timelines for projects, monitored student progress, advised students on content knowledge and location of content resources, and submitted the project packages for scoring. Overall coordination at each high school site was assigned to an assistant principal. All scoring of student projects was completed centrally with Bridge Project Monitors, other teaching staff, and supervisors of instruction serving as scorers. Fourteen scoring sessions were held during the school year.

2. Identify the strategies to which you attribute the results. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations.

SMCPS never abandons the goal of students passing all the HSA tests outright. Even as students seek alternatives, such as the combined score option or bridge projects, we continue to remediate and test them. Students working on bridge projects have time built into the schedule where they work with dedicated HSA content teachers who are coaching them through their work and preparing them for re-testing. Students continue to sit for each test administration as they move along with their bridge projects being motivated by the understanding that improvements in their score may lead to fewer bridge projects needed – perhaps even passing the test or hitting the combined score option.

Students completed projects through a number of options, including independent study, within a scheduled course, or as a member of a work group. The individual and small group tutoring provided for students appeared to be effective to assist students with fulfillment of the Bridge Plan option for graduation. Resource allocations included one .5 FTE for each High School Assessment content area to serve as Bridge Project Monitors, one .10 assistant principal at each high school to provide overall school site coordination, and one .25 FTE central office director to implement the Bridge Plan.

3. Describe where challenges were evident.

The greatest challenge was identifying time within the school day for students to meet with Bridge Project Monitors. Many of the students had a full load of courses and their schedules did not permit work time.

The second greatest challenge was students who transferred from another state to the school system in their senior year. Students had to take the course and then take the corresponding High School Assessment twice before they could actually begin a Bridge Project. The window for exercising the Bridge Project option was tight for these students.

Class of 2010

Based on the Examination of Data for Juniors (Rising Seniors) Who Have Not Yet Met the High School Graduation Requirement as of June 30, 2009 (Table 3.11).:

1. Identify the challenges that persist.

Student results on the Bridge Plans for Academic Validation do not count toward the school's AYP. It is a challenge to convince students who have met the graduation requirement through Bridge Projects to retake the High School Assessment in English and/or Algebra to help the school meet the AYP goal. Students do not feel the need to retake the assessment when they met the requirement.

2. Describe the changes or adjustments that will be made to support those juniors (rising seniors) who have not yet met the HSA graduation requirement in passing the High School Assessments. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations.

SMCPS is dedicated to students finding success the first time through each HSA course and this year we are adding classroom intervention projects using problem-based learning to target students when they initially struggle. These projects align the indicators as well as increase the degree of scaffolding for students. Students are placed in cooperative groups, based on data, allowing students to engage in student-student dialogue as they complete the different phrases of the project. In addition, these intervention projects embed formative assessments to allow students to monitor their understanding.

Bridge Project Monitors, working with content supervisors of instruction, developed instructional resources for teachers to use with students. The centralization of these instructional resources will facilitate obtaining the necessary resources students need. Curriculum development funds were used to support the coordination of these instructional resources.

Limited English Proficient Students

Based on the Examination of AMAO I, AMAO II, and AMAO III Data (Tables 4.1- 4.3):

1. Describe where progress is evident.

In 2008 – 2009, 49% of English Language Learners (ELLs) made AMAO I compared to 85% in 2007-2008. The AMAO I target was not met. As for AMAO II, 26% of ELLs met the target in 2008-2009 compared to 73% in 2007 – 2008. The AMAO II target was met. The decrease in the number of students making progress in 2008 – 2009 can be attributed to the reversal in the Federal guidelines for making AMAO. This was the first year that Federal guidelines required an unduplicated count when identifying students who made AMAO I and AMAO II. The results from SMCPS AYP data in Reading and Mathematics indicate that ELLs made AMAO III.

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

Content teachers and school based administrators continue to embrace and participate in professional development on sheltered instruction and the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). This training has increased collaboration and opportunities for the content teacher and mainstream teacher to team teach in a sheltered classroom. In addition, it has provided focused attention to providing the direct, explicit instruction that ELLs need, and a team approach to developing lesson plans that reflect the SIOP components. Direct services are provided by the ESOL teacher, depending on the student's individual needs, in a pull-out or push-in setting.

In addition, ESOL teachers are trained to use the *Performance Matters* data warehouse system and are able to access benchmark assessment data to identify areas that need to be targeted in instruction, and to monitor the progress of students who are in reclassified status.

3. Describe where challenges are evident in the progress of Limited English Proficient students towards attaining English proficiency by each domain in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.
 - Listening-The rate of speech and degree of fluency by the Native English Speaker (NES) makes it difficult for ELLs to process information and to comprehend what they hear.
 - Speaking - Content specific vocabulary is limited and interferes with the ELLs ability to express their thoughts particularly as it relates to a specific content. Difficulty with comprehension and the inability to understand specific vocabulary is, in many ways, a result of insufficient knowledge about the culture of the Native English Speakers (NES).
 - Reading - ELLs experience difficulty with reading which can be attributed, in part, to a lack of knowledge about the culture of the native English speaker (NES). ELLs may have different life experiences from their NES peers and will therefore need text they can relate to or specific attention to building background knowledge. In addition, ELLs do not have the grade-level oral fluency and vocabulary of their native English speaker (NES) peers.

- Writing-Limitations in knowledge about the culture of the NES or an inability to validate the culture of the ELL can interfere with the ELLs ability to provide a response in writing.
4. Describe the changes or adjustments that will be made to ensure sufficient progress of Limited English Proficient students towards attaining English proficiency. Include a discussion of corresponding resource allocations, and incorporate timelines where appropriate.

To address the listening and speaking challenges, mainstream teachers will work collaboratively with ESOL teachers to develop content objectives and language objectives in their instructional planning and implementation. The rate of speech (e.g., slower rate, enunciation) and the extent to which teachers provide clear explanations for tasks will be a primary focus. Pull-out and mainstream teachers will utilize gestures, body language, pictures, and objects to accompany speech. Strategies for teaching grammar and usage in content will be carefully selected and utilized.

Our core reading text uses companion text for ELLs. When teaching reading and writing, teachers validate the culture of the ELLs by selecting text to which the students can relate to address the challenges in reading and writing. For beginners with very limited English vocabulary, explicit instruction focuses on vocabulary that will increase their conversational fluency.

Beginning in 2009-2010, an additional ESOL tutor was hired to provide support to students with very limited English. The number of schools participating in SIOP training (and can now implement a pull-out and push-in model to service ELLs) increased from four to seven schools with more than 50 teachers having completed the training. The pull-out model will continue to be used for students who need smaller classes and individualized instruction.

Training in the SIOP components is offered at least once a year prior at the beginning of school. Title III and local funds will be used to provide the necessary resources for the training.

Beginning January, 2010, a mid-year benchmark data from the LAS benchmark assessment will be utilized. This data will be used to determine modifications needed with instruction as well as students in need of additional support. Title III funds will be used to provide substitutes for data review meetings.

Collaborative planning time will be provided during the school year for mainstream teachers and ESOL teachers using the SIOP model. Teachers who need to meet after school hours will be provided stipends using Title III funds.

In 2009-2010, three ESOL tutors (two public, 1 non-public) will be providing small group instruction to our very limited or beginning ELLS.

No Child Left Behind requires that corrective actions are taken in local school systems that failed to make progress on the AMAOs:

- *For any fiscal year.* The school system must separately inform a parent or the parents of a child identified for participation in or participating in a language instruction educational program of

the system's failure to show progress. The law stipulates that this notification is to take place not later than 30 days after such failure occurs. The law further requires that the information be provided in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, in a language that the parent can understand.

- *For two or three consecutive years.* The school system must develop an improvement plan that will ensure that the system meets such objectives. The plan shall specifically address the factors that prevented the system from achieving the objectives.
 - *For four consecutive years.* The state shall require the local system to modify the curriculum program and method of instruction or determine whether or not the local school system shall continue to receive funds related to the system's failure to meet the objectives, and require the local system to replace educational personnel relevant to the system's failure to meet the objectives.
- Describe the corrective action plan specifying action to be taken for not meeting AMAO I:

Local school systems not making AMAO I must provide an update on how the school system has revised the applicable components of the Master Plan to ensure progress of English Language Learners towards English proficiency. In the report, school systems should describe what challenges are evident and what changes or adjustments will be made so that the school system will meet AMAO I.

Parents of students in the ESOL program will be notified of SMCPS failure to meet AMAO I. This information will be provided in a letter, parents will have an opportunity to discuss this further during a parent meeting if needed. For eligible students who enter after the beginning of the school year, the parents will be informed of this failure within two weeks of the child being placed in the program. Every effort will be made to meet the AMAO targets at the end of the 2009-2010 school year. However, if ELLS failed to meet AMAO targets at the end of year 2, an improvement plan, with specific strategies and a plan of implementation will be developed, to ensure that the AMAO targets are met.

Limited English Proficient Students

- Describe the corrective action plan specifying action to be taken for not meeting AMAO II:

Local school systems not making AMAO II must provide an update on how the school system has revised the applicable components of the Master Plan to ensure progress of English Language Learners towards English attainment. In the report, school systems should describe what challenges are evident and what changes or adjustments will be made so that the school system will meet AMAO II.

ELLs in St. Mary's County met the AMAO II target.

- Describe the corrective action plan specifying action to be taken for not meeting AMAO III:

Local school systems not making AMAO III must provide an update on how the school system has revised the applicable components of the Master Plan to ensure progress of Limited English Proficient students toward attaining reading and math proficiency. In the report, school systems should describe what challenges are evident and what changes or adjustments will be made so that the school system will make Adequate Yearly Progress. You may refer to other sections of this update as appropriate

ELLs in St. Mary's County met the AMAO III target.

Adequate Yearly Progress

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

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

All elementary schools, including Title I schools, made AYP in 2009. Three of four middle schools did not make AYP in 2009.

Challenges include reading and mathematics performance of special education students. Students with numerous challenges are in multiple subgroups and have significant needs.

Changes and adjustments include:

- ARRA funds have been allocated to address the challenges of student groups making AYP.

The IDEA ARRA grant provided

- Significantly increased interactive instructional technology to engage students in differentiated instruction and increase access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities (SWD)
- Assistive technology for Universally Designed instructional and curriculum accommodations
- Instructional material for interventions to SWD assessed with MSA, HSA, MOD-MSA, ALT-MSA and ECAS
- Intensive district wide professional development for special education and general education teachers that focuses on evidence based school-wide strategies in reading/math/writing and science to improve outcomes for SWD
- Expand early intervening services with the availability and range of inclusive placements for preschoolers with disabilities
- Opportunities for summer services/programs to SWD to maintain and improve student outcomes
- Augmented staffing for mental health services to SWD providing the interventions necessary to ensure student availability for learning

The Title I ARRA grant provided

- Interactive technology package that will be installed in every classroom in the four Title I schools will include an interactive white board with projector, student response pads, an interactive tablet, and a document camera.
 - Front Row classroom amplification systems will be installed in the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. The amplification system enhances young students' ability to differentiate among sounds for the development of phonemic awareness.
 - Upgraded classroom technology to include for each school a FASST Math intervention program and installation of Kidspiration software.
 - Professional development and technology support will be provided to train and assist the teachers with integrating the technology into their content and curriculum.
- The introduction of calendar math in addition to 90 minutes of daily math instruction and a “must do” list referenced on pages 27-29. Mathematics Consultant Pat Turner, formerly of MSDE, will continue to work with teachers on a balanced approach to mathematics aligned to the MSC.

- Adjusted reading maps and pacing guides to emphasize guided reading with increased reading time and vocabulary development.
- Reducing unsuccessful down time for students by providing intervention and direct academic support in lieu of unproductive independent work time
- Commitment for instructional resource teachers to provide direct intervention service four days a week, with more guidance in matching students' academic needs with appropriate interventions.
- The Future Leaders of the World (FLOW) Safe and Drug Free Schools grant provides student mentoring at all elementary and middle schools and will expand to the high schools this year.
- Provided funding for extended day programs including transportation at all elementary and middle schools

The impact the interventions/changes have had on instruction and student performance include:

- The infusion of instructional technology provides differentiated instructional delivery for special education and economically disadvantaged students.
- Extended and prescriptive mathematics and reading blocks provide challenged students with more time to acquire content.
- Curriculum materials were acquired and maps were developed to enhance curriculum alignment.
- Professional development provided the instruction and support for teachers to implement the changes listed above.

All content areas have bi-monthly data meetings chaired by the school's administrative leadership, as well as content department meetings focused on shared planning and assessment. Reading and math have curriculum aligned system-wide benchmark assessment. School teams use our data warehouse, Performance Matters, for re-grouping of students based in the results.

Strategies to support middle schools that did not make AYP include:

- Adjusted instructional periods for language arts and math within the school day to provide extended direct instruction time. This provides time within the school day to ensure that identified students are in instructional interventions that are targeted, explicit and systematic.
- Implementation of SMART Technology in language arts and math classes.
- Extensive staff development opportunities with teams of teachers, both general educators and special educators, participating in the National Conference of Teachers of Mathematics. Content Supervisors closely planned this professional development opportunity to ensure that the knowledge gained was applied to the targeted population of students.
- Continued collaboration with the University of Maryland on the CORI project to understand the motivational aspects of reading in middle school students.
- St. Mary's County Public Schools uses *Performance Matters* data to track and monitor all sub-group achievement and performance. Interventions are designed to be targeted and prescriptive.
- All middle school students are administered the AIMSweb MAZE to assess comprehension skills and identify those students who may need additional instructional supports. Instructional interventions and progress is monitored and tracked with grade level materials using AIMSweb passages. Additional AIMSweb benchmarking also measures decoding, fluency rate and automaticity. The REWARDS Generalization test is also administered assess the ability to read multi-syllabic words.

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

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

There are no elementary or high schools in improvement and there are no Title I schools in improvement. All Title I schools have Technical Assistance Teams (TAT) that meet quarterly to monitor progress, provide academic support, and to gauge readiness for success on MSA. This practice serves as our system's approach with "local improvement". The described actions have allowed elementary schools to maximize achievement and to make AYP and allowed schools to exit school improvement status.

Although our middle school in improvement made AYP in 2008 and held in Restructuring-Planning during 2008-2009 school year, AYP was not attained in 2009. They have progressed to Restructuring-Implementation and will continue implementation of their Maryland State Board of Education approved Alternative Governance Plan with local and state monitoring.

Describe actions that the school system took during the 2008-2009 school year.

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

Describe the actions that the school system will take once school improvement status is determined for the 2009-2010 school year.

- Spring Ridge Middle School will continue to have additional allocated staff to address student needs. These include an Academic Dean and school counselor.
- The Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Academy (STEM) which began with grade 6 in 2007-2008 has added a new cohort each year and now serves grades 6-8 at Spring Ridge Middle School. This academy currently serves 142 students. System-wide the program has expanded to grades 4-11 in the STEM pathway.
- The grant period has been extended for the remaining State School Improvement Grant (SSIG) funding through June 30, 2010. These funds will continue to support instructional technology and Professional Learning Communities (PLC).
- Spring Ridge Middle School will continue to have a 21st Century Learning Center extended day program and a FLOW student mentoring program funded through state and federal grants.

Attendance Rates

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

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

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

Elementary and middle school rates continue to remain above the state goal of 94% in the aggregate and high schools made a slight increase from the previous year. At the elementary level, all but one student group met or exceeded the goal of 94% attendance with only the American Indian/Alaskan Native group recording attendance below this goal. The American Indian/Alaskan Native high school group has, however, posted a fourth consecutive year of growth. This group is now performing above the 94% level for the first time. Although our African American high school student group remains slightly below the state's goal, they have posted a second consecutive year of growth. They have improved from 88.6% to 92.1% in the past two years, the highest to date.

At the high school level, we have improved from three of our student groups being at or above the 94% goal to four student groups reaching that goal this year- Asian Pacific Islander, Hispanic, White, and Limited English Proficient (LEP). This is an improvement over the past two years when just one group exceeded 94% in the 2006-2007 school year.. Four high school student groups did not make the 94% goal- FARMS, African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Special Education. The White student group has increased from 92% to 94.3%, a 2.3 percentage point gain over the past two years. The Special Education population at high school has experienced a 4.3 percentage point increase over the past two years as well.

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

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

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

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

Great Mills High School experienced the greatest increase for high school students. This can be partially attributed to the Technical Assistance Team that met regularly there to specifically address attendance and other climate data such as discipline. This focus on climate also permeated the entire system in that asset development, character education and other school-based initiatives have resulted in a 14% reduction in suspensions. This further supports our attendance efforts in that more students are attending school without breaks in service, allowing them to benefit from high quality instruction. We are continuing to partner with the community Interagency Committee on School Attendance to work with the Sheriff's Office and the State's Attorney's Office to enforce the school attendance laws.

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

The school system also created a ninth grade academy, Fairlead Academy, which provided a comprehensive alternative learning environment for sixty first time freshmen who were recruited from the four middle schools in the county. The class sizes were very small, 1:10 teacher/student ratio. Additional technology was infused in the program with one computer for every two students, and interactive technology was placed in each classroom. The instructional program was organized into 90 minute blocks and ran on an A/B day schedule. Teaching was differentiated to students' particular areas of need and interest. There was also a daily 30 minute session built in for mentoring and character development. Each student was provided with an individualized learning plan developed for them. Several enrichment activities were interwoven into the curriculum and were directly connected to the instructional program. As a result of this program, the overall attendance improved, the combined grade point average improved, the vast majority of students were involved in extracurricular activities, and 58 out of the original 60 students earned enough credit to move onto the tenth grade. The other two students were withdrawn from the school for non school related reasons.

Last year was our second year of implementation for our new web based student information system, *eSchoolPlus*. Teachers entered student attendance directly into the system and parents were given real time access to track their children's progress. In addition, schools were better able to monitor and track their students as a result of this data system. This information system helped us to monitor attendance more closely from the home and from school. All of these programs and initiatives are combining to improve our overall attendance.

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

Our first area of challenge is to maintain the progress we experienced at the middle school level during the 2007-2008 school year. Six of our nine middle school student groups decreased from the previous year.

Our second area of challenge is our Hispanic student group. This student group had decreases in the attendance rate at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Although the Hispanic student group has experienced decreases at each grade level, each grade level continues to perform above the 94% goal.

Another major challenge for the school system is the Special Education and African American student groups at the high school level. Both groups continue to make gains from the previous year and both groups have posted another consecutive year of growth. Yet, both groups are still performing below the 94% attendance goal set by the state.

The most significant issue for SMCPS attendance is the discrepancy for our FARMS students. This group did not reach the state goal at either middle school or high school and this student group continues to experience a steady decline as they move from elementary to middle and from middle to high school. The FARMS elementary student group has, however, reached the 94% goal for the second consecutive year, despite experiencing a slight decrease during the 2008-2009 school year. The FARMS high school student group demonstrated a 1.5 point gain, increasing from 88.9% to 90.4%, despite not reaching the 94% goal. This is the second consecutive year of growth for this student group.

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

Strategies and interventions are targeted to those student groups and to those areas where AYP is not being met. Given that regular and consistent attendance is fundamental to high school completion for all students, the Student Support Team (SST)/Pupil Services Team (PST) meets regularly at each school to, in part, monitor attendance. A major role of our Pupil Personnel Workers (PPWs) is to serve as leaders on the SST/PST committee.

At these meetings, time is allotted to review attendance, discipline, and other school-wide data pertaining to AYP and subgroups. Interventions are planned for individual students and groups of students who are confronting challenges and are not coming to school regularly. There are many interventions that specifically address attendance concerns.

Interventions specifically addressing attendance for students may include the following:

- Home visits are made by members of the Student Services Team on a regularly basis. Our PPWs coordinate these efforts and assist with the visits.

- In all of our Title I schools, our Parent Liaison Coordinators serve as attendance monitors and communicate with our parents frequently, specifically those families and students confronting challenges and are not coming to school.
- Our school nurses (who in many cases get to know many of our truant students) are now mentoring students with truancy issues and are in constant communication with these families regarding attendance.
- Pupil Personnel Workers provide transportation for those students who miss the bus or are not in school. In addition, they provide transportation for families who need to attend meetings to discuss the needs of their children.
- For those students who have attended Fairlead Academy , which is focused on improving dropout and graduation rates, these students have been provided a Transition Coordinator who will monitor their attendance and academic performance once they transition to the 10th grade.
- Counselors, who are part of the Student Support Team, coordinate the teacher/parent conferences process once a student is identified by the Student Support Team as having attendance, discipline, and/or academic concerns.
- The school system's Home Access Center (HAC) allows parents to review their children's daily attendance online. As a result, parents are now much better informed.
- The school system's automated phone out system, *School Messenger*, call all parents when a student is absent or tardy to class.
- On the school systems Articulation Day, the Student Services Team- Psychologist, PPWs, and Counselors- meet to discuss those students who need extra support transitioning from one school to the next. The team focuses on students who have attendance and other concerns
- Students who continue to be truant and parents who are not ensuring that their children attend school regularly may be referred to the Interagency Committee on School Attendance. In addition, such cases may be referred to the State's Attorney's office if the problem persists.
- There are also attendance incentives and student assemblies which are designed to reward students who are maintaining excellent attendance and students who have improved their attendance.
- The Student Services Team develops individual plans with measurable goals to address specific student needs. A majority of these plans include a home/school communication component and follow-up meetings are held to assess progress.

Although these are overall initiatives that are in place to support all students and student groups, our FARMs, Special Education, and African American student groups are the focus of such initiatives, given

the need for additional support. Therefore, these student groups and students from these student groups become the focus for our school system and individual schools' Student Support Team committees.

The adjustments planned for 2009-2010 are intended to provide school staff with a focused approach to addressing the needs of those student groups whose attendance lags behind their peers. The first adjustment is a new model for school improvement plans that focuses the work of school staff on strategies that have proven successful in our schools and in other systems. Schools will choose from several approved options for climate setting: PBIS, Asset Development and/or Character Education initiatives. Funding for asset development was provided by the Local Management Board.

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

One new school is being trained as a PBIS school. All PBIS schools reviewed and discussed their attendance, discipline, and Special Education disproportionality data as a component of their returning team training this summer. This discussion will lead them to include strategies for reducing the disproportional suspension of student groups as a component of their PBIS plan for 2009-2010. PBIS funding is provided by a Special Education discretionary grant.

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

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

Because of the success of our Tech Connect and Fairlead Academy programs for our freshmen students, we have expanded the number of students who will be enrolled into these programs for the upcoming school term. In addition, we have created a tenth grade component for these programs. To ensure that we maintain ongoing support for these students, the school system has a full time transition coordinator who has the primary responsibility of ensuring that the ongoing success of the students in these programs continue to meet with success at the high school level.

Graduation Rates and Dropout Rates

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

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

In terms of graduation rate, the aggregate and four subgroups (Asian/Pacific Islander, White, Hispanic, and Females) met or exceeded the AMO. Two of our three high schools, Leonardtown High School (LHS) and Chopticon High School (CHS), made progress from the previous year, with LHS achieving the highest graduation rate in six years (91%). This high school also improved in and reduced their already very positive dropout rate to .99%. Chopticon High School (CHS) exceeded the AMO for graduation rate (89.79%) an improvement of 1.67 percentage points over the previous year.

With regard to dropout rate, two high schools, (CHS and LHS) were well within the range for the aggregate. As a system, the aggregate and four subgroups (Asian/Pacific Islander, White, FARMS, Male, and Females) are all below the 3% state standard. Several groups made progress as compared to the previous year. FARMS students demonstrated a 1.5 percentage point improvement and LEP students improved by 2.97 percentage points. All three high schools showed decreases in the drop-out rate from the previous year, although the dropout rate at Great Mills High School (GMHS) remains above the state standards.

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

In the past few years, the St. Mary's County Public School System has developed many programs, initiatives, and interventions which are designed to engage students who are underachieving in school. Furthermore, based upon these students' academic and attendance data, many would probably struggle in school and would perhaps later dropout, if they are not provided additional support. To support students with such challenges and to reduce the dropout rate, the school system has targeted students who would benefit from such programs and interventions.

Many of the students in these programs are from our student groups who are underperforming academically- FARMS, Special Education, and African American. Some of the programs which were designed to address such challenges are Fairlead Academy and the Tech Connect program. There is additional information regarding these programs in the original Master Plan submission. The school system has also developed programs which exist in each school in the district. There is a credit recovery program and an evening school program for high school students. The school system has placed high quality mentoring programs in each school as well.

Each school was provided additional resources to develop interventions that are designed specifically for their student populations in need of additional support. Members of the Student Support Team ensure that students who are in need of the appropriate interventions are identified and placed into programs and interventions that will meet their respective needs. In addition, SST members provide the ongoing monitoring and assistance to the families and students.

The team is instrumental in identifying these students and recommending them to our programs which will provide the additional support. The transition coordinator, who is part of the SST, provides ongoing support to students leaving Fairlead Academy to transition back to their home schools. The role of our transition coordinator is to ensure that these students continue to receive the individualized support that enabled them to attain success via these programs. In addition, our counselors, who are also part of this team, help to identify these students based upon the data and monitor students in these programs.

Consistent and ongoing data review allows the team to make targeted interventions as well as monitor the impact of those interventions. Efforts are made to engage students and provide support to students. When a student is considering dropping out, students are counseled and provided information about alternatives to dropping out. Counselors and PPWs work closely with these students to develop plans for continuing their education.

Parents are encouraged to participate in the SST meetings. Partnering with parents allows the team to develop comprehensive and relevant support plans for students and families. When parents are unable to attend the team meetings, follow-up is conducted by a team member to ensure that parents are aware of both the area of concern and the proposed plan for the student. In many cases, components of the plan are the development of regular communication between home and school that allows for monitoring and adjustments of the SST plan.

As mentioned above, one high school made progress (Leonardtwn High School) and can attribute that progress partly to the school's staff who worked closely with identified students and their parents to encourage students to stay in school. Other progress was made in terms of building future capacity and is explained in greater depth below.

The Tech Connect Program at the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center (JAFCTC) was created and implemented in order to assist incoming ninth graders in the difficult transition from middle school to high school. This program was created in response to our system data that shows the majority of our dropouts are 2nd and 3rd year 9th and 10th graders. As there was existing instructional capacity at the JAFCTC, we seized the opportunity to create a course that developed technological literacy. The class was designed to meet the requirements for the technology education credit required by the State of Maryland and also have computational elements embedded within it so that students earn one half a credit in elective mathematics. Almost every student in the course passed it and over half of those enrolled also earned enough credit at their home school to move on to their sophomore year. Three out of four students stated that they intend to return to the JAFCTC and complete one of the myriad programs offered there. The majority of the Tech Connect students have enrolled in a Forrest Center program for the following school year. As a result, the school system will continue offering this program as an option for students who are interested.

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

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

As it relates to our graduation rate, there was a slight increase for the aggregate, but a decline for the following student subgroups: African American, American Indian/Alaskan native, Hispanic, FARMS, LEP, and Special Education. Limited English Proficient students had a rate of 0% with a cohort of two students. The Special Education group experienced a decline from 79.49% in 2008 to 71.95% in 2009. The African American student group also declined from 81.35% in 2008 to 75.89% in 2009. The American Indian/Alaskan Native group consisting of 15 students experienced a 52.38 percentage point decline in graduation rate. The graduation rate for Hispanic students dropped from 90.32% in 2008 to 88.46% in 2009. Students in the FARMS subgroup experience a 1.13 drop in percentage.

The dropout rate for the aggregate remains within the acceptable range at 2.13%, there was a decrease from the previous year's rate of 2.80%. Five student groups are above the 3% dropout rate standard (African American, American/Indian/Alaskan Native, Hispanic, LEP and Special Education).

This graduation and dropout data is tied to the other 2009 data. Our Males and African American students are overrepresented in our suspension data. The FARMS group also constitutes our biggest challenge in terms of regular and consistent school attendance. If students are suspended and/or do not attend school regularly, they fall behind their peers academically and are at a greater risk for dropping out of school. As a result, we are looking at alternatives to out of school suspensions.

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

We will continue the implementation of a new model for school improvement plans that focuses the work of school staff on strategies that have proven successful in our schools and in other systems. Schools will choose from several approved options for climate setting: PBIS, Asset Development and/or Character Education initiatives. Initial funding for asset development has been provided by the Local Management Board (LMB). The school system will continue working with the LMB to continue providing funding and training for the asset development process. We will continue to provide training and support for those schools who have piloted the asset development program. We are also working with the national PBIS office to provide ongoing training for our PBIS schools as well. High school-based pupil services teams also meet regularly to identify students who are at risk in the areas of attendance, discipline infractions, and retention or dropping out. Individualized plans will be developed and implemented for these students that include mentoring, parent involvement, referral to school and community resources, and creative scheduling.

As we continue our focus on the transition year of ninth grade, Fairlead Academy opened last fall with 60 incoming 9th grade students who were identified as needing intervention in reading and mathematics in order to be successful at high school. That number has increased to 72 students for the 2009-2010 school year. We have also expanded this program to the tenth grade year for 30 students who need the ongoing support of Fairlead Academy for an additional year. This ninth grade academy continues to draw students from all three attendance areas and additional slots will continue to be assigned to Great Mills High School, as that school continues to experience the greatest challenge in terms of potential dropouts and graduation rate concerns.

The Tech Connect program will also continue to serve approximately 75 ninth graders in the partial day program, with a focus on reengagement to encourage on time graduation in four years. We will continue

to support and monitor the academic progress of these students beyond the ninth grade year. These students will have a mentor at the Forrest Center, will complete an informal vocational evaluation, and will have opportunities to explore courses available at the center.

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

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

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

As we endeavor to meet the academic needs of all of our children with a differentiated model pertaining to the development and refinement of middle school students' reading and mathematics skills, we are making a concerted effort to better prepare our middle school students before they enter high school. But even with that, we know students must be successful the first time through ninth grade. As a result, we will continue our tiered response to those still underperforming as freshmen. Level one, we tailor their school schedule to allow up to 90 minutes for mathematics or English depending on skill development. Level 2, we offer Tech Connect as a creative hands-on approach to learning at the JAFCTC. Level 3, we place them full-time at the Fairlead Academy with small class sizes (one to ten or less), blocked classes, technology rich instruction, and a highly dedicated and supportive staff. To expand capacity, we have increased enrollment in these programs.

The school system has allocated additional resources from the general fund to support additional after school mentoring and tutoring initiatives for our students who need additional support. Through general fund and grant fund resources, the school system has provided transportation for these before and/or after school programs as well. This will enable a greater number of our students to access these

programs. We have also secured grant funding to provide additional learning opportunities to ensure that students do not fall behind in their core subjects- English, math, science, and social studies- prior to the end of the first and third semesters. For students who do fall behind in the core subject areas in quarters one and three, the school system will provide after school tutoring opportunities in the evenings for these students at no cost to the students and their families.

Highly Qualified Staff

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

1. Describe where progress is evident.

As we continue to strive to meet our goal of having 100% of CAS taught by highly qualified teachers, we are also faced with a turnover of individuals teaching in those subject areas. This school year, we faced a number of vacancies that were a challenge to fill, including Special Education, Mathematics, Science, and English teaching positions. As our percentage of highly qualified teachers rose from 92.9% to 93.85%, we continually seek to examine ways to improve our recruitment and retention efforts for such shortage areas. We worked closely with teachers to ensure they were aware of the requirements to keep their certificate valid at renewal and had zero (0) teachers NHQ because of an expired certification.

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

Practices and strategies that have proven successful for teachers within St. Mary's County Public Schools system include:

- a. Training for our administrators and open lines of communication with school-based administrators pertaining to assignment of teachers in CAS with respect to the individual's certification;
- b. Increased awareness of administrators and applicants regarding the requirements for meeting Maryland certification requirements prior to being hired in a CAS;
- c. Training for another Certification Authorized Partner with MSDE to increase the number of individuals in the Human Resources Department that hold that status to two(2);
- d. Partnership with the College of Notre Dame in the Resident Teacher program in critical shortage areas and local shortage CAS, including a Tri-County agreement with neighboring counties to offer opportunities for more individuals to enroll in the RTC program;
- e. Expansion of the PDS Partnership with St. Mary's College of Maryland program that has provided an increased number of interns, thereby offering a highly qualified pool of applicants;
- f. Conferences with individual teachers and their administrators to develop plans to obtain full certification;
- g. Recruiting foreign teachers that meet the standards for highly qualified in a CAS in critical shortage areas;
- h. Providing a high quality induction program that is aligned with the recommendations of the Maryland Professional Development Advisory Council's recommendations to support new teachers that aids in both recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers (The SMCPS New Teacher Induction Program was recognized as an Maryland ASCD Program of Excellence);

- i. Termination of employment if certification standards are not met;
- j. Reimbursement for Praxis assessments;
- k. Providing increased tuition reimbursement ; and
- l. Partnerships with local colleges for Direct Billing to the school system for system employees that are enrolled in approved courses.

3. Describe where challenges are evident.

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

- Recruiting and retaining teachers in critical shortage areas identified locally and by MSDE;
- Recruiting and retaining Special Education teachers; and,
- Predicting teacher turnover due to military transfers of teachers (or transfer of spouses due to military transfers), leaves of absence due to maternity or illness, retirement, unexpected resignations, etc.
- Participation in job fairs of colleges/universities that offer Maryland Approved Programs, including the previous year’s participation in the Maryland Education Recruitment Consortium (MERC).

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

Overall, the strategies and practices that are currently in place and identified in Question 2 have been successful in addressing significant increases in the past for the number of teachers who are highly qualified teaching CAS. Refinement of the strategies, increased and timelier notification to teachers with regard to their certification, and developing alternative certification programs will be keys in making progress in this area in the future. The PDS partnership with St. Mary’s College of Maryland continues to expand. This year, the number of interns in our school is 44 from SMCMD, which offers us a rich pool of highly qualified applicants, a high number of which get hired for SMCPS. The Resident Teacher Certification program, in partnership with the College of Notre Dame, has the potential for increasing the number of “highly qualified” teachers during the 2009-2010 school year. Expanding this program to include neighboring counties in a joint agreement, along with exploring programs with other institutions of higher learning, will enable St. Mary's County Public Schools to continuously improve in this area in the future.

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

1. Describe where progress is evident.

In elementary classrooms identified through high poverty schools, 100% of the classes were taught by highly qualified teachers. In elementary classrooms identified through low poverty schools, 96.21% of the classes were taught by highly qualified teachers. At the secondary level,

we do not have a secondary school identified as a high poverty school, but our low poverty secondary schools had 93.74% of the classes taught by highly qualified teachers.

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

Schools identified by Title I are staffed completely by highly qualified teachers. Principals of high and low poverty schools work closely with Human Resources representatives to identify teacher candidates that meet the highly qualified requirements prior to interviewing those teacher candidates. As newly hired teachers join our workforce, we are faced with the challenge of retaining those teachers in CAS in high and low poverty schools. All attempts are made to accommodate voluntary transfers to high and low poverty schools in relation to areas of greater need. At the present time, we do not offer any incentives to voluntarily transfer to high and low poverty schools. Preferential hiring was offered to all Title I elementary schools as well as schools identified by the Superintendent as a priority hiring based on student data. St. Mary's County Public Schools offers a competitive salary and continues to see that as a priority. An excellent benefits package that includes health insurance, tuition reimbursement, and life insurance is offered as an incentive as well. In order to build and improve teacher quality, SMCPS provides high quality professional development for all staff members, and partners with local colleges and universities, as well as the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center, to provide courses locally. New Teachers are provided a variety of supports including a three-day New Teacher Orientation program, optional early-bird professional development sessions, a mentor who has been provided training in coaching and mentoring skills, and a two-year cycle of new teacher meetings. Additionally, this program provides demonstration classrooms where teachers can get ongoing support (in addition to their mentor) at their grade level or in their content. Mentors are provided meetings that occur quarterly to address the need for ongoing training.

3. Describe where challenges are evident. In your response, include teacher experience, minority status of students, and poverty status of students, where appropriate.

The schools with high and low poverty students are usually where turnover rates are highest. The challenge facing St. Mary's County Public Schools is identifying and retaining teachers who are willing to teach at those schools without any financial stipends. With changes in the Quality Teacher Incentive Act of 1999 that took effect through the 2009 Legislative Session through the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BRFA), our teachers see less financial incentives such as the elimination of the Signing Bonuses, cuts in stipends for Nationally Board Certified Teachers, and Advanced Professional Certificate stipends for teachers working in challenge schools. These small incentives were sometimes deciding factors for teachers wishing to transfer to schools with greater needs and minority and poverty students.

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

Increased resources in professional development for new teacher induction have been provided. Changes in the administration of the schools have led to an increase in morale at those sites and a willingness of veteran highly qualified teachers to transfer to and remain at high and low poverty schools. The placement of student teacher interns in challenging schools and PBIS schools helps to increase the abilities of new teachers and allows them to gain the skills necessary to be successful once they are fully employed teachers. Teachers were identified to be used as resource teachers in schools where significant gains are necessary based upon their demonstrated skills in certain subject areas and concentrations.

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

1. Describe where progress is evident.

The number of teachers that resigned declined by 4.46% and the number of teachers that took a leave of absence declined by 0.87%. Although the number of teachers that were dismissed/non-renewed increased, those teachers were replaced with highly qualified teachers.

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

St. Mary's County Public Schools is making progress in retaining highly qualified teachers in the areas of resignations and leaves of absence. Resignations decreased by 4.46% and leaves of absence decreased by 0.87%. Newly hired teachers must meet highly qualified requirements to be considered for positions and principals are being trained and retrained on placement of teachers to match certification with subject area instruction.

3. Describe where challenges are evident.

With the economy being in such a variable state, it is hard to predict how teachers will react in terms of their continued employment. One minor trend this school year is of teachers wanting to teach closer to their homes. In many cases, this may mean a teacher resigns from SMCPS to work in neighboring counties where they reside. Although our pool of applicants has increased, that does not necessarily mean our pool of highly qualified applicants has increased. Human Resources personnel are taking extra steps and reviewing carefully applications to determine highly qualified status.

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

As a school system, we seek to find the best match for teachers and the schools in which they work. With this in mind, we consider all requests for transfers to schools within our system that

accommodate where geographically a teacher lives, or childcare concerns, or married couples when both are employed as teachers, with schools closer to each other.

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

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

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

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

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

St. Mary's County Public Schools Option 2-2009 Update

Districts that submitted plans for integrating the teacher professional development planning framework included in the *Maryland Teacher Professional Development Planning Guide* into school improvement planning are required to report on their progress on each of the four tasks included under this option. The four questions and specific issues to be addressed in the progress reports follow below.

1. **Has the district integrated the teacher professional development planning framework into school improvement planning guidance?** If so, attach a copy of the revised guidance, including all related forms and artifacts, to the annual update. If this task has not been completed, include a brief explanation of the challenges and difficulties that were encountered and describe how the task will be completed during the 2009-2010 school year.

Yes.

The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Planning Guide (Revised, November 2008) provides a solid framework for guiding professional development. St. Mary's County Public Schools have integrated these components into our school improvement planning (SIP) process, and we have revised the templates for our SIP process to include components of the planning guidance provided by MSDE. In 2005, the SIP process integrated professional development planning components for each specific goal, and asked schools to outline the context, content, and process, as well as the follow-up necessary to achieve the goals. Over the past few years, the system has worked to revise the guidance for school improvement professional development, with specific attention to the components of the teacher professional development planning framework.

This year (2009) the SIP model was modified, with specific guiding questions relative to the Professional Development Standards and the key planning components.

- **Needs Assessment/Identified Need:** As an integral component of the SIP process, for each identified goal area, schools were to provide a detailed analysis of their data, including root causes. In this discussion, school teams should identify staff needs relative to these root causes of student achievement. A key initiative this year is implementing a process for tracking teacher observation data, so elements of proficiency can be identified across a school. This will allow a school to identify areas of need for professional development as observations will focus on direct connections between teacher behaviors and student learning. This needs assessment set the priorities for the professional development. Key questions include:
 - *In what ways does the PD plan support the needs articulated in your SIP plan?*
 - *Be explicit in your description of how this connects to SIP goals.*
- **Goals:** Schools were asked to identify specific professional development goals aligned with their SIP needs assessment for each identified area (e.g., mathematics or

reading). These goals must be objectively stated, and indicate specific teacher learning outcomes. In collaboration with the school improvement team, staff are expected to design indicators related to these outcomes with the school improvement team. Guiding questions for this area included, but were not limited to:

- *What are the goals for the professional development activity?*
- *How will staff be involved in establishing learning goals?*
 - *PD goals are based on the participants' learning and implementation.*
 - *Provide ways for input from participants*
- **Learning Activities:** As part of this component of the SIP, school teams developed a plan for high quality learning experiences for staff. Participants for each activity were identified, and may be differentiated by the need for the professional development, the intended outcomes, and the level of student proficiency. Guiding questions included:
 - *What is the process and design of the professional development?*
 - *What strategies will be employed?*
 - *Include appropriate, active learning opportunities.*
 - *Ensure full participation, incl. leadership involvement*
- **Follow Up:** “Staff Development without follow-up is malpractice.” These words by Dennis Sparks, former executive director of the National Staff Development Council, ring in the ears of our school leaders, as follow-up has been emphasized as a critical and non-negotiable component of the SIP process. For this element, guiding questions included:
 - *What follow-up will occur?*
 - *When will it occur?*
 - *How have you matched the follow-up design with the learning activities?*
 - *Consider job-embedded approaches*
 - *Allow for frequent, collaborative interactions*
- **Evaluation:** Evaluation is a critical step in the process. Principals guide the evaluation of collaborative teams and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) through regular meetings and open dialogue with staff. This is also an embedded component of the SIP process for professional development. To this end, the evaluation extends beyond what Tom Guskey would describe as “Level 1” staff development evaluation, where participants rate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the presentation or initial participation in an activity. Instead, this key guiding question is asked:
 - *How will you evaluate the impact on instruction and student learning?*
 - *Measure staff learning*
 - *Measure the extent and level of implementation*
 - *Measure the impact on students' learning*
 - *Essentially, the evaluation should answer three questions:*
 - *Did the professional development take place as planned?*
 - *What were teachers' perceptions of the professional development?*
 - *Did the professional development achieve the intended outcomes?*

Teams at each school create team action plans, quarterly, that reflect data discussions and target instruction to identified student need. These action plans are recursive, i.e.,

evaluation information about teacher learning and student learning are used for the development of the next quarter's plans.

- **Organization and Management:** The 2009 School Improvement Process has been revised to include this section where the school team specifically identifies the structure within the school schedule and the processes in place for managing the job-embedded professional development throughout the year. The master calendar for the school system also now includes four (4) early release days specifically for staff collaborative planning. In addition, the system provides funding for release time, and schools are directed to provide a schedule of when the collaborative planning time is included in their schedules. Key questions for consideration include:
 - *Who is responsible for the professional development? Who are the participants? What scheduling and structures need to be in place to make time for the professional development?*
 - *Provide time equitably for staff involved in the initiative*
- **Budget:** Each school is provided funding through Title II, Part A, for collaborative planning and Professional Learning Communities. The funding is specifically targeted for this form of job-embedded professional development. Funds are provided to promote effective collaborative teaming and to support the teams in working to improve instruction, share effective instructional practices, share student work, analyze data and work products, redesign the instruction based on that analysis and review all formative assessments. The content addressed through these collaborative teams varies based on the both student needs and teacher needs. School leadership teams work in a differentiated model to determine the focus of a team's work. Teams at each school create team action plans, quarterly, that reflect data discussions and target instruction to identified student need. The school principal must submit an initial action plan and the school improvement PD Plan outlining the use of Title II funds for job-embedded professional development prior to accessing the funds.

Professional Development Plan to Support School Improvement Efforts

Choose 2-3 professional development priorities for your school for the school year. Use this form for each of these identified PD priorities.

Use this planning frame to design the professional development related to your school improvement goals.

Identified Need		Professional Development Goals	
<i>In what ways does the PD plan support the needs articulated in your SIP plan?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Connect to SIP goals.</i>		<i>What are the goals for the professional development activity?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>PD goals are based on the participants' learning and implementation.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Provide ways for input from participants</i>	
Major Emphasis: Connection to SIP Goal(s):			
Learning Activities	Follow Up	Evaluation	
<i>What is the process and design of the professional development? What strategies will be employed?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Include appropriate, active learning opportunities.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Ensure full participation, incl. leadership involvement</i>	<i>What follow-up will occur?</i> <i>When and how often will it occur?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Consider job-embedded approaches</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Allow for frequent, collaborative interactions</i>	<i>How will you assess the PD initiative's impact?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Measure staff learning</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Measure the extent and level of implementation</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Measure the impact on students' learning</i>	
Organization and Management			
<i>Who is responsible for the professional development? Who are the participants? What scheduling and structures need to be in place to make time for the professional development?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Provide time equitably for staff involved in the initiative</i>			
Person(s) Responsible:	Participants/Target Participants:	Budget: <input type="checkbox"/> <i>No Cost</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Grant</i>_____ <input type="checkbox"/> <i>School-Based Funds</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Other</i>_____ <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Title II, Coll. Planning Funds</i>	
Structure and Scheduling of Professional Development:			

2. **Has the district implemented a program to prepare principals, other school leaders, school improvement teams, and school-based professional development staff to use the teacher professional development planning framework?** If so, describe the program, clearly specifying (a) who participated and whether all of the intended participants did, in fact, participate, (b) the schedule (e.g., the number of sessions, the length of each session), (c) the topics covered, and (d) the professional learning activities (e.g., presentations, opportunities for practice and feedback). Also, attach copies of any materials developed for the training session. If the district has not implemented a program to prepare principals and others to use the planning framework, discuss the reasons for not doing so and describe how such a program will be completed during the 2009-2010 school year.

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

Overview of Professional Development Sessions for Administrators and Supervisors:

Session	Participants	Date/Time	Topics
A&S Leadership Retreat	Administrators and Supervisors	8/4-6/08 8 hrs	Implementing Job-Embedded PD; Focused Work of PLCs; School Improvement Review
A&S Leadership Seminar	Administrators and Supervisors	10/1/08 2 hrs	Review and Discussion of PLC Work; Assessments for Learning
A&S Leadership Seminar	Administrators and Supervisors	11/8/08 2 hrs	Collaborative Planning and Action Planning- Revisiting the Process
A&S Leadership Seminar	Administrators and Supervisors	4/1/09 1 hr.	Collaborative Planning/PLCs Update
A&S Leadership Seminar	Administrators and Supervisors	5/6/09 90 min	Review of School Improvement Process for 2009-2010 – PD Elements
A&S Leadership Retreat	Administrators and Supervisors	8/3-6/09 8 hrs	Implementing Job-Embedded PD; Focused

			Work of PLCs; School Improvement Review
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For all administrators and supervisors, monthly leadership seminars include a major focus on professional development. With a book study guiding the dialogue, principals and supervisors investigate ways in which they can make the most of the professional learning communities at their schools. This past year, the book used was *Ahead of the Curve* (Reeves, 2008). This book provided research and discussion around using assessments *for* learning, while using professional learning communities as a process. Guidance from system leaders, as well as funding support, both through Title II, Part A, and local funding (e.g., with the addition of four early release days for collaborative planning), provide the support and accountability for schools to engage in this type of high quality professional development. The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Planning Guide offers clear guidance and detailed, supportive explanations that lend another layer of professional development. These strategies are indicative of how SMCPS has prepared leaders, school teams, and coaches in the use of the principles and practices in the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Planning Guide.

Over the last few years, several opportunities were provided to offer school leaders and school-based staff guidance and support in designing high quality professional development:

- **School Improvement Guidance:** In both the spring of 2008 and the spring of 2009, one full day was provided for SIP guidance and professional development. As part of this day, the professional development guidance was an overt and emphasized component. Through this component, results of the 2008 SMCPS Survey of Teacher Participation in High Quality Professional Development were shared, with a clear emphasis on job-embedded professional development. With the accompanying template for professional development as part of the SIP, schools had an accountability measure in place to ensure that the components of planning framework were met. Funding for follow-up days were provided to each school for planning and feedback. Detailed feedback and collaborative dialogue is built in as part of the process in our August Leadership Retreat, which is outlined in #3 below.
- **Professional Development Institute:** The Professional Development Institute was implemented last year, and kicked off again this year. Through a three (3) day institute this summer (and 8 follow-up sessions delivered throughout the school year), school leaders, system leaders, teacher leaders, and school based coaches (known locally as Instructional Resource Teachers) participated in an in-depth professional development academy designed and delivered by the SMCPS Department of Professional and Organizational Development and Cindy Harrison, national consultant and author of *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teachers and School-Based Coaches* (NSDC, 2006). In this institute, over 55 leaders in 2008-2009, and 36 leaders in 2009-2010, actively utilized the standards for staff development and were responsible for designing a high quality experience – and receive feedback on their design. This institute set the stage for effective planning in the school improvement process, and built a cadre of highly-skilled professional developers. Embedded in this

institute was training in the use of the planning guide, and the plans developed by participants were to reflect these elements of high quality professional development. SMCPS received the *2009 MCSD Excellence in Staff Development Award* for the Professional Development Institute.

- **IRT Professional Development:** Instructional Resource Teachers (IRTs) are the school-based coaches in place at schools. The IRT works with the school principal to facilitate the job-embedded professional development with the staff. The evaluation system for IRTs includes clear language explicitly stating the expectation for providing high quality professional development. More specifically, this year, the roles and responsibilities were clarified to emphasize their role as a professional development leader. To this end, they have been part of ongoing PD in designing high quality professional development, using the work of Cindy Harrison and Joellen Killion (*Taking the Lead* was used as a book study). IRTs participated in the PD Institute, and components of the PD Planning Guide were reviewed as part of the IRT monthly meetings (held on the fourth Friday of every month).
- **PLC Leader Training:** In alignment with the practices set forth in the planning guide and Teacher Development Standards, teacher leaders and Professional Learning Communities (PLC) leaders engaged in ongoing learning opportunities to understand their roles and best practices for job-embedded professional development. In July, the first part of a multi-day training for PLC leaders took place. As part of this professional development opportunity, both administrators and teacher leaders examined and practiced protocols and processes for leading effective collaborative teams and professional learning communities. Further, they were given strategies for planning effective collaborative team meetings and ongoing professional development, for which the Planning Guide is used in the follow up sessions. This effort, in which over 100 leaders participated in both the 2008 and 2009 cohorts, helped to prepare school-based individuals for their roles in facilitating engaging sessions with teams focused on critical and guiding questions for our PLCs:
 - Exactly what is it we want all students to learn?
 - How will we know when each student has acquired the essential knowledge and skills?
 - What happens in our school when a student does not learn?

Presentations, agendas, and resources are saved to a password-protected intranet site or SharePoint site; therefore, a link cannot be included in this submission. Sample agendas and presentations are included on a separate disk.

3. **Has the district implemented plan to prepare district staff for reviewing and providing feedback on professional development plans?** If so, describe the program, clearly specifying (a) who participated and whether all of the intended participants did, in fact, participate, (b) the schedule (e.g., the number of sessions, the length of each session), (c) the topics covered, and (d) the professional learning activities (e.g., presentations, opportunities for practice and feedback). Also, attach copies of any materials developed for the training session. If the district has not implemented a program to prepare district staff for reviewing and providing feedback on the professional development plans, discuss the reasons for not doing so and describe how such a program will be completed during the 2009-2010 school year.

As part of the SMCPS August Leadership Retreat (August 3, 4, and 6, 2009), a full day (August 4, 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.) is built in for collaborative reviews of school improvement plans. Because the professional development plan is an integrated part of the SIP, it is reviewed actively by the group of leaders and feedback is provided consistently for every school improvement team. Our design for review and feedback includes a team approach, where four to five school leadership teams sit together with representative school system supervisors, directors, and Instructional Resource Teachers, to review each school's plans. The group utilizes a rubric, inclusive of all components, to provide oral feedback. Key Questions provided for the discussion of School Improvement Plans for PD included:

- What are the key professional development initiatives your school is undertaking this year?
- *In what ways does the PD plan support the needs articulated in your SIP plan?*
- *What are the goals for the professional development activity?*
- *What is the process and design of the professional development? What strategies will be employed?*
- How is follow-up provided?
- *What follow-up will occur?*
- *When and how often will it occur?*
- *How will you assess the PD initiative's impact?*
- How are you ensuring the time is scheduled for PD?
- *Who is responsible for the professional development? Who is the audience? What scheduling and structures need to be in place to make time for the professional development?*

Notes and written feedback are provided to schools shortly thereafter, and schools have an opportunity to revise their plans. Following the finalization of the school plans, the Department of Professional Development compiles a summary report to each school, offering support and delineating where commonalities are noted between schools (thereby promoting networking and sharing of resources).

District staff (led by the Department of Professional and Organizational Development) led teams through a review of the components of high quality professional development, as well as the expectations for completing the Professional Development Plan as part of the School Improvement Plan. This review included a walkthrough of a sample PD plan that was completed, as well as a review of the rubric. As the review teams all included administrators, supervisors, and directors, each who had written plans, these teams also had their own examples and learning experience of writing the plans to provide insight in this collaborative review process. Since the development of the 6-step PD Planning process provided by MSDE, this 6-step model and the elements of high quality professional development have been a part of the culture of professional development in St. Mary's County. The new format for the school improvement PD plan was a natural evolution of this understanding of high quality professional development. Nonetheless, as the model and the elements were reviewed in our June and August leadership seminars, each team examined the PD plan template and engaged in collaborative analysis. The collaborative process involving writers as reviewers helped to streamline the process, where the reviewer training was concomitant to the writer training.

Sample School Improvement Plan – PD Section

Leonardtown Elementary School - Professional Development Plan to Support School Improvement Efforts

Choose 2-3 professional development priorities for your school for the school year. Use this form for each of these identified PD priorities.

Utilize this planning frame to design the professional development related to your school improvement goals. Duplicate or Delete planners as necessary.

Identified Need		Professional Development Goals
<i>In what ways does the PD plan support the needs articulated in your SIP plan? Connect to SIP goals.</i>		<i>What are the goals for the professional development activity? PD goals are based on the participants' learning and implementation. Provide ways for input from participants</i>
Major Emphasis: Alignment of Instruction to Science VSC objectives Connection to SIP Goal(s): Our SIP goals are all based on improved student achievement on all assessments. Ensuring alignment to the Science VSC objectives as well as the rigor to which those objectives are taught will result in student achievement. The process of ensuring alignment will carry over to the other content areas.		Goals: Teachers will increase their own knowledge and understanding of the Science VSC. Teachers will use a framework, which they develop, to self and peer review lessons for accurate alignment and rigor making changes as necessary to improve instruction. Teachers will consistently implement the components of differentiation and assessment in their lesson plans and implementation.
Learning Activities	Follow Up	Evaluation
<i>What is the process and design of the professional development? What strategies will be employed? Include appropriate, active learning opportunities. Ensure full participation, incl. leadership involvement</i>	<i>What follow-up will occur? When and how often will it occur? Consider job-embedded approaches Allow for frequent, collaborative interactions</i>	<i>How will you assess the PD initiative's impact? Measure staff learning Measure the extent and level of implementation Measure the impact on students' learning</i>
Teachers will self-assess their knowledge and understanding of the Science VSC Teachers study and unpack the Science VSC through grade level collaborative discussions Teachers develop a lesson plan checklist for alignment, rigor, differentiation, and assessment	Grade Level Team Meeting discussion about how to teach a specific objective Lesson plans for the identified objective will be reviewed for alignment, rigor, differentiation, and assessment at the following month GLTM Monthly informal walk-throughs during Science lessons for identified "look-fors"	Pre self-assessment and Post self-assessment on knowledge and understanding of the Science VSC Lesson plans will include objectives, differentiation, and assessment Objectives on the board will align to instruction in classroom

<p>Teachers will use this checklist once a month to analyze the alignment of planned instruction to chosen Science VSC objectives</p> <p>Teachers will develop a “look-for” list to be used during walk-throughs to document</p>	<p>Follow-up will include debriefings of walk-throughs with teachers.</p> <p>Follow-up will occur at one Grade Level Team Review of student work samples to assess effectiveness of lesson plan implementation</p>	<p>Students will be able to explain the objective they are learning</p> <p>More students will reach benchmark on county assessments and MSA</p>
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Organization and Management

Who is responsible for the professional development? Who is the audience? What scheduling and structures need to be in place to make time for the professional development?
Provide time equitably for staff involved in the initiative

<p>Person(s) Responsible: Denise Eichel Carrie Smith Laurie Wood Marla Pyles</p>	<p>Participants/Target Audience: K-5 Teachers Special Education Teachers Paraeducators</p>	<p>Budget: <i>No Cost</i> <i>School-Based Funds</i> <i>Title II, Coll. Planning Funds</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Grant</i> _____ <i>Other</i> _____</p>
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Structure and Scheduling of Professional Development:
 Self-assessment of Science VSC objectives will begin at the August Professional Days before school starts. Collaborative discussion focused on the Science VSC objectives will take place at one Grade Level Team Meeting per month. Title II funds will be used to provide 2 hours of planning per quarter to review quarterly data.

SAMPLE FEEDBACK - This feedback was provided and an ensuing discussion with the school team allowed for deeper analysis and dialogue.

Professional Development Plan to Support School Improvement Efforts

Choose 2-3 professional development priorities for your school for the school year. Use this form for each of these identified PD priorities. Utilize this planning frame to design the professional development related to your school improvement goals. Duplicate or Delete planners as necessary.

Identified Need		Professional Development Goals	
<p><i>In what ways does the PD plan support the needs articulated in your SIP plan?</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Connect to SIP goals.</p>		<p><i>What are the goals for the professional development activity?</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> PD goals are based on the participants' learning and implementation.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Provide ways for input from participants</p>	
<p>Major Emphasis: Alignment of Instruction to Science VSC objectives</p> <p>Connection to SIP Goal(s): Our SIP goals are all based on improved student achievement on all assessments. Ensuring alignment to the Science VSC objectives as well as the rigor to which those objectives are taught will result in student achievement. The process of ensuring alignment will carry over to the other content areas.</p>		<p>Goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To increase knowledge and understanding of the VSC. Teachers will utilize a framework to self and peer analyze lessons for accurate alignment and rigor. To further build capacity in teachers to collaborate and reflect on their practice. 	
Learning Activities	Follow Up	Evaluation	
<p><i>What is the process and design of the professional development? What strategies will be employed?</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Include appropriate, active learning opportunities.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure full participation, incl. leadership involvement</p>	<p><i>What follow-up will occur?</i></p> <p><i>When and how often will it occur?</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Consider job-embedded approaches</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Allow for frequent, collaborative interactions</p>	<p><i>How will you assess the PD initiative's impact?</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Measure staff learning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Measure the extent and level of implementation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Measure the impact on students' learning</p>	
<p>Teachers will have the opportunity to self-assess their knowledge and understanding of the Science VSC</p> <p>Teachers will have the opportunity to study and unpack the Science VSC through grade level collaborative discussions</p>	<p>Grade Level Team Meeting discussion about how to teach a specific objective</p> <p>Lesson plans for the identified objective will be reviewed for alignment, rigor, differentiation, and assessment at the following month GLTM</p>	<p>Pre self-assessment and Post self-assessment on knowledge and understanding of the Science VSC</p> <p>Lesson plans will include objectives, differentiation, and assessment</p> <p>Objectives on the board will align to instruction in classroom</p>	

Comment [JAM1]: Be explicit about the specific learning objective for the teachers, i.e., what do you hope they will learn and be able to do. Consider the stems: Teachers will be able to...

Your second objective is pretty close, providing a process objective.

Comment [JAM2]: There has to be some level of accountability and expectation set for the PD>>

Comment [JAM3]: These are excellent follow-up activities.

<p>Teachers will have the opportunity to develop a lesson plan checklist for alignment, rigor, differentiation, and assessment</p>	<p>Monthly informal walk-throughs during Science lessons for identified "look-fors" Follow-up will include debriefings of walk-throughs with teachers.</p>	<p>Students will be able to explain the objective they are learning</p>
<p>Teachers will have the opportunity to use this checklist to analyze the alignment of planned instruction to chosen Science VSC objectives</p>	<p>Follow-up will occur at one Grade Level Team Meeting per month to analyze lesson plan for alignment and rigorous instruction</p>	<p>More students will reach benchmark on county assessments and MSA</p>
<p>Teachers will have the opportunity to develop a "look-for" list to be used during walk-throughs to document</p>	<p>Review of student work samples to assess effectiveness of lesson plan implementation</p>	

Comment [JAM4]: Will teachers also be involved in the walkthroughs? Or will it just be admin?

Organization and Management

Who is responsible for the professional development? Who is the audience? What scheduling and structures need to be in place to make time for the professional development?

<input type="checkbox"/> Provide time equitably for staff involved in the initiative								
<p>Person(s) Responsible: Denise Eichel Carrie Smith Laurie Wood Marla Pyles</p>	<p>Participants/Target Audience: K-5 Teachers Special Education Teachers Paraeducators</p>	<p>Budget:</p> <table> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Cost</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Grant _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> School-Based Funds</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Title II, Coll. Planning Funds</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Cost	<input type="checkbox"/> Grant _____	<input type="checkbox"/> School-Based Funds	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Title II, Coll. Planning Funds	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Cost	<input type="checkbox"/> Grant _____							
<input type="checkbox"/> School-Based Funds	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____							
<input type="checkbox"/> Title II, Coll. Planning Funds								

Structure and Scheduling of Professional Development:
Self-assessment of Science VSC objectives will begin at the August Professional Days before school starts. Collaborative discussion focused on the Science VSC objectives will take place at one Grade Level Team Meeting per month. Title II funds will be used to provide 2 hours of planning per quarter to review quarterly data.

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

Below is a segment from the memorandum to principals detailing the process of accountability to these plans:

Accountability and Support:

Teams/PLCs are especially effective when they are monitored and supported by the leadership of the school and the school system.

- **Teams/PLCs should offer the opportunity and expectation to collaboratively plan instruction and develop shared assessments.** These shared assessments will be used to facilitate wider and more consistent discussion about student achievement. The planning frames for these discussions should be the Two Week Planner.
- **Monitor the work of the Teams/PLCs through Monthly/Quarterly Action Plans.** Effective Action Plans are aligned with the school improvement plan. There is no mandated template or form for you to use although there is a sample that you may use if you so choose. There is an attached list of identified components that your Action Plans must include. The best Action Plans are results-oriented, based on data analyzed from state, local, and school sources. Professional development should be reflected, as appropriate, to assist the members of the Team/PLC to enhance their instructional effectiveness for increased student learning.

Action Plans will be reviewed and discussed quarterly at A&S Leadership Seminars. These plans must be submitted to the Director of Curriculum and Instruction one week prior to the quarterly A&S seminars in September, December, February, and April. Instructional supervisors will provide support and feedback, as needed, for the work of the Teams/PLCs.

- Just as the Action Plans will be reviewed and discussed quarterly at A&S Leadership Seminars, **follow-up sessions will be held at the assistant principal sessions.**
- The **Professional Growth Plans for teachers on formative assessment should reflect their work in the Team/PLC** and not be misaligned. Elements of the work of collaborative planning have been added to the Teacher Performance Assessment System for teachers on both formative and summative evaluations.

4. **How is the district monitoring implementation and impact of the school-based professional development activities? Has the district reviewed school improvement plans that address the new professional development planning requirements?** If so, discuss the results of the review process, clearly specifying (a) how many of the plans were approved as submitted, (b) how many schools were required to revise their plans, (c) the patterns of strengths and weaknesses of the plans as reflected in how they addressed each of the six elements of the planning framework, and (d) lessons learned about the need for additional and/or different kinds of training and support for school and district staff. What specific strategies are in place for working with schools to monitor implementation and impact of school-based professional development in 2009-2010 and beyond?

The professional development plans were reviewed in collaborative teams. These teams provided input in the design of professional development. The following summary articulates the elements of the PD plans.

In this review, most plans were pretty clear about the type and focus of PD, though there were a couple of PD plans that were vague and global, focusing on a process rather than zeroing in on a set of measurable outcomes (e.g., “will learn to use data to...” rather than “will implement guided reading and differentiated instruction by using data effectively to make instructional decisions”). A few schools listed PLCs as a focus, but did not identify a specific goal. As the review process allowed for revisions, the plans were returned to schools and these items were re-written for the final submission. Only one school was asked to provide major revisions.

- The focus for PD varied, with the following notations:
 - 10 elementary schools identified **Mathematics: CGI** as a focus
 - 6 elementary schools identified **Guided Reading** as a focus
 - 6 elementary schools identified **6+1 Writing** as a focus
 - 5 elementary schools identified **Technology** (either skill development or SMART technologies) as a focus
 - 2 middle schools identified **Guided Reading** as a focus
 - 2 middle schools identified **6+1 Writing** as a focus
 - 2 middle schools identified **Technology** (either skill development or SMART technologies) as a focus
 - 4 high schools* identified **using data to differentiate** as a focus
 - 4 high schools* identified **Technology** (either skill development or SMART technologies) as a focus

- In reviewing the process for professional development, it was clear that schools are using job-embedded and high quality professional development practice to support staff learning. While it is noted that all 27 schools include initial training or workshops, learner-focused follow-up activities are included as well.
 - All 27 schools identified **collaborative planning/PLCs** as a prevailing methodology for supporting staff development

- 11 elementary, 3 middle, and 1 high school/s identified **peer coaching/feedback** as a PD process
- 8 elementary, 3 middle, and 3 high schools identified **analyzing data and student work** as PD processes
- 8 elementary and 1 middle school/s identified **participating in a book study or video study** as a PD process

Schools were provided a spreadsheet of tables to guide design shared PD, share information and resources, as well as focus our systemic efforts. This synthesis was posted on the school system's intranet SharePoint site.

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

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

As described above, these action plans are brought to quarterly administrative and supervisory seminars for collaborative review.

This past year, all schools submitted school improvement plans that included professional development planners. One school was asked to provide major revisions. However, through the process of review, we learned that the planner included for the 2008-2009 year was inefficient. Because of the way the planner was integrated in the school improvement process, schools either had inefficient professional development plans, or they had too many priorities to manage. This year (2009-2010), the planner was presented with specific guidance to design no more than three high quality professional development initiatives for the school year. Further, more specific guidance and an example were provided for the 2009-2010 school year that helped school teams to design high quality activities.

Building a cadre of strong professional development leaders is essential. Through the professional learning opportunities outlined above (leadership training, PLC leader training, and the Professional Development Institute), more leaders throughout St. Mary's County Public Schools are gaining an understanding of high quality professional development. Through a review of the School Improvement

PD Plan as well as quarterly action plans, we are able to support and coach leaders in the design and delivery of job-embedded professional development. During this school year, directors are assigned to school teams to provide coaching and feedback to PLC leaders and facilitators. This will provide both the accountability to the process and the support for effective implementation.

Schools that are Safe, Drug-free, and Conducive to Learning

NCLB requires states to identify persistently dangerous schools. In Maryland, a “persistently dangerous” school means a school in which each year for a period of three consecutive school years the total number of student suspensions for more than 10 days or expulsions equals two and one-half percent (2½%) or more of the total number of students enrolled in the school, for any of the following offenses: arson or fire; drugs; explosives; firearms; other guns; other weapons; physical attack on a student; physical attack on a school system employee or other adult; and sexual assault. Schools are placed into “persistently dangerous” status in a given school year based on their suspension data in the prior year. **Note:** Information associated with Safe Schools is also included in Part II, Additional Federal and State Reporting Requirements and Attachment 11: Title IV Part A, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities.

A Based on the Examination of Persistently Dangerous Schools Data (Table 7.1 – 7.5):

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

N/A

Annually, local school systems are required to report incidents of bullying, harassment, or intimidation as mandated by the Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005.

B Based on the Examination of Data on Incidents of Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation (Table 7.6):

1. How would you characterize the prevalence of bullying, harassment, and intimidation in the schools in your system? If you have seen an increase or decrease in reports over the past three school years, explain those in terms of programs and/or procedures that you have implemented.

SMCPS experienced numerous successes with regard to establishing and maintaining a safe learning environment:

- No persistently dangerous schools.
- No elementary schools with suspension rates exceeding identified limits (12%).
- Harassment, sexual harassment, and bullying suspensions reduced by 20%.
- All active PBIS schools earned awards for fidelity to the program and for improved academic and discipline data. Six schools earned exemplar status and one first year school earned green ribbon status.
- There was a reduction in many key offense categories that had the effect of increasing student time on task (class disruption, insubordination, refusal to obey school rules) and/or ensuring a climate of safety (disrespect, fighting, threats, attacks and other weapons).
- Seven schools reduced the disproportionate representation of African American students in their suspension data.
- Eight schools reduced the number of students with an IEP who were suspended from school.
- Eight of seventeen elementary schools had 10 or fewer suspensions.

The 2008-2009 incidents of bullying, harassment, and/or intimidation have increased from last year by 22 incidents from 66 to 88. Although the 2007-2008 number of incidents were down from the previous year, the 2008-2009 incidents have increased.

Our greatest challenge is the disproportionate representation of some student groups in our discipline data. Male students accounted for two-thirds of the in-school and out-of-school suspensions. African American students accounted for 44.9% of the students suspended out of school and 36.2% of students assigned in-school suspensions. FARMS students are assigned to in-school suspension (38%) and suspension (47.5%) at a higher rate than they are represented in the county data. Students with disabilities comprise approximately 12% of our population and accounted for 14% of those assigned to in-school suspension and 21% of those who were suspended out of school.

2. What methods has your school system used to make staff, parents, and students aware of the Bullying, Harassment, and Intimidation Form?

The school system makes brochures available to all schools for distribution to students and parents relative to bullying and sexual harassment. In addition, the school system's website provides strategies for prevention that parents may implement to help their children. This information includes a section on cyber bullying.

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

Each student receives a student handbook and reviews it with a staff member during the first week of school or when the student registers, during the school year. A discussion of bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment is included in that discussion. Staff members at the secondary schools also review the handbook with a Pupil Personnel Worker (PPW) and the president of the Education Association of St. Mary's County. During this presentation, time is spent on the identification and reporting of these infractions. Assistant principals are reminded of the seriousness of these issues at their annual training and strategies are discussed. All staff, including substitutes and bus drivers, are trained annually on bullying, harassment and sexual assault prevention and reporting requirements. The handbook, the code of conduct, and the classroom presentations are also on the system website. The use of consistent parameters for student expectations and discipline consequences ensures that all stakeholders can articulate and understand the discipline plan for SMCPS.

Each school creates a school-wide discipline plan that includes recognition for appropriate behavior, referrals for student support, and scaled consequences for repeated behavioral infractions. Assistant principals, counselors, PPWs, and psychologists provide intervention and support as do school-based and community mentors at some sites. PBIS is utilized to set climate and address specific concerns

at nine of our schools. A Special Education discretionary grant, the Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment Prevention grant and the SDFS grant have supported this initiative.

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

C. Based on the Examination of Suspension and Expulsion Data for Sexual Harassment, Harassment, and Bullying (Tables 7.7):

1. Identify the system-wide strategies that are being used to prevent/reduce suspensions and expulsions for sexual harassment, harassment, and bullying.

The St. Mary's County Public School System utilizes a variety of strategies to prevent and/or reduce incidents of sexual harassment, harassment, and bullying. Students in grades 3-9 receive instruction in one of two research-based curriculums: Steps to Respect (elementary) and Second Step (secondary). Classroom discussion is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the lessons. In addition, we have continued to provide training for all secondary students and staff that outlines the difference between sexual harassment and sexual assault and the importance of reporting these infractions.

PBIS initiatives include a focus on respectful behaviors among different groups. The Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment Prevention and the Disproportionality (Special Education Discretionary) grants continue to support PBIS school incentives. The PBIS initiative rewards and acknowledges the positive and appropriate behavior of our students.

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

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

This same individualized support for students who continue to disrupt the learning environment will be the focus of our school-based Pupil Services Team (PTS) discussions. This team consists of an administrator, counselors, nurses, PPWs, and school psychologists who work with others such as parents, special educators, and instructional resource staff to assess the behavioral needs of students

and the climate needs of the school. The team will continue to identify and implement school improvement strategies and interventions for individual students as identified by school data.

D Based on the Examination of Suspensions Data (Tables 7.8 – 7.10):

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

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

Character education is tied to school climate in each of our schools. Direct instruction in terms of character education takes place in elementary schools and enhances our PBIS initiatives as appropriate. The six pillars of character education are tied to our discipline codes and are used as additional supports for our teachers.

PBIS was fully implemented in nine schools. Discipline data indicates that those schools are making progress toward reducing suspensions and in reducing the disproportionate representation of various student groups in that data. Suspensions for males and African American males, in particular, continue to be of concern although the data indicates that there is a reduction in the number of students suspended.

The group mentoring programs will also focus on the needs of underachieving students who are experiencing social, behavioral, and academic problems. We will target those students who are in the student groups who are underachieving district wide- including our African American, FARMS, and Special Education student groups. In addition to the mentoring opportunities, these students will also be provided with additional interventions.

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

Safety assistants are meeting regularly with the Supervisor of Safety and Security. Their role in prevention and intervention will be expanded to ensure that they serve as an additional resource for the school in the hallways and in the cafeteria.

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

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

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

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

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

The school system will continue to expand and implement the PBIS program to those schools that are confronting challenges in this area. We will provide our team leaders and district coaches with training from the national PBIS office to ensure that the program is being implemented with fidelity. Once our local school system PBIS coaches and school leaders are trained from each school, we will begin training staff members at the school level.

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

As a component of the school improvement plans, school-based pupil services teams will meet regularly to identify students who have accumulated discipline referrals and/or suspensions. Individualized plans will be developed to assist these students in changing behavioral patterns that interfere with learning. A work group composed of school-based and central office staff has revised our functional behavioral assessment process and the accompanying behavior intervention plan. The new process and new documents will be utilized by school staff as a result of the data discussions to address the behavioral needs of identified students.

Professional development will be provided to key staff in targeted areas. School leaders and identified central office staff will participate in threat assessment training in August and will be trained in the use of the new functional behavioral assessment and behavior intervention plan and support for students with autism. Student Services staff will attend training in August, and in October will focus on reducing the disproportional representation of identified student groups in our

attendance, discipline, dropout, and graduation rate data. Those students in the targeted students groups will be identified and supported by school-based and central office student services staff, using individual student information from our state attendance, dropout, and graduation reports.

We have also partnered with our Local Management Board (LMB) to provide Asset Development training for our site based school leaders. Many of our schools participated in this training and received the training materials at that time. To ensure that staff members and participating schools are implementing this initiative with fidelity, we will provide additional training and we will monitor this process centrally as we provide the schools with the necessary support.

The school system is in the second year of implementing a federal mentoring grant, Future Leaders of the World (FLOW), through the office of Safe and Drug Free Schools. Funding has been provided for each school in the school system to have a program. Although the grant was available for elementary and middle schools last year, high schools were not eligible. There will, however, be a high school component for the 2009-2010 school year. The FLOW mentoring initiative focuses on one to one mentoring for students who are encountering social and behavioral challenges.

In addition, the school system has also provided funding for male and female group mentoring programs. This initiative was piloted at one of our four middle schools during the 2008-2009 school term and was deemed to be very helpful by the students, parents, and staff. A group of male students who were not meeting with success were mentored by a group of male teachers for one hour after school for one day per week. This program will be expanded to other secondary and elementary schools in the school system.

F. Based on the Examination of Programs and Services Coordinated with Community Mental Health Providers and Agencies to Support Students with Emotional and Behavioral Needs:

St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) coordinates programs and services with community mental health providers and agencies on a consistent and regular basis to provide support to students with personal/ interpersonal needs to be successful at school.

Some of the programs and services include Interagency Committee on School Attendance, Multidisciplinary Team with the Department of Social Services, Transition Team for students involved with the Department of Social Services. At these meetings the various service providers and agencies wrap around the student to support school attendance and success. Often students who have attendance problems, family conflict or problems in the community, are in need of assistance with personal/interpersonal issues. At these meetings, the different providers and agencies determine a plan to assist these students.

The Maryland Student Assistance programs are available to students in school. Students with at risk behaviors or involved with alcohol, drugs and personal/interpersonal issues are often at the center of these behaviors.

The St. Mary's County Public Schools also works closely with the Local Management Board to coordinate services and bring in support mental health services within the school directly or through agencies. In cooperation with the Local Management Board, a position was created, "Interagency Liaison" to help coordinate services to students.

Addressing Specific Student Groups

Career and Technology Education

1. Describe the school system's progress on the implementation and expansion of CTE Programs of Study within Career Clusters and the strategies for increasing CTE enrollees to become completers. Data points should include the number of enrollees, the number of concentrators and completers.

CTE program implementation and expansion in St. Mary's County begins with a Local Program Advisory Council who helps us determine our program needs.

The Council is the heartbeat of the CTE program development, implementation, and evaluation. The Council, made up of parents/guardians, students, teachers, representatives of business and industry, and labor organizations, believes that all CTE students should be taught a rigorous program of study. Due to this belief, the Council is involved in developing programs that:

- produce a highly prepared local labor force that is appropriately skilled both academically and technically
- value lifelong learning
- provide students exiting high school with the skills needed to assume educational as well as career responsibilities and challenges
- lead to industry certification
- increase articulation opportunities with post-secondary programs
- include challenging culminating senior projects
- offer work-based learning experiences, paid internships, and career awareness opportunities (to introduce students to career options)
- align with local, state, and national goals/standards

All programs are driven by labor market data. This market data (career cluster opportunities) is essential to program expansion and development. The Council plays an important role in collecting, analyzing, and using the information to make definitive program decisions such as implementation/expansion. We have active support from our Southern Maryland Workforce Development Board and St. Mary's County Government - Economic Development.

Since last year, we have received approval for a new Web Page Design and Development program and are continuing with the implementation of the Academy of Health Professions program. A curriculum developed for a new Dental Assisting program was recently approved by the Maryland State Dental Association. We are in the process of getting this program approved by MSDE (List A). A goal of June 2010 has been set to receive National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF) certification for the Diesel program currently running at the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center. Upon receiving certification, a MSDE proposal will be submitted, requesting program approval (List A). Our MSDE List A programs continue to link to the largest employer, Patuxent River Naval Base and the regional contractors serving that facility.

We rely on the Council to provide on-going evaluation and consultation about our programs. They are in the best position to help keep our CTE programs current with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary for students to be successful in their chosen occupations. Specifically, students give input as to how satisfied their peers are with the program offerings and the appropriateness of selected resources. Our faculty uses the Program Quality Index (PQI) and the Local Performance Accountability Report (LPAR) enrollment, follow up, and self-reporting data to evaluate program performance. Effective staff development for teachers, counselors, and VSST is provided to assist with effectively evaluating CTE programs for quality, appropriateness, and rigor.

Strategies for increasing CTE enrollment and the number of completers are in place. The high school CTE departments make regular visits to each middle school. Teachers and students spend one half day informing middle school students, teachers, and counselors of high tech, high wage careers. They also explain how enrolling in CTE at the high school can help prepare them for entering these high wage careers. CTE plans presentations to be aired on the local CABLE 96 channel. Middle schools visit the high schools and Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center to observe high school students at work in their programs and see firsthand the unique laboratories and equipment used in these industry-based programs. Program DVDs have been developed and are shared with each school for regular showing on the school system Channel 96. These strategies to increase student awareness of CTE programs continue to have a positive impact on enrollment data. Making students aware of career options is also a strategy in place to increase program enrollment. The Tech Prep coordinator assists with marketing by making presentations on the Career Cluster and available career and technical education programs at the local college, College of Southern Maryland (CSM). Field trips to various businesses, guest speakers from numerous and diverse career fields, and program brochures (for students in grade 8) are strategies used to make students aware of program careers.

2. What actions are included in the Master Plan to ensure access to CTE programs and success for every student in CTE Program of Study, including students who are members of special populations?

Each CTE program is guided by a Program Advisory Council (PAC). A majority of the PACs are made up of parents/guardians, students, teachers, school counselors, administrators, business, industry, labor organization representatives, and representatives of special populations. These individuals are involved in staff development that includes understanding the necessity of making CTE programs accessible to all students and ensuring the success of all students (Perkins IV requirements). HSTW Perkins' IV reading materials have been purchased for each site to be placed in the CTE Resource Center. The PAC is directly involved with program development, implementation, evaluation, public relations, and purchasing/acquisition of supplies.

Non-CTE personnel, such as administrators and school counselors, are strong supporters of CTE. They view the programs as a means to reform the high schools. They attend the PAC meeting and/or make sure that a school administrator is present. They participate in most phases of curriculum development. They are only interested in implementing curriculum that gives all students an opportunity to complete rigorous academic coursework and curricula that help students acquire the necessary skills that lead to career success.

Addressing Specific Student Groups

Early Learning

A. Based on the examination of 2008-2009 MMSR Kindergarten Assessment Data (Tables 8.1 and 8.2):

1. Describe the school system's plans, including any changes or adjustments that will be made, for ensuring the progress of students who begin kindergarten either not ready or approaching readiness as determined by the Maryland Model for School Readiness Kindergarten Assessment. Please include a discussion of the corresponding resource allocations and include timelines for use of allocations where appropriate.

The 2008-2009 Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) data show major progress in the school readiness of St. Mary's County kindergarten students over the past five years. 79% of students entering kindergarten were fully ready for school up from 69% in 2007-2008. 65% of kindergartners were fully ready for school in Math. Every Day in Pre-K: Math has been purchased for every prekindergarten classroom. Professional development for staff focused on assisting children in developing strong mathematical competencies using discussion as the core of the instruction. Workshops using Cognitively Guided Instruction and the use of Counting Profiles for observation were implemented.

Careful analysis of the data indicates that the focus for 2009-2010 should be on Scientific Thinking. This domain has had the lowest number of proficient students for the past five years. Working with the science supervisor, early learning teachers have developed hands-on, discovery units based on the Maryland State Curriculum objectives. Staff development funds in the Maryland Model for School Readiness Grants will provided focused, age appropriate training for prekindergarten, kindergarten, preschool Special Education, and Head Start teachers on August 21, 2009 and September 25, 2009.

2. What are the school system's plans to work with other early childhood partners/programs (i.e., Preschool Special Education; Head Start; Child Care Programs) to ensure that children are entering school ready to learn?

St. Mary's County Public Schools Early Learning programs include regular prekindergarten and kindergarten classes, preschool special education classes, Head Start classes, Judy Center classes for three year olds. All Classes use the Maryland State Curriculum to plan developmentally appropriate instruction for children. The teachers and MSDE use Houghton Mifflin Prekindergarten materials and Creative Curriculum as the scope and sequence for instruction.

The Work Sampling System is used to record ratings for each child based on observation and collection of work samples for individual portfolios. These ratings are recorded in the central data warehouse in November and May as well as reported to MSDE.

Staff development for staff includes training and workshops focused on trends seen in analyzing the data. There are collaborative planning meetings between the teachers of the children who are dually placed in various programs.

B. Based on the examination of the 2008-2009 Public Prekindergarten Enrollment Data (Table 8:3)

1. Please verify the accuracy of the Public Prekindergarten enrollment data for school year 2008-2009.

All prekindergarten children are entered into the *eSchool* central database upon registration in St. Mary's County Public Schools. Daily attendance for students is recorded electronically by each teacher.

2. Describe the policies and practices put in place to ensure the enrollment of all eligible children into the Public Prekindergarten Program as described in COMAR 13A.6.02.

Beginning in January of each year, information about prekindergarten enrollment is distributed in the local newspapers, on electronic news sites through television and radio broadcasts, through flyers distributed through the partner programs, and by members of the St. Mary's County Local Management Board's Early Childhood team. System-wide prekindergarten round-ups are held in April and May. The Early Childhood team sponsors an Early Childhood fair each spring that provides screenings, immunizations, supplies, and other assistance for families of children living in the most economically disadvantaged areas (20653 and 20634).

Addressing Specific Student Groups

Gifted and Talented Programs

1. List the goals, objectives, and strategies for the Gifted and Talented Program student identification and services along with the progress made in 2008-2009 toward meeting those goals, objectives, and strategies. Include supporting data as needed to document progress.

Goals, objectives, and strategies for the gifted and talented program in SMCPS include:

Goal 1: Increase system awareness of gifted and talented services.

- **Objective1:** Increase communication regarding services available to elementary school students in the areas of Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, and enrichment programs.
- **Objective 2:** Improve communication practices to clarify for stakeholders what programs are available to highly able learners and what resources beyond the school day exist as well.

Strategies:

- Communicate regularly with schools via a monthly newsletter entitled, “This Month in PAC-TD.” The PAC-TD acronym represents the Program of Acceleration, Challenge, and Talent Development. Newsletter features include how to implement PAC-TD services including, Junior Great Books (K-8), William and Mary Reading/Language Arts units (2-8), GT Math Extension Maps (3-5) and Project M3 (3-5). Additional communication will be handled through updates to principals as part of regularly scheduled elementary school principals’ meetings.
- Refer students to Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth programs.
- Provide local opportunities for CTY testing.
- Invite students to apply to STEM, particularly those students whose performance data indicate a special talent in the areas of math and science.
- Regularly post updates to program initiatives on the school system intranet, SharePoint, and the SMCPS website.

Goal 2: All schools will fully implement GT program services.

Objective2: Provide technical assistance at school sites for program implementation.

Strategies:

- Conduct professional development sessions, model lessons, and classroom walkthroughs.
- Provide professional development for implementation of the updated Primary Talent Development units by master teachers on county professional development days, as well as through the distribution of PTD CDs and posting the PTD materials and resources on the intranet.
- Provide technical assistance for middle schools in the implementation of Junior Great Books and William and Mary units for Reading/Language Arts.

Goal 3: Identify all potential students for gifted and talented services at the elementary level.

Objective 3: Ensure that placement criteria and procedures are in place to achieve representative participation.

Strategies:

- Meet with administrative and instructional teams at each elementary school to provide technical assistance in identifying students for participation in PAC-TD services.
- Meet regularly with primary teams to ensure consistency and reliability in REPI scoring of PTD artifacts.

Goal 4: 65% of all students will complete Algebra in Middle School.

2007-19%, 2008-31%, 2009-18% of students completed Algebra in middle school.

Objective 4: Ensure that placement criteria and procedures are in place to achieve representative participation.

Strategies:

- Collaborate with the supervisor of instruction for English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Fine Arts to ensure that placement criteria allow equitable access to higher level coursework, with the goal of mirrored demographics between the Honors, Pre-AP and AP courses and school system enrollment. Gifted and Talented programming at the middle and high school levels consists of leveled courses, with Honors/Pre-AP and AP courses in each content area.
- Work with the supervisor of mathematics to ensure that the Pre-Algebra course for sixth grade students provides rigor for mathematics, while supporting the SC for sixth grade math.

Goal 5: All high schools will achieve a 1.5 AP challenge index and a 60% pass rate cumulatively.

2008 Challenge Index-Leonardtown 1.693, Great Mills 1.438, Chopticon .85

2008 SMCPS Pass Rate-44.8%, 2009 SMCPS Pass Rate 49.4%

Objective 5: Ensure that placement criteria and procedures are in place to achieve representative participation in Pre-AP and AP courses.

Strategies:

- Fully utilize data, such as AP Potential, to identify students for enrollment in AP courses.
- Implement a web-based registration tool that defaults to the most rigorous course available for each student.
- Implement common assessments to monitor student progress and support student performance in AP courses.
- Provide resources, such as released AP exams, to provide daily instruction at the rigor of the AP assessment.

The 2008-2009 school year marked the second full year of formal GT identification. With full implementation of the Primary Talent Development (PTD) program at all schools, teachers and schools were able to report Readiness, Emerging, Progressing, and Independent (REPI) data electronically through the use of a REPI database. This data was merged with information available

through the Stanford-10/OLSAT test administration in the spring of second grade. Information used included total reading and total math percentile rankings, total reading and total math stanines, and School Ability Index (SAI) score, which serves in place of an IQ score. Data also included progress on county reading and mathematics benchmark scores. This data was color-coded and sent back to schools so that teams could begin to look at the data. Since blue and green colors signified advanced or above average ability, color-coding made identification of students a highly visual process. Data from the 2008-2009 identification round indicated that the procedures for identification needed to be revised as identification gaps exist among minority and economically disadvantaged students. The 2009-2010 procedures for identification will reflect the addition of the county gifted and talented supervisor to elementary school teams in order to help school teams identify students and determine whether underrepresented students have met at least one of the criteria in each category.

In addition to progress in establishing GT identification procedures, SMCPS has made progress in providing instructional materials that provide enrichment and challenge to identified students. The Johns Hopkins CTY program, Descartes' Cove, has been purchased and used at the elementary level for very highly able students. In addition, the school system has reviewed several other mathematics units that can be used to supplement grade level instruction. These include Project M3 materials, and Interact mathematics simulations. GT Math Extension maps were created in order to provide daily suggestions for extending the mathematics in each unit and increasing the level of challenge. Grouping suggestions were included to provide for the need for highly able students to work together in a peer group.

In reading/language arts, professional development has focused on the implementation of Junior Great Books (JGB), and the shared inquiry model of literature discussion and analysis. Level 1 training for the program was held one time, with a cohort of teachers ready to participate in Level 2 training during the 2009-2010 school year. A class set of these materials was purchased for the first grade at each elementary school during the 2007-2008 school year. Grades 2-8 participate in the William and Mary curriculum for Reading/Language Arts. Grade 2 materials for JGB were added during the 2008-2009 school year.

SMCPS continues to implement the PTD program in Pre-K through Grade 2. This program continues to yield data regarding student strengths, as well as professional development needs, such as reaching underrepresented populations such as minorities and boys.

Communication regarding gifted and talented programs was increased during the 2008-2009 school year through the development of print media, such as a GT brochure, PTD brochure, PTD newsletter, and increased information available through the school system website. Communication with school principals, via face to face updates, emails, or professional development workshops will be a focus for the 2000-2010 school year.

2. Identify the strategies, including resource allocations that appear related to the 2008-2009 progress.

While the PTD program reached the end of its third year of implementation in 2008, the school system was able to participate in a pilot of the revised PTD modules during the 2008-2009 school year. Professional development and technical assistance through the grant has provided the school

system with support in developing and refining defensible identification procedures, as well as the opportunity to explore materials of instruction that provide the challenge that gifted and talented students require. Professional development in the JGB Shared Inquiry model continues to provide teachers with strategies that can be used to increase rigor through questioning. Providing young students with quality texts that are worthy of in-depth discussion at the primary level, has been critical to teaching students to think as well as in reinforcing and supporting PTD behaviors such as perceptive, inquisitive, and communicative.

Other strategies that have contributed to progress include a continued commitment to Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) as part of the elementary mathematics curriculum. This type of instruction emphasizes math problem solving and communication about problem solving strategies. Higher level questioning and an emphasis on investigation in the elementary grades increases rigor of instruction and allows students to explore multiple approaches to problem solving. Teachers are making the connections between PTD, JGB, and CGI. Early Algebraic Thinking was emphasized as a way to increase rigor through the classroom routines outlined in the *Investigations* math program.

Progress at the elementary school level is considered to be a direct result of the PTD grant and its role in supporting the school system in establishing criteria that allow a look at the whole child. Incorporating REPI data as evidence of achievement behaviors has allowed the school system a glimpse at early potential. Coupled with achievement and ability data available through the SAT-10/OLSAT tests, the school is provided with evidence of potential and information on gaps between achievement and that potential. This grant funding has allowed the school system to not only establish criteria for GT services, but also to implement instructional programs that allow these students to develop their talents. These include the purchase of Junior Great Books as well as the math program Descartes' Cove. To ensure that this progress continues, the school system will need to provide school teams to complete instructional walkthroughs and portfolio reviews to monitor implementation of PTD, as this seems to be the gateway to STEM and to other GT program services.

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

The greatest challenge evident in the gifted and talented program continues to be identification of students from underrepresented populations. Because the school system strives for equity in all GT programs, professional development opportunities will continue to focus on documenting and identifying GT students from all student groups. The GT and content area supervisors will continue meeting with grade level teams to evaluate progress and provide assistance in increasing challenge within the curriculum. Identification criteria at the middle school level will be emphasized as data indicate that students can rise to the challenge when asked.

The goal of SMCPS is to finalize and implement GT identification procedures at the end of second grade or beginning of third grade that will remain in effect until the end of fifth grade. This identification will be monitored throughout the year to check for changes in student performance that indicate that a change in services needs to occur. Identification of students will be monitored to ensure that the demographics of the GT program match those of the school system. As we implement these criteria at the elementary school level, adjustments in the criteria for placement in

middle school Honors programs will be made. Currently, the school system uses results from the Math-Level Indicator (MLI), as well as information gained through teacher recommendations and report card grades to place students in Honors. The 2008-2009 placement data indicated gaps in Honors placement by feeder elementary school. This seemed to indicate gaps and/or misalignment with what is valued in instruction, particularly in math. While elementary school math instruction places an emphasis on math processes and math problem solving, the MLI seems to be more an indicator of computational skill. The Supervisor of Instruction for Gifted and Talented Programs and the Supervisor of Instruction for Mathematics have examined these gaps and have made changes to the middle school Honors placement criteria for the 2009-2010 school year. These criteria reflect a more inclusive approach to mathematics placement. The 2009-2010 school year saw an increase in Algebra I of approximately 250 students. Pass rates on the Algebra I HSA are expected to remain the same. For the 2008-2009 school year, the pass rate was 99.1%. This indicates that when asked, students rise to the challenge of more rigorous courses. Once placed in the Honors program, these students will progress through the Honors options and will filter into Advanced Placement courses at the high school level. The school system has noted a similar effect at the high school level where, although enrollment has nearly tripled in the past five years, pass rates on AP exams continue to increase. Advanced Placement enrollment is considered to be “open” as long as the student meets the identified prerequisites that are listed in the high school program of studies. AP opportunities for SMCPs students begin at the 9th grade level with AP World History in the Global and International Studies Academy, and continue through grade twelve. SMCPs supports AP students by requiring and paying the \$86 fee for each AP exam taken. Identification of these students is supported by SMCPs by paying for the PSAT/NMSQT to be administered to all students in grades 10 and 11, and through the use of the AP Potential data available after the PSAT is administered.

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

Professional development for the 2009-2010 school year will continue to include strategies for reaching at-risk students, including boys, minorities, and students from poverty. The Supervisor of Instruction for Gifted and Talented programs will continue to monitor student identification and its alignment with overall school system demographics in order to ensure equity. With the system-wide implementation of the new PTD modules, new and stronger opportunities exist to document the targeted behaviors. Professional development related to these initiatives will be presented on the August and September county professional development days, as well as at individual schools throughout the school year. Program implementation measures, such as PTD Walkthroughs and PTD Portfolio Reviews, will continue. PTD walkthroughs will be held in February, and portfolio reviews will continue at the end of the year.

It is hoped that the introduction of both JGB and William and Mary will lead to the establishment of differentiated levels of program services, with William and Mary for the highly able, and Junior Great Books having a wider scope of reach to include average to high average readers. Mathematics materials, including implementation of the GT Math Extension maps, will be examined to allow for the same differentiation of program services. A tiered approach, such as that found in Response to Intervention (RtI), will be implemented for highly able students.

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

Salaries and Wages = \$26,710.00

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

Materials of Instruction = \$36,550.00

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

Consultants = \$37,900.00

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

County Inservice = \$25,000.00

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

State funding was available through the Primary Talent Development Year 4 grant that expires on September 30, 2009. Funding was provided in the following amounts:

Salaries and Wages = \$1,973.20

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

Contracted Services = \$12,366.24

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

Supplies and Materials = \$33,704.58

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

Other Charges = \$6203.24

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

Other state funding was provided through the Project NEXUS grant. While the Year 3 grant ended in December 2008, funding assisted the school system in identifying AP Potential and in increasing college awareness at the middle school level. Grant funding is available in the following amounts:

Salaries and Wages = \$22,467.00

- Support for rigor in the classroom was provided. Embedded professional development was emphasized.

Contracted Services = \$8,400.00

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

Supplies and Materials = \$20,408.00

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

Other Charges = \$7,150.00

- Fixed Charges and conference fees were also provided.

An additional mini-grant was also awarded to the school system. This \$11,000 mini-grant provided AP Student Support sessions for AP English Language and Composition and AP English Literature and Composition teachers. These sessions allowed teachers from four neighboring counties the opportunities to collaboratively score student responses to a common AP released item. Practice exams were also purchased with this funding. Substitutes were provided for teachers from SMCPS, and lunch was provided after the half-day session. SMCPS teachers remained after the session ended to participate in AP PLC activities, including AP Exams Review planning and data analysis of the collaboratively scored items.

Because grant funding is no longer available to cover these costs, substitute money will need to be allocated. The projected cost is \$300. The school system will need to continue professional development activities, particularly Junior Great Books training, in order to facilitate the implementation of shared inquiry and critical thinking strategies. Materials for Kindergarten should be purchased to provide rigor to high ability primary students and to ensure that critical thinking abilities are nurtured at a young age. At the middle school level, the school system will need to identify teacher leaders who can facilitate the implementation of Pre-AP strategies. Collaboration between the Supervisor of Instruction for Gifted and Talented Programs and content area supervisors is critical in ensuring alignment and rigor that will start in middle school and prepare students for Advanced Placement courses at the high school level. In order to ensure access to AP, the school system should continue to allocate funding to support payment of AP exam fees as well as administration of the PSAT/NMSQT to all students in grades 10-11. Increasing this funding to include PSSS administration to ninth graders would expand this initiative and provide early identification of AP Potential and increased access to the tenth grade AP course. The projected cost of this initiative is \$20,000.00.

FY10 Funding for materials of instruction and county in-service remained consistent, as these funds are considered to deliver the most impact for meeting the needs of GT students in SMCPS. Previous funding for consultants provided staff development for Pre-AP and AP strategies, as well as for Junior Great Books Level 1

training. Over the past two years, the school system has been able to train enough people to build capacity for in-house professional development. The school system continues to acquire materials to supplement the curriculum for highly able students. Materials of instruction funds are used to purchase Project M3, Descartes' Cove, William and Mary, and Junior Great Books materials. The remaining funds allow for substitutes for collaborative planning, coaching, mentoring, and professional development for teachers.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Educational Technology

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

1. Describe the progress that was made in 2008-2009 toward meeting educational technology goals, including how the school system is addressing:
 - Student, teacher and school administrator technology literacy standards;
 - Results of student, teacher and school administrator technology literacy measurements;
 - Objectives of the *Maryland Educational Technology Plan for the New Millennium: 2007-2012*.

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

The MD Technology Literacy Inventory for Teachers results showed that 91% of the respondents were proficient in the Maryland Teacher Technology Standards. The Maryland Technology Literacy Inventory for Administrators revealed that 82% of our principals were proficient and 79% of all assistant principals were proficient. Our teachers and administrators are able to use technology for teaching and learning. Data driven decision-making is an integral part of our teachers and administrators' daily work. However, it is apparent that teacher technology literacy is not being transferred to our students through instruction as evidenced in only 43% of our seventh grade students were considered technology literate. This will be addressed under challenges.

The use of the Electronic Learning Community (ELC) has enhanced the collaborative efforts of our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at all our schools. Teachers and principals are able to share resources across the system. SMCPS also introduced SharePoint to the administrators in order to share documents and house resources in order to reduce our use of paper.

Communication among SMCPS students, staff, parents/guardians, and community is a part of our superintendent's Fifteen Point Plan. This was possible through *eSchool's* Teacher Access Center (TAC) and Home Access Center (HAC) as well as *Performance Matters*. In an effort to communicate effectively and efficiently with the community, the SMCPS Board of Education instituted the use of *Board Docs*.

In an effort to promote stakeholder involvement, SMCPS continued to require each school to have an active technology committee as a subgroup of the School Improvement Team. For the most part, these teams are co-chaired by the principal and school library media specialists. The school teams made decisions about technology purchases as reflected by the data in the school improvement plans.

Additionally, the library media specialists are the technology contacts for most schools so technology information is disseminated through them and the SMCPs website.

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

Data Warehouse: The data warehouse is a web-based tool that allows SMCPs to delve into a wide variety of data in order to make informed decisions about students. SMCPs uses the data to identify strengths and weaknesses in student, teacher, and school performance. This year the system administered mid-year and end-of-year assessments in all core content areas including the Advanced Placement courses in order to assess the strength of its students. Use of this system has helped SMCPs continue its work towards eliminating the achievement gap. In reading, the achievement gap between African American and White students decreased by 1 percentage point at the elementary level, 2 percentage points at middle school, and 7 percentage points at high school. In mathematics, the achievement gap between African American and White students decreased 3 points at the elementary and middle school levels, and 10 points at high school.

The data warehouse remains the central repository of data from various sources, e.g., MSA/HSA, Stanford 10, DIBELS, SAT, ACT, local formative assessments, attendance and discipline, and is used for the storage, retrieval, and management of such data. It provides a snapshot of a student or class at a particular time as well as providing trend analysis. The reports allow the user to filter by various subgroups and qualifiers in order to drill down further into the data. Our PLCs use this data regularly in order to articulate specific discussion of students' needs during professional learning community/grade level/department meetings and county content assessment review meetings.(Goal 3) In order to successfully put data into the teachers' hands, professional development was provided by a variety of methods. Central office personnel visited schools during grade level/department team meetings; the instructional resource teachers/HSA lead teachers continued to provide direct assistance at each building.

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

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

Each elementary building provided direct access for teachers to the University of Oregon DIBELS data web site. Teacher's access to this web site (<http://dibels.uoregon.edu/data>) provides detail reports of a student's progress or deficiencies in a particular area of reading (oral reading fluency, phonemic awareness, word use fluency, etc.) Each school's IRT offers professional development to staff under the

direction of the Supervisor of Reading Language Arts. Central office imports student data exported from our *eSchool* system into the DIBELS system.

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

SMCPs continued to expand its communication with the community through the *School Messenger* telephone notification system and the Channel 96 education programming channel. Schools provided additional programming for Channel 96. One hundred percent (100%) of SMCPs administration has access to the voice broadcast system. (Goal 4) Additionally, the SMCPs attempts to provide students, parents/guardians, and the community with current information.

Electronic Grade Books/Report Cards: SMCPs continued to provide electronic grade books for all grades. SMCPs fully implemented a new electronic primary report card (Pre-Kindergarten through grade 2). Programmers worked to provide a seamless import capability for the primary report cards. (Goal 1 and 4)

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

TestPilot: Professional development increased in this application as the PLC groups worked to create common assessments. It is our intent to use TestPilot as a method for allowing students to practice for the Science Online MSA, online HSA courses, and the MD Technology Literacy Assessment for seventh grade students.. TestPilot data can be imported into the data warehouse so that it can be an alternative/substitute for some of the scanned assessments. (Goal 1) Approximately 40 teachers were trained last year in the spring.

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

STEM: SMCPs added graded 5,7 and 10 to its Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Academies. The STEM program integrated the use of wireless and interactive technology in all

classrooms as well as robotics and other technologies provided by our partnerships with the Naval Air Warfare Center, Patuxent River and defense contractors. (Goal 1)

Interactive Technology: Elementary and middle schools integrated the use of InterWrite Tablets and TurningPoint Response Pads in order to access student learning and reflect on teaching. A number of schools purchased additional sets of the technology so more classrooms would have access to the technology. The Title I schools and Spring Ridge Middle School continued to use school funds to integrate the interactive technology throughout their buildings. Two of our high schools have purchased SMART boards for their classrooms. (Goal 1)

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

eSchoolPlus: SMCPS uses *eSchoolPlus* to provide access for administration, teachers (TAC), parents/guardians and students (HAC).

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

SMCPS continues to address the challenges associated with the rapidly changing state of technology. In addition to our inability to fund online courses, SMCPS have not integrated some of the innovations students use in their everyday life such as podcasting, blogging, and texting. Our funding and infrastructure prevent implementation at this time.

While only 42% of our teachers responded to the Maryland Teacher Technology inventory, it revealed that we need to provide more professional development in the areas of *Standard IV: Assessment for Administration and Instruction (74% proficient)* and *Standard VII Professional Growth (81%).* The administrator inventory brought to light the need to create support for more specific data driven decision making, professional practice, and management. This data will enable SMCPS to target professional development and curriculum development at our monthly A & S meetings.

Key components for our system include:

Staffing: SMCPS falls below the state staffing recommendations to support technology. (SMCPS Framework for Technology Objective 1 and Appendix A) Currently SMCPS is staffed at 50 percent of the state recommended support technology personnel. SMCPS recognizes that the 43% technology literacy proficient rate among seventh grade students reflects the need to provide more staffing to support seamless technology integration at all levels.

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

Online Access: SMCPs must have high speed at all of its elementary schools and increased bandwidth to the Internet backbone if we are to be successful at delivering content to all students. (SMCPs Framework for Technology Objectives 2-3)

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

Data Warehouse: Every teacher has access to the data warehouse by providing an upgraded computer on the teacher's desk. (Goal 1) The increase in additional assessments added strain to the central office personnel. A 17-hour assistant was hired to help alleviate the strain but it is not enough at high volume times. Similarly, each content area has only one supervisor to oversee the creation of assessments although SMCPs teachers are paid to participate in item creation, review, and editing of assessments. Additional human resources are needed for both the assessment creation, review, and the scanning process and software/hardware will help SMCPs meet the teachers' demand.

Primary Report Card: SMCPs provided the electronic tool in Fall 2007 yet it is more cumbersome than the grades 3-12 report card. In the Fall of 2009, SMCPs will pilot a new version of the primary report card. After the pilot, we will again have the challenge of being able to provide adequate support for the application. (Goal 1)

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

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

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

The Chief Academic Office and the Technology Department continue to work closely to make best use of limited human/financial resources. SMCPs will continue to request positions for technology coaches across the system as well as additional technicians to support and maintain our current technologies.

SMCPs will continue to investigate virtual schools as a possible way to reach the non-traditional student. SMCPs would like to offer online courses however, the funding is not available at this time.

In the 2009-2010 school year, interactive technology packages will be integrated into the Grade 6, 7, 8 and Algebra 9-90 mathematics classes and the English 9-90 classes in order to engage all learners and most especially our Special Education students. Similarly our LAP and SAIL Special Education classes will receive SMART boards to help deliver instruction and boast student achievement. These packages include a SMART board, AirLiner tablet, response pads, and a SMART document camera. Ongoing professional development will be provided by both the vendor and in-house teachers.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Education That Is Multicultural

Discuss the progress toward meeting Education That Is Multicultural (ETM) goals as outlined in the Education That Is Multicultural regulation COMAR 13A.04.05 by responding to the following questions:

1. Identify the major ETM goals that were addressed by the school system during the 2008-2009 academic year. Describe the progress that was made toward meeting these goals, and the programs, practices, strategies, or initiatives that were implemented related to the goals. In your response be sure to address the following areas: Curriculum, Instruction, Staff Development, Instructional Resources, and School Climate.

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

The Task Force has two major objectives: implement site-based, targeted interventions and acceleration programs designed to increase student achievement and eliminate achievement gaps; and maintain a process for the community and the school system to share ideas and communicate strategies to increase student achievement, especially for underperforming students. As a result of the recommendations made by the Task Force subcommittees, a number of system-wide strategies and initiatives have been implemented and are described in numbers 1-6 below.

1. Quality Workforce

- The recruitment specialist, added to the Department of Human Resources in SY 08-09, continues to recruit candidates of color, meet with educators of color and various community members - such as the NAACP for input, and extends recruitment efforts to include international teachers.
- SMCPS has hired (8) teachers from Jamaica and (1) from Nigeria.
- The Human Resources Department continues to visit Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) for quality candidates of color.
- Each new teacher is provided a mentor teacher who will meet with them throughout the school year to provide ongoing support.

2. Intervention and Special Programs

- The school system was awarded a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education for after-school programs. The funding will be used to continue the Dream Team/Boys & Girls Clubs at elementary and middle schools, and to begin a program at the St. Mary's County Carver Recreation Center.
- The school system was awarded a three-year mentoring grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The FLOW (Future Leaders of the World) mentoring program began in all schools in SY 08-09.
- The Readers Are Leaders mentoring program continued at Great Mills High School which allowed the high school students to engage elementary students in reading.

- The Check-N-Connect Dropout Prevention Mentoring program continued at two high schools and one middle school. This program addresses students' engagement with learning and promotes students' engagement through relationship building.
- Each school created a School Based Task Force to focus on students in need of additional academic support.
- Technical Assistance Teams (TAT), a collaboration of district-level supervisors and administrators and site-based school leaders, were implemented at various school sites to focus on students and teachers in need of additional support.
- Additional schools in the district initiated the Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports (PBIS) program to reward positive student behavior.
- Southern Maryland College Access Network (SoMD CAN) provides a support person at the high school level to help first generation students prepare for college/post-secondary education.
- The school system provided schools with an Academic Literacy program for all students reading below grade level and not performing at proficient levels on MSA reading.

3. Parent-Community-Business Partnerships

- Through the Department of Academic Support, SMCPS meets with community members and student leaders to solicit recommendations on issues confronting students in St. Mary's County.
- In collaboration with the family/school partnerships project of Teaching for Change, the Tellin' Stories Project was implemented at two elementary schools. This project offered a series of workshops that provided parents, grandparents, teachers, and administrators an opportunity to come together and share personal stories.
- The superintendent hosted several meetings and activities for various community stakeholders to solicit their support and recommendations on how we can work collaboratively to support students in St. Mary's County. Such activities/meetings included: Principal for a Day, Superintendent's Business Breakfast, Faith Community Meeting, and the Volunteer Recognition Ceremony.
- St. Mary's County Public Schools maintained its initiatives and partnerships with community groups and organizations. The school system, community organizations, and groups collaborated on many community initiatives. Some of the partners included: the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, the St. Mary's County Chamber of Commerce, the Local Management Board (LMB), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), St. Mary's County Faith Leaders, St. Mary's College, the College of Southern Maryland, St. Mary's County Government, and the U.S. Department of Justice. These partnerships enabled the school system to collaborate with community leaders and organizations for the benefit of the children in our school system.

4. National Network of Partnership Schools

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

5. Study Circles

The Study Circles process helps schools and school systems address racial and ethnic barriers to student achievement and parent involvement. A Study Circle consists of a small group of approximately 12-15 stakeholders from different ethnic and racial groups in a school or community. The group meets for six 2-hour sessions and they are led by two trained facilitators who are responsible for ensuring that everyone is actively involved in the process.

6. Cultural Proficiency

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

In addition, SMCPs specifically addressed the five encompassing ETM areas as indicated below.

Curriculum. Explain how your curriculum enables students to demonstrate an understanding of and an appreciation for cultural groups in the United States as an integral part of education for a culturally pluralistic society.

- The MSDE/Reginald F. Lewis Museum "An African American Journey" curriculum remained on the school system's intranet for all schools to access.

Instruction. Identify how you ensure that students are not denied access to equally rigorous academic instruction on the basis of cultural background.

- The school system targeted more African American and Economically Disadvantaged students to take the PSAT, SAT, and AP exams. In addition, more African American students were targeted to take more Advanced Placement (AP) classes.
- The Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center allowed greater access to African American and Economically Disadvantaged students through the Tech Connect program. These students have an opportunity to experience courses at the Career and Technology Center in their ninth grade year.
- Grade level teacher collaboration centered on student achievement using disaggregated performance data to make instructional decisions.
- Fairlead Academy opened in SY 2008-2009 for sixty underperforming ninth grade students and will be expanding to grade ten in SY 2009-2010. The program is designed to assist struggling freshman with the transition to high school and guide them through the first two years of high school helping them to avoid obstacles to their academic achievement.
- Each school has a School Based Task Force to focus on students in need of additional academic support.
- Technical Assistance Teams (TAT), which is a collaboration of district-level supervisors and administrators and site-based school leaders, were implemented at targeted school sites and all Title I schools to focus on students and teachers in need of additional support.
- The school system provided high schools with an Academic Literacy program for all students reading below grade level and not performing at proficient levels on MSA reading.

Staff Development. Include descriptions of ETM course and workshop offerings and disaggregated enrollment data for these staff development programs.

Study Circles

The Study Circles process helps schools and school systems address racial and ethnic barriers to student achievement and parent involvement. A Study Circle consists of a small group of approximately 12-15 stakeholders from different ethnic and racial groups in a school or community. The group meets for six 2-hour sessions and they are led by two trained facilitators who are responsible for ensuring that everyone is actively involved in the process. Recommendations that are developed during the last two sessions are then shared with key decision makers, most of which are then implemented. Study Circle participants within the school system are eligible to receive (1) CEU credit.

As a result of collaborating with St. Mary's College and the St. Mary's County Government, this collaboration was able to facilitate three successful Study Circles – two school- based and one with central office administrators and supervisors.

The diverse group of 29 participants included (6) African-Americans, (1) Korean-American, (1) Hispanic, and (21) Caucasians.

Ten new facilitators were trained to implement the Study Circle process.

Cultural Proficiency

St. Mary's County continued implementing Cultural Proficiency training for principals, assistant principals, supervisors, and other school leaders through the school system's Administrative and Supervisory (A&S) meetings. School principals and leaders were expected to facilitate similar discussions and professional development at their respective schools.

Assistant Principals are vital to our system's success. Monthly sessions are held with APs at which important issues are discussed and information is shared. Their professional development as leaders is essential.

Cultural diversity training entitled "*Building Cultural Proficiency and Positive Relationships to Improve Student Achievement*" was conducted at targeted elementary and high schools.

Cultural diversity training was provided for new teachers as part of the new teacher induction program. New teacher seminars continue on a monthly basis.

Each year, SMCPS offers a three credit course, "Teaching in a Diverse Learning Environment – Education that Is Multicultural." This course is designed to share strategies to infuse education that is multicultural into instructional practice. The course focuses on the effects of poverty, learning/teaching styles as impacted by culture, and culturally responsive education. Participants develop an action plan focusing upon changing individual and/or collective instructional practices based on select readings, group discussion, independent activities and professional reflection. Collectively, there have been 48 teachers who have taken this course during the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years.

Instructional Resources. Explain your process for reviewing materials that avoid stereotyping, discrimination, bias and prejudice, as well as materials that reflect the diverse experiences relating to cultural groups and individuals.

- Instructional resources including textbooks, supplemental materials, library media materials, and technology are selected to assist students with learning the curriculum. Instructional resources are aligned with the curriculum and are selected to match students' varied interests, abilities, and learning styles.
- While textbooks are not the only source for learning, textbooks are the most commonly used instructional resource to assist students with learning content, skills, and processes.
- Textbooks are adopted by a committee of teachers, administrators, and supervisors of instruction. Textbooks are displayed publicly in all three St. Mary's County public libraries and at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction for public preview before adoption. Notices of such adoptions appear in the local press.

School Climate. Explain how your school climate reflects the diversity of your community and encourages respect for different cultures.

The population of the St. Mary's County Public Schools is comprised of diverse ethnic, cultural, religious, and racial groups, as reflected in individual classrooms and schools. SMCPSS' global perspective promotes the valuing of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity and creates a climate within the schools which acknowledges and enhances the dignity and importance of each individual. Equally important is the strengthening of steps which have been implemented to encourage students pride in themselves and their cultural identities and achievements; and to promote a feeling of understanding, trust, and acceptance among persons of differing cultural indicators such as ability, age, gender, ethnicity, language, race, region, religion, and socioeconomic status.

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

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

- A. Ensuring that we make time to sustain the Cultural Proficiency work and maintain it as a school system priority.
- B. National Network of Partnership Schools
 - There is a lack of parent involvement at the middle and high school level.
 - There is a need to have every school in the school system become an active member of NNPS.
 - The need to organize more effective, goal-oriented partnership programs at the district level and in all of our schools.
- C. Study Circles
 - There will be a need to continue to train additional facilitators.
 - The facilitators of the Study Circle process must assist the schools with the recruitment of students, parents, and staff.
- D. Cultural Proficiency
 - There will be a need to provide Cultural Proficiency training for *ALL* new employees to the school system.

- There will be a need to ensure that school principals and ETM representatives are providing teachers at their schools with Cultural Proficiency training.

E. Community Partnerships

- School leaders must maintain the current partnerships that have been developed.
- School leaders must continue building relationships and partnerships with community leaders and organizations.
- School leaders must continue to assess partnerships to ensure that they are meaningful and beneficial for children.

3. Describe the changes, adjustments, or revisions that will be made to programs or strategies for 2009-2010 to address the identified challenges.

For the 2009-2010 school year, St. Mary's County Public Schools will continue to implement the following initiatives to meet the goals of ETM:

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

The work of the Superintendent's Blue Ribbon Task Force to Eliminate the Achievement Gap will continue into the 2009-2010 school year. The Task Force's focus will continue to be on the implementation of the recommendations from the 2005-2006 school year. In addition, the Task Force will continue to provide monitoring at the school level.

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

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

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

The superintendent and the superintendent's leadership team will continue to meet with and establish Community Partnerships with groups and organizations. There are a series of partnerships, events, and meetings scheduled for the 2009-2010 school year for Patuxent River Naval Air Station, the business community and the Chamber of Commerce, the Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), the faith based community, student groups, and many other civic and social organizations. The position of Coordinator of Parent, Business, and Military Outreach was created to serve as a liaison to promote positive relationships and increased collaboration between parents, businesses and organizations, and other stakeholders serving and interacting with the students of St. Mary's County Public Schools. 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.

Local Goals and Indicators

The St. Mary's County Public School Bridge to Excellence Master Plan is fully aligned to the five ESEA goals and therefore all goal progress has been addressed in the proceeding sections.

Clarifying Question Responses
November 12, 2009

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