



Accountability equals quality: From Pre-K to Graduating High School



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The Alliance for Quality Education is a New York State community-based organization fighting for high-quality public education. AQE played a major leadership role in fighting and securing fair funding for public schools, which led to the historic four-year funding increase enacted in 2007. AQE has always advocated for accountability to ensure that the increased funding reaches schools and students that need it the most. AQE was instrumental in the creation of the new accountability measures, the Contract For Excellence, enacted into law in 2007. AQE continues to be one of New York State's most vocal advocates for accountability in public education.

**Accountability equals quality.
From Pre-k to High School!**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The move to standards-based education reform created a set of federal and state standards by which student performance is defined in an attempt to create more accountability. The intent of these high-stakes test is to promote accountability and learning. Student success on standardized testing is meant to be a measure of the quality of education and student learning, an assumption that is also not always accurate. Students do better on standardized tests when they have had quality education from the time their academic characters are formed, from the age of three (Perry preschool Study; Abecedarian Study). Students do well when they have high quality teachers that can help them overcome potential obstacles they may face (Illinois experience). Students do well when their teachers, schools, and school districts use methods and techniques that have been proven successful (NYSED). And lastly, students do well when their schools are adequately funded and their teachers well paid. A comprehensive approach to accountability using all of these components has the best chance of closing New York State's achievement gap.

When it comes to improving achievement, states often choose less expensive but shortsighted methods. Instead of investing in early childhood education and specifically pre-Kindergarten so that most children get or sharpen the skills they need to succeed in school, services are offered later on to children who are in need. This is made evident in the fact that no state fully funds pre-Kindergarten (NIEER). While some school-age children will need services regardless of pre-K education, the number is significantly reduced when children attend a quality pre-K program. (High/Scope study; Regents proposal on State Aid to School Districts). Instead of choosing to implement best practices that may cost more money in the short term but give a greater return in the long term, states and school districts choose the shortsighted savings, such as providing tax relief, ignoring that they will end up spending as much money on a work force that is not educated enough to make more than minimum wage. Instead of investing in high quality teachers and giving them incentive to teach the students with the greatest educational need, states choose to simply not spend the money. The end result is a fragmented view of accountability, which may help some students, but not all. Fragmented accountability means concentrating only on fiscal or only on programmatic or only on performance accountability. Conversely, a comprehensive view of standards-based accountability includes all of the aforementioned aspects, starting with mandatory pre-K so that all students have solid foundations. A truly standards-based accountability means setting high standards for all factors that affect learning.

This report summarizes laws and programs that have been implemented in other states, which could be used to achieve a more comprehensive accountability system in New York. There are three interrelated parts to the present report. The first presents accountability laws and systems from the states of Maryland, New Jersey, and New York. The second part describes the North Carolina preschool program *More at Four*, the *Abbott Preschool* in New Jersey, and the New York Universal Pre-Kindergarten program. The third part describes initiatives to hire and retain high-quality teachers that have been implemented in Illinois.

Each of these examples has its advantages and disadvantages. The report does not attempt to make a comprehensive recommendation for overhauling the NYS accountability system. Instead, it attempts to make some recommendations for consideration in the quest for improvement. The report builds on the proposition that adequately funded, research-supported practices, built on the solid foundation of universal pre-K, yield good results that afford all students a chance to succeed in school and in life after school.

Accountability laws in sample states

Maryland experience:

The creation of the *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002*, which was accompanied by an unprecedented increase in school funding, brought about improved standards and higher expectations in Maryland. Maryland local school systems (LSS) are expected to create a five-year plan and provide annual updates in which the schools' priorities, goals, strategies, and funding and expenditures will be spelled out to increase student achievement. The Maryland investment is already paying off as test scores have improved since implementation.

New Jersey experience:

New Jersey has recently begun the process of implementing statewide school reform. Because of these reforms and as a result of the settlement of the *Abbott v. Burke* case, NJ created the Abbott Districts. The Abbott Districts are urban school districts receiving as much money as the successful suburban school districts. A few years after this increase in funding for districts with the highest needs, as part of statewide school reform, NJ voted into law the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC), which applies to all school districts. QSAC requires school districts to report at least every three years their score themselves in a predefined set of performance indicators regarding Instruction and Program, the fiscal management of the district, governance of the district, operations management which includes students conduct and safety, and personnel which includes certified teachers and teachers aides. Education Department officials then review all of these.

After the increase in funding in Abbott Districts, student performance has improved and the achievement gap is beginning to close, as indicated by test scores.

New York:

There are three accountability systems in New York. Individual schools in accountability status have to create the Comprehensive Education Plan. Districts with one school or more in accountability status have to create the District Improvement Plan or the Contract for Excellence if they receive 10% or \$15 million increase in foundation aid. Of the three accountability systems, only the Contract for Excellence requires school districts to spend money on a specific set of programs to improve student achievement, thereby tying funding to educational outcomes.

Pre-K

All of the aforementioned accountability systems include funding or investment in quality pre-K programs, something that illustrates a global understanding of quality pre-K as an essential foundation for student achievement and success. In North Carolina, through the *More at Four* program, at-risk (of academic failure) four-year-olds receive free quality pre-K. In New Jersey, the Abbott rulings mandate the provision of free quality pre-K to at least 90% of all resident three- and four-year-olds. New Jersey has also the highest per pupil spending for pre-K. New York offers pre-K to about a third of the four-year-olds in the State. Reports found that the quality of pre-K in NYS can be improved, but perhaps more importantly, the funding for implementation of services must increase.

High Quality Teachers

Even before the No Child Left Behind act, the quality of teachers was considered to be one of the most accurate predictors of student achievement. The NCLB act mandates that teachers hold a Bachelors degree, meet state certification requirements, and demonstrate knowledge in the core academic subject areas such English language arts and mathematics. There are higher standards

to be met. Some states, such as Illinois, have incorporated academic knowledge as part of their quality standards. Research in Illinois Schools, produced by the Illinois Education Research Council, indicates that when teachers are experienced and knowledgeable (they have high ITAC) students do better.

High quality teachers are particularly important for students at risk. Schools with needy students and little resources do not attract high quality teachers, which in turn keeps student performance below standard which in turn keeps high quality teachers away. Research illustrates that there are effective ways to break this vicious cycle, such as providing professional development opportunities to teachers that work in high needs schools or offering housing incentives or student loan forgiveness.

Recommendations for a comprehensive accountability system

Lessons learned from other states' accountability laws

NYSED should:

- Create a new office or department whose only responsibility will be to provide guidance and monitor allocation of resources per program, student, and school in light of the staffing cuts that NYSED suffered in recent years.
- Create a single comprehensive plan for school districts and schools to plan how to provide learning opportunities to their students. Fold the Comprehensive Education Plan into the District Improvement Plan so that school districts are not required to submit many different plans for improvement. The District Improvement Plan is required by law, but has not been enforced to this day.
- Require all school districts to submit an electronic version of their annual plan to increase performance of all of their students. Extend the online system for the Contract for Excellence districts to all districts. The online system that SED has created includes detailed information on how school districts will improve student performance.
- Revise Contract for Excellence regulation to allow for public comment on the submitted contract.
- Extend the Contract for Excellence from one year to either three or five years with annual updates, so that districts have time to not only implement different programs but be able to evaluate them, improve, and show progress.
- Set clear and understandable performance standards.

Pre-K

- A Pre-K mandate, for either at-risk and lower income four-year-olds or for all children in NYS, would expand access of enrollment. Without a mandate, some districts have chosen to return UPK funding, not actively reach out to families with children at-risk, and not provide pre-K to eligible children.
- Determine a reliable source of funding for pre-Kindergarten to ensure that it is available to all three and four-year-olds. UPK program provides a good vehicle for universal half-day pre-K for four-year-olds but it has to be adequately funded.
- Create accountability mechanisms for pre-K (online filing and reporting similar to the More at Four program).
- New York State is in the process of updating its early learning standards. This process should be expedited so that children, particularly those at-risk, receive the high quality preschool that will help them achieve later academic success.

High Quality Teachers

- Create incentives for highly qualified teachers to work in high needs schools, such as housing initiatives, loan forgiveness, sabbaticals, and scholarship funding. Many positive examples already exist in different school districts in NYS. One of them is the Master in Literacy that Middletown school district made available to its new teachers through a deal with St. Mary's College in Newburgh, NY. Middletown will pay the tuition for the teachers that want to enroll in this program.
- Create rigorous induction programs that will not only help teachers adjust, but help them develop their skills in ways that help the students in the specific school learn better. For instance, New York City, in collaboration with United Federation of Teachers, has implemented a "lead teacher program" in the Bronx, a program that allows to teachers to share a classroom and spend half of their time teaching and showcasing best practices and the other half in professional development activities providing support to other teachers.
- Reduce class size and workload for teachers in high needs schools, so that teachers have the ability to provide more individual attention to students without risking excessive workload and burnout.
- Provide substantial bonuses for newly hired teachers of hard-to-staff schools and sustain them so that teachers are retained.
- Establish and enforce an early timeline for hiring teachers in high needs school districts.
- Create comprehensive tools that teachers can use to assess whether they are highly qualified and provide all the required information and resources to help them become highly qualified. The NCLB provides a similar tool (HOUSSE: High Objective Uniform State Standard Education), but it lacks the support aspect.
- Academic qualifications and scores on certification tests should be considered in the assessment of teacher candidates during the hiring process.

Table 1. Accountability Systems in Maryland, New Jersey, and New York.

Accountability system	Increased Funding?	Funding targeted?	Tracking money?	Specific programs mandated?
MD Bridge to Excellence (Master Plan) (district level)	Yes.	Yes: Funding is distributed inversely to local wealth	Yes, school districts have to report all of their resources, but funding is unrestricted.	Yes: -Pre-K & K programs for special needs students -students with limited English -students in risk of failing
NJ Quality Single Accountability Continuum (District Performance Review) (district level)	No.	No.	No, but all school districts have to report funding resources	No, but school districts have to report in five key areas which includes curriculum and instruction.
NY Contract for Excellence (district level)	Yes: 10% or \$15 million	Yes: to schools with the highest educational need	Yes: school districts have to report where they will spend the increment of foundation aid they receive.	Yes: school districts have to choose from a menu of items under which there is specific set of allowable programs for each one. -full day Pre-K and K. -extended time on task - middle school and high school restructuring -class size reduction -programs for English language learners -teacher-principle quality initiatives
NY District Improvement Plan (district level)	No.	No, but school districts have to consider redirecting resources to programs under the Contract for Excellence menu items	No.	No.
NY Comprehensive Education Plan (at school level)	No.	No.	No, but school have to report all of their funding sources.	No.

www.marylandpublicschools.org
<http://www.state.nj.us/education/>
www.nysed.gov

Table 2. Measures of performance

Accountability system	Maryland Bridge to Excellence	New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum	New York
Federal requirements ¹	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional testing	High School Assessment (English II, Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, Government)	New Jersey High School Assessment.	Regents exams.
Kindergarten testing	Yes, to ensure elementary school readiness.	No.	No.
Use of Technology	Educational Technology (to enhance professional development and learning opportunities for students).	Yes, but without clear standards.	Not statewide, district specific.
Multicultural Approach	Yes, through Education that is Multicultural. ²	Yes, but without clear standards.	Not statewide, district specific.

¹ Federal requirements include: a. Standardize tests in English, Mathematics, and Science for grades 3-8, and 11.

- b. Adequate Yearly progress that all students must make
- c. Highly Qualified Teachers teaching Core Academic Subjects in the top poverty quintile (high) and bottom poverty quintile (low).
- d. Number of suspensions
- e. Types of offences that caused the suspension.

² Education that is Multicultural refers to methods and strategies used in schools to address minority and other groups' experiences to maximize learning, i.e. the African-American curriculum used in Baltimore city.

<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde>

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/>

<http://www.nysed.gov/>

Table 3. Maryland: Bridge to Excellence Master Plan.

Accountability System	Who does this system address?	Specific targets	What does this program regulate?	Major provisions	Performance indicators	Evaluation	Oversight, enforcement, transparency	Consequences Supports
MD Bridge to Excellence Master Plan: Five year plan with annual updates.	All students ensuring adequacy and equity.	Special needs students, students with limited English proficiency, students in risk of failing.	Funding is distributed inverse to local wealth. Funding must be reported as well. Long term goals for each local school system, as well as strategies for achieving those goals, timelines for implementing strategies and strategies to measure progress.	Local school systems have flexibility of spending so as to meet their students' needs as well as state and federal standards.	State and federal standards.	Reviewers evaluate each master plan and recommend to the State Superintendent approval of the annual update of each master plan.	Office of comprehensive planning and school support Annual updates State Superintendent approves the Plans.	If the State Superintendent deems that the Plan will not help students improve, s/he can ask for specific revisions. The State Superintendent advises the state regarding the state funds (but does not withhold). State Superintendent provides recommendations and revisions.

<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde>

Table 4. New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum: District Performance Review.

Accountability system	NJ Quality Single Accountability Continuum District Performance Review Annual Plan (QSAC).
Who does this system address?	School districts to ensure thorough and efficient education It is a uniform tool for all school districts
Specific targets	All student populations.
What does this program regulate?	The entire budget and strategy to achieve state and federal standards
Major provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction & Program • Personnel • Fiscal Management • Operations • Governance
Performance indicators	State standards
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The districts self-report. • The commissioner and the NJDOE verify the information included in the DPR.
Oversight, enforcement, transparency	NJ Department of Education
Consequences Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If districts do not get the points they need to meet QSAC standards, they may need an improvement plan and may receive technical assistance. • A Highly Skilled Professional may provide assistance to the districts. <p>The State may partially or fully intervene by appointing up to 3 additional board members with or without the approval of the board respectively.</p>

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/>

Table 5. New York State Contract for Excellence

Accountability system	C4E (NY) Annual plan
Who does this system address?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High needs students (sound basic education for all children of NYS, mandated by the court decision in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity law suit). • Districts with one low performing school (year 2 and above) AND with at least 10% or \$15 million increase in foundation aid.
Specific targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% of money has to go to the top 50% of schools most in need. • English Language Learners or students with limited English proficiency. • Students with low academic achievement. • Students with disabilities. • Students in poverty.
What does this program regulate?	Regulation of the increment of the foundation aid (excluding inflation and flexibility varying from 25% to 50%).
Major provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money has to be used to implement programs under a menu of items. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expanded Pre-K & K from half to full day. 2. Principle-Teacher quality initiatives 3. ELL programs 4. HS-MS restructuring 5. Class size reduction 6. Time on Task
Performance indicators	<p>All Students or the targeted population must make at least 10% progress in subject areas in which they are underperforming as specified by the regulations. The legislation does not specify any performance benchmark.</p>
Evaluation	The legislation indicates that the State Education Department must complete evaluations of the programs annually.
Oversight, enforcement, transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The New York State Education Department (NYSED) has the responsibility to oversee and enforce all the provisions of the legislation and the regulations. • The public participation process prescribed by the legislation and the regulations ensure that the public has access to the process. • Independent
Consequences Supports	<p>. Districts that do not comply with the law and regulations do not submit their Contract until they fully comply.</p> <p>The Education Commissioner must to provide guidance to all the districts that need.</p>

www.nysed.gov

Table 6. New York State Comprehensive Education Plan.

Accountability system	CEP & CDEP (Comprehensive District Education Plan) Annual plan
Who does this system address?	Low performing schools and districts.
Specific targets	Student populations that are underperforming.
What does this program regulate?	The goals (objectives), strategies, and actions that schools and school districts must take to improve performance.
Major provisions	Schools and school districts must identify the issues they face, their goals, their plan of action to correct the problematic performance so as to meet federal and state standards, identify their funding sources and where funding goes.
Performance indicators	State Standards
Evaluation	NONE SPECIFIED.
Oversight, enforcement, transparency	Developed by the School Leadership Team comprised by teachers, parents, and administrators.
Consequences Supports	NONE SPECIFIED.

Table 7. New York State District Improvement Plan.

Accountability system	DIP Annual plan
Who does this system address?	Low performing Districts.
Specific targets	All student populations in addition to the populations targeted by the Contract for Excellence.
What does this program regulate?	Entire school district budget: districts must consider redirecting resources to programs under the menu items of the Contract for Excellence. If not, the district must provide an explanation to the Commissioner.
Major provisions	NO REGULATIONS SPECIFIED TO DATE
Performance indicators	NONE SPECIFIED
Evaluation	NONE SPECIFIED
Oversight, enforcement, transparency	NYSED is responsible for enforcing the DIP. To date, nothing has been done and no district has created one.
Consequences Supports	School district must hold a public NONE

www.nysed.gov

Table 8. Summary of Pre-K programs presented in report.

Pre- K program	Funding	Benchmarks*	% of enrolment	Pre-k coverage
NY Universal Pre-K	\$437,697,665 (for 2007)	6/10	35% of 4 year-olds	55%
NJ Abbott preschool	\$500,000,000	9/10	25%	27%
NC More at Four	\$140,635,709	10/10	15%	30%

*Quality Benchmarks set by the National Institute of Early Education Research.
www.nieer.org

Table 9. Quality Benchmarks for Pre-K programs presented in report.

Policy	New York	New Jersey Abbott Preschool	North Carolina More at Four
Early learning standards (learning standards must be comprehensive)	No	Yes	Yes
Teacher degree (lead teacher must have at least a BA)	No	Yes	Yes
Teacher specialized training (lead teacher must have specialized training in pre-K area)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher-in service (Teacher must receive at least 15 hours/year of in-service professional development and training)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Assistant teacher degree (Assistant teacher must have a CDA or equivalent, at minimum)	No	No	Yes
Maximum class size (max number 20 children per class) 3-year-olds 4-year-olds	Yes	Yes	Yes
Staff-child ratio (lowest acceptable ratio of staff to children in classroom must be 1:10 or better) 3-year-olds 4-year-olds	Yes	Yes	Yes
Screening/referral and support services (Screenings and referrals for vision, hearing, and health must be required; at least on support service must be provided to families)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Meals (at least on meal daily)	No	Yes	Yes
Monitoring (site visits must be used to demonstrate ongoing adherence to state program standards)	Yes	Yes	Yes

A. ACCOUNTABILITY LAWS IN MARYLAND, NEW JERSEY, AND IN NEW YORK STATE

As described in this section, the Maryland and New Jersey Education Departments, to the extent of their capacity, have exhibited leadership with respect to accountability. Maryland was the first state to implement a more equitable school funding system with increased accountability without a court mandate, whereas New Jersey has been one of the first states to undergo education reform as a result of a court case. Leadership from any state's Department of Education ensures that school districts or systems have a defined set of standards and goals towards which they must be working. At the same time, as the example of Maryland illustrates, tying funding to educational practices not only demands best outcomes, but ensures transparency and accountability. Perhaps more importantly, it ensures equity. Equity in education translates into a more educated society, something that benefits everyone.

Maryland:

Maryland started comprehensive school reform after the recommendation by the Commission on *Education, Finance, Equity, and Excellence* (also known as the Thornton Commission). The first piece of legislation that stemmed from the commission's recommendations was the *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002 (BTE.)* The BTE is based on the principles of adequacy and equity.

The BTE calls for dramatic restructuring of Maryland's school finance system, including substantial increases in State aid for education to be phased in over a period of six years. As part of tracking the funding and ensuring accountability, the legislation requires that local school systems (LSS) develop, adopt, and implement a five-year Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP), designed to meet the unique needs of its students beginning with the 2003-04 school year. (MD State Department of Education, 2007) Before looking at the legislation, it is worth spending some time on the report that was the foundation of the school system restructuring.

Thornton Commission Report

The basic principles of the report are adequacy, equity, and excellence. The commission used these principles to ensure that schools receive adequate funding from the State to meet prescribed state standards; reduce funding inequities among school districts; and ensure excellence in school systems and student performance.

Approaches and Methodologies used in the Thornton Commission report: "Money matters" approach

The Commission hired independent firms to conduct the studies used as the basis of its recommendations. These firms used two approaches for the studies they conducted: the "professional judgment" and "successful schools" approaches. Under the "professional judgment" approach, panels comprised of educators (two for each level of education and one oversight panel) were asked to define a set of programs, services, and resources for a hypothetical school, after being given a detailed description of the State's performance standards. Under the "successful schools" approach, the researchers looked at a set of elementary, middle, and high schools (59 schools: 33 elementary, 10 middle, 16 high schools) that were identified as meeting the State's performance standards. The "successful schools" approach included real data from each school regarding spending. Both of these approaches showed that the amount of funding that schools and school districts receive allow them to provide certain programs for their students. The "professional judgment" and "successful schools" approaches can be summarized as "the money matters" approaches.

The Commission adopted a standards-based view of accountability that is based on educational outputs, rather than mandated educational inputs. Under Maryland's educational finance system, before the report became law, accountability was based on the implementation of specific programs, such as class size reduction and increases in teacher salaries. The Commission suggests that such programmatic accountability requirements be eliminated, so that districts have the flexibility to allocate funding as necessary to meet students' needs in each jurisdiction. From this perspective, the state has to:

1. establish performance standards for students, schools, and school systems;
2. ensure that schools and school systems have adequate funding necessary to meet the State's performance standards; and,
3. hold schools and school systems accountable for making progress towards, and ultimately meeting, the state's performance standards.

The recommendations of the Commission were:

- Cost of funding should be based on actual spending, represent a middle ground, and link state performance standards and state aid.
- Supplemental spending should be provided for students with special needs (enrollment of students in special education, those eligible for free or reduced price meals, and those with limited English proficiency).
- Funding ought to be targeted in the form of programs for student populations that need it the most, such as students in poverty or low-achievement students.
- Cost of education should depend on location: the per pupil spending must be in accord with regional cost.
- Wealth equalization of categorical funding: schools with lower wealth students should receive more funding
- Student transportation must be provided
- There should be a guaranteed tax base, to make sure that districts with low wealth/ tax base continue to fund public schools.
- Consolidation: There will be elimination of approximately 50 programs.
- Flexibility of spending: There should be flexibility on how State aid is spent by school districts.
- State/ Local shares: the State should have a greater share in funding public schools per pupil. In 2007-08 school year, the state appropriated 43.85% for education, whereas local appropriations were at 49.75%.
- There should be a phase-in period.
- Revenue sources: the State should come up with new revenue sources.

As a result of the above recommendations, and 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 to have all students: be proficient in reading and mathematics; receive a high school diploma; be taught by highly qualified teachers; and attend safe schools, as is also required by federal law.

The Bridge to Excellence Act (BTE), the accountability system that was created based on the Thornton Commission and implemented most of its recommendations, states that each school system is 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 (2008 Master Plan Annual Update).

School systems are required to have a five-year Master Plan on which they must report annual progress. While local schools systems are given the flexibility to spend funding in the way they deem as best to meet the needs of their students, they must illustrate in the Master Plans that they are spending dollars to improve student achievement. The Master Plans are elaborate documents that illustrate what each district will do to meet federal and state regulations, the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and the BTE respectively. Below is a brief description of what the Master Plan must include.³

The Master Plan requires school systems to plan their educational goals for the long term and find/allocate resources towards meeting those goals. The Master Plan requires inclusion of ways the school will meet the needs of special needs students, students with limited English proficiency, and students at risk of failing in addition to the general student population. Also, the master plan addresses certain programmatic elements, including but not limited to:

- a. services for pre-K students
- b. services for kindergarten students
- c. services for career technology
- d. services for gifted and talented students.

Additionally, the master plan requires inclusion of implementation strategies for achieving the identified objectives; strategies to measure progress in achieving objectives; time lines for implementing strategies and achieving objectives; and, organizational units or individuals responsible for implementing strategies and achieving objectives.

The Master Plans must include two sections: the Content and the Technical section. The two sections aim at illustrating what schools are implementing to achieve their goals. The Content includes an executive summary, which should include a budget narrative explaining and justifying the allocation of resources. The budget narrative must include demographic changes, a description of the fiscal climate, and a discussion of the effect of these changes on the school system and the implementation of the Master Plan. In addition, the budget narrative must address the school system's priorities for the coming year and how the funds are distributed to meet those priorities. These changes must address five components: mandatory increases, new initiatives, additional positions, revised strategies and redirected or reduced funding. The budget narrative must be able to stand on its own without having to refer to the proposal for additional information.

In addition, the Master Plan must include a *Finance* section, a *Data* section, and a *Goal Progress* section. In the *Finance* section, local school systems must detail the budgetary allocations, which provide an insight to the work they engage in on a daily basis. The finance section includes the executive summary, which will report the challenges faced in the prior year, coming year priorities, and a description of how the resources are being distributed to support priorities. The finance section also includes Budget Variance tables, which show revenue and expenditure data for FY 2008 and 2009. The first table has to show the budgetary plan for the current year (2009). The second table has to compare the budgetary plan of 2008 to the actual events for the same year. The two tables must illustrate how old funds were retargeted or

³ For an example of a Master Plan, please see Appendix I or visit <http://www1.pgcps.org/WorkArea/showcontent.aspx?id=28058> or http://www.bcps.k12.md.us/School_Board/Master_Plan.asp

redistributed as well as how new funds are spent. This provides the school systems with an opportunity to illustrate their commitment to improving student achievement and eliminating gaps by describing and explaining how they use new funds and/or retarget resources.

The *Data* section of the executive summary includes templates which the Maryland State Department of Education has prepared for each LSS. These templates contain specific information that the MSDE has about an individual LSS.⁴

The *Goal Progress* part of the Executive summary must address the question: *are the programs, practices, and strategies implemented by local schools systems achieving their intended effect of improving student performance and eliminating achievement gaps?* Schools must address student performance in terms of grade band and subgroups; include professional development opportunities, identify the changes that will be made, timelines, and corresponding resource allocations. Specifically, for each area set by the BTE Master Plan (listed below), LSSs are required to clearly describe the progress made, including the practices, programs, or strategies and the corresponding resource allocations to which they attribute the process. Also, LSSs must describe the challenges they face in terms of specific subgroups; what adjustments will be made to ensure that students make sufficient progress which will also include the changes in resource allocations.

The areas that LSSs must report progress on include No Child Left Behind requirements such as proficiency of students in reading/language arts, science, and mathematics; the Adequate Yearly Progress that student groups make; how many Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) teach Core Academic Subjects (CAS) specifically in high-poverty and low-poverty schools; and number and cause of suspensions which determines whether a school is safe (for an example of a LSS plan to keep its schools safe see page 69 in Appendix 1).

In addition to the math, language, and science proficiency level requirement, Maryland has established growth targets, namely the High School Assessments, which include tests in English II, Algebra/ Data Analysis, Biology, and Government. Also, LSSs must describe the school system's plans for ensuring the progress of students who begin kindergarten either not ready or approaching readiness as determined by the Maryland Model for School Readiness Work Sampling system. This description must be complemented by the corresponding resource allocations.

One other reporting requirement of the Master Plan is a report of cross-cutting themes regarding Educational Technology and Education that is Multicultural. Educational Technology refers to how schools systems will use new technologies to enhance professional development and learning opportunities for students through online tools and other media. Education that Is Multicultural (ETM) refers to methods that address minority and other groups' experiences so as to enhance and maximize learning. For instance, Baltimore City school system continues to implement Maryland's African-American Curriculum and helps teachers learn instructional strategies and understand different cultures in support of greater student achievement. For Educational Technology, LSSs must indicate how they are using all of the funding sources to meet NCLB goals, as well as the Maryland technology plans. For ETM, LSSs must describe the goals identified in the previous year and the progress made towards meeting them with respect to curriculum, instruction, staff development, instructional resources, and school climate. This description must also include resource allocations. Lastly, LSSs Master Plans must include Local

⁴ A copy of the Data that the MSDE requests and collects from LSSs is found at

<http://docushare.msde.state.md.us/docushare/dsweb/View/Collection-13177>

Goals and indicators and discuss the progress they are making towards goals that have not been addressed in preceding sections.

The state of Maryland created the *Education Fiscal Accountability and Oversight Act of 2004* which requires that LSSs submit a biannual fiscal report in addition to the Master Plans. This report regards only fiscal accountability. The MSDE stated that, because of the unrestricted nature of State aid, as well as the increasing portion of the State budget that it was expected to take each year (increasing from 26% in FY2002 to 33% in FY 2005 of the State General Fund, in FY 2008 it is expected to account for 36% of the general fund), the State of Maryland needed to make sure that funds were spent in the way the BTE intended. Thus, it requires that LSSs submit a biannual fiscal report to the MSDE and the county government. Prior to this legislation, the LSSs were not required to report how the Thornton funds were spent (Maryland Policy Reports, 2004).

An annual report presented by the Maryland Department of Education on the effect of the increased state aid (*Evaluation of the Effect of Increased State Aid to Local School Systems through the Bridge to Excellence Act, 2007*) illustrates that the achievement gap is closing. Specifically the presentation notes that:

Since the passage of BTE and full implementation of the MSA (Maryland Standards Assessment):

- Statewide student proficiency levels improved at elementary and middle school levels- all NCLB groups (LEP: Limited English Proficiency, FARMS: free and/or reduced price meals students, special education students: SPED)
- Some groups are outpacing others to “close the gap” to 100 percent proficiency in reading and/or math
- Preliminary English 2 HSA results—improvement in high school students’ proficiency levels

The Maryland experience illustrates that with strong leadership and adequate funding accountability and transparency has positive results for students, their families, and society in general. The enforcement of the *Bridge To Excellence* and the *Education Fiscal Accountability and Oversight Act*, that created the Master Plans and the biannual fiscal reports require school districts to detail how they are spending education money, for which goal, and to with what outcome, something that translates into meaningful accountability.

One of the most important parts of accountability is ensuring that funding is spent on programs that work. The Maryland State Superintendent reports annually on the progress that LSSs make, by reviewing each Master Plan to determine whether the strategies school systems implement have the intended effect of improved achievement for all groups and subgroups. In addition, the State Superintendent has to annually report on the alignment of local school priorities with their annual budgets as reported in the Master Plans and annual updates, something that is required by the *Education Fiscal Accountability and Oversight Act of 2004* (Analyzing Data, establishing priorities, targeting resources: strategic planning for improved student achievement, 2007), and biannually report on the fiscal stability of school systems.

As the Maryland experience indicates, oversight and guidance, and perhaps more importantly leadership from the Maryland General Assembly and State Department Education, produce positive results for students in public schools. The Maryland General Assembly, through a competitive process, hired MGT of America, Inc. to perform a three-year evaluation of the effect of the BTE. MGT of America produced an initial and an interim report at this point.

The reports show that the increase in funding along with all the other provisions of the BTE has produced significantly increased academic achievement by all students. Specifically, student proficiency levels for all NCLB groups have improved at the elementary and middle level. However, some groups are closing their gaps towards achieving 100% proficiency much faster than other groups. Also, high school students' proficiency levels have improved since 2005 (Evaluation of the Effect of Increased State Aid to Local School Systems through the Bridge to Excellence Act, 2007).

New Jersey:

Abbott Project

New Jersey moved to a more equitable education funding system and standards-based education and accountability as a result of the resolution of the Abbott v. Burke litigation. The court ordered that the poorest urban districts receive as much school funding as the most successful suburban districts so that all children attending public schools receive "adequate and efficient education." Specifically, the series of Abbott rulings state that poor urban, underperforming school districts must expend as much funding as the best performing suburban school districts. The decisions mandate standards-based education and reform for all districts.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), as mandated by law, is planning to evaluate the Abbott districts in collaboration with the Education Law Center (ELC), the group that advocates on behalf of public school children for access to an equal and adequate education under state and federal laws that also filed the lawsuit in the Abbott v. Burke case. The plan of the evaluation of the Abbott districts will first investigate whether districts have adequate resources to collect quality data. Then, the evaluation will investigate what resources Abbott districts have in place presently to improve instructional outcomes; whether there has been any changes in the last eight years and what are their consequences; and, what programs or policies have positive outcomes.

The NJDOE is planning on working with the Abbott districts to establish benchmarks and progress indicators. Each district should have an abundance of data on student achievement based on standardized tests on three subjects in grades 3 through 8 and in grade 11, as well as tracks the improvement by students who are not yet proficient in state standards (value-added data). In addition, each district has to set a progress indicator specific to the demographics and other district-specific circumstances, an indicator tied to early literacy so that as students advance in higher grades they have adequate English proficiency. The third indicator intends to reflect how the district is focusing or re-adjusting its professional development spending to meet the needs of teachers and students. For instance, if a district is lacking in math, the district should be re-focusing its spending on professional development to enhance math instruction and activities. The fourth indicator should be focused on qualified teachers. Specifically, each district should summarize how many of its teachers meet NJ certification standards (which include matching of subject taught and certification and look at collegiate majors) and how many are uncertified or have emergency certification.

It is worth noting that the NJDOE has not yet implemented its plans for the Abbott districts, possibly due to its capacity problems that have been documented by a KPMG report chartered by the Department itself. Nevertheless, the progress that Abbott districts are making has been documented by the ELC which follows closely the performance of the Abbott districts. Recently, ELC published reports on four Abbott districts: Camden, Trenton, Newark, and Union City. The reports track the progress of the districts, which is based on the study of a comprehensive list of indicators. These indicators include the socio-economic background of each school district and

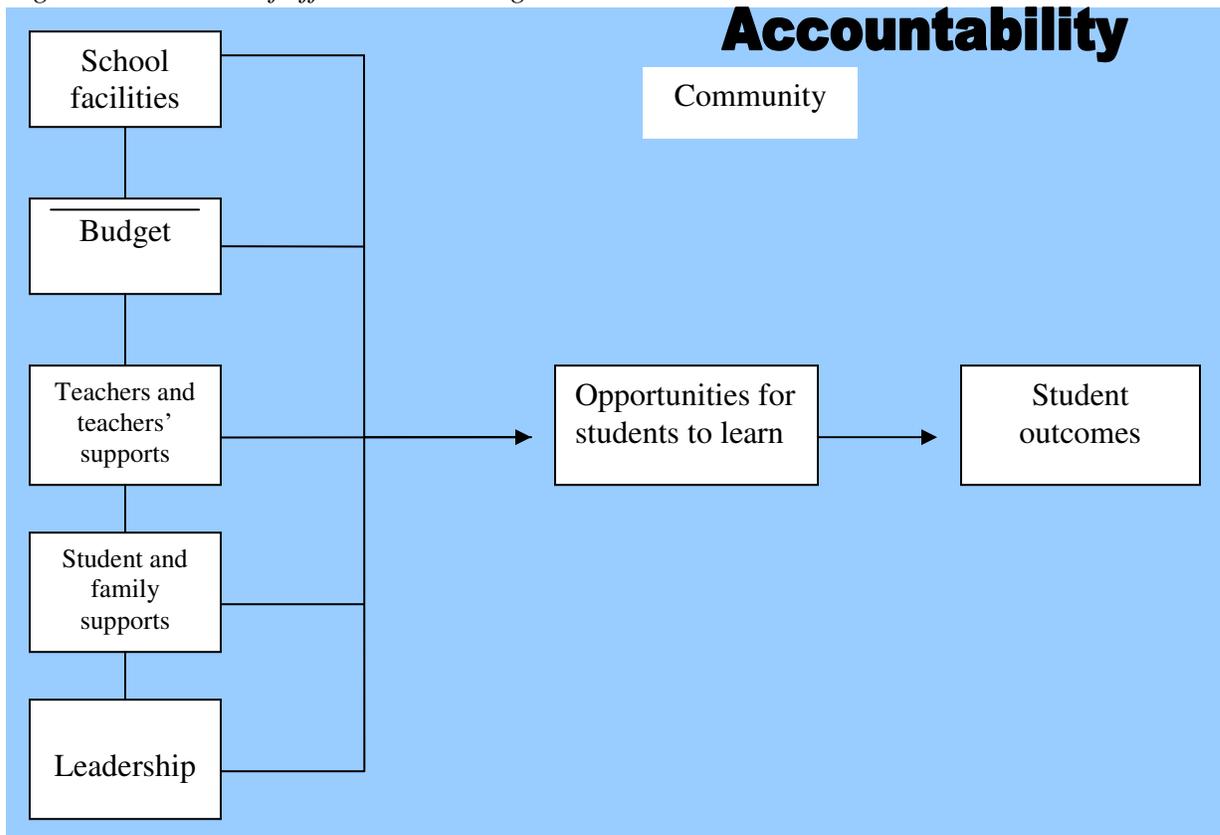
its students, characteristics of each level of education (preschool and K-12) which include number of students, curricula used, teacher certification, parental involvement, suspension and attendance rates, mean scores on standardized tests, facilities conditions, fiscal resources, and many more indicators (look at Appendix for the comprehensive list of indicators).

The indicators are organized in the following elements of effective schooling for each level of education:

- Student and Family Supports [which are aimed at] ensuring that all students come to school ready to learn and are equipped to succeed in school. Additional supports must be available to meet the unique needs of students and their families.
- Teacher Qualifications and Supports: Teachers need to be well-prepared and supported;
- Budget: The district must have enough revenue to support a high-quality education;
- School Facilities Construction: School facilities must be healthy, safe, and educationally adequate; and
- Leadership: School and district leadership should be informed, inclusive, and effective” (Camden report, 2005, p. 5).

All of these elements must be present and functioning well to ensure that there are opportunities for students to learn (look at the figure below for a visual representation of the elements of effective schooling). When one looks at the indicators within this framework, one can assess the school district’s progress.

Figure 1. Elements of effective schooling.



With respect to student outcomes, the Abbott indicators provide answers to the following questions:

- *“How physically, socially, and emotionally healthy are our children?”*
- *“Are all students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 learning according to State standards?”*

In addition to the traditional test scores, included in assessing student outcomes are student attendance and suspension rates, high and low performing schools, graduation rates estimated via the cumulative promotion index and via the traditional and alternative Grade 11 Exam (HSPA/HSPT & SRA respectively); and, lastly college entrance rates.

Regarding school financing, the Abbott indicators address the fundamental question, *“are our schools adequately funded”* as compared to the best performing suburban school districts? This section looks at funding streams from the state, local property taxes, and federal funding. It is worth noting that the Abbott indicators do not link money to programs. That is, there is no tracking how much funding goes to each program. The budget section of the reports illustrate the source and amount of money per student provided to the school district. The ELC was unable to track the money that goes into programs because of shortcomings in the way the New Jersey Department of Education collects financial data.

Quality Single Accountability Continuum:

Recently, the NJ legislature has passed an accountability law that applies to all the school districts including the Abbott districts. The Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC), New Jersey’s single accountability system for all public schools, is a monitoring and evaluation system. QSAC was voted into law in 2005 and allows for the evaluation of each school district so as to assess whether the district is complying with regulations, whether it is effective, and able to provide a “thorough and efficient education” (T&E standards). QSAC’s intent was to assess each school district’s capacity and effectiveness in five key areas: instruction, personnel, fiscal management, operation management, and governance. Capacity refers to all the resources in a school district, the ability of the district to perform at a satisfactory level in all effectiveness components, the ability to meet state and federal policy and standards, the ability of the district to ensure the provision of a thorough and efficient education. Effectiveness refers to the quality of performance (how well does a district perform in each required task) and to the task that was actually performed. For each key area, NJDOE has developed a set of quality indicators against which performance is measured.

QSAC requires every school district has to complete a District Performance Review (DPR) at least once every three years. The DPR works in the same way as a scorecard. It has the five sections, one for each of the key areas of school district effectiveness, as mentioned above. Each section includes a set of performance indicators set by the NJDOE. The Instruction and Program section includes 36 indicators in areas of student performance which includes NCLB requirements, curriculum, instruction, mandated programs, early childhood programs, and high school graduation. The Personnel section includes 16 indicators in the areas of licensed personnel, personnel policies, and professional development. The Fiscal Management section includes 23 indicators in the areas or budget planning, financial and budgetary control, annual audit, restricted revenues, and efficiency. The Operations Management section includes 26 indicators in the areas of facilities, student conduct, school safety and security, student health, and student support services. The Governance section consists of 51 indicators in the areas of student achievement, board training, disclosure and operation, ethics compliance, policies, procedures, by-laws, standard school board practices, annual evaluative process, school

board/administration collaboration, budget priorities, and communications. In each section each indicator receives a certain point value.

The DPR includes three steps:

1. the districts perform their own assessment,
2. the district superintendent assesses the veracity of the district assessment,
and
3. the state Commissioner of Education reviews each assessment and places the district at the appropriate point on the performance continuum.

If the district satisfies at least 80% of the indicators in each key area, then it is characterized as “high performing.” If the district does not satisfy at least 80% of the quality performance indicators in any one or more of the five key areas, it must develop an improvement plan to address the areas of deficiency or limited capacity. If the district satisfies only 59-79% of the quality performance indicators it must conduct an in-depth evaluation of the areas of deficiency or limited capacity. If the district satisfies less than 50% of the performance indicators in one or more of the five key areas, the commissioner must conduct an in-depth evaluation. If the district demonstrates that it has capacity in fewer than four key areas, the state takes partial control. If the district satisfies less than 50% of the performance indicators in all five areas, the state takes full control.

It is worth noting that, while QSAC is a relatively useful instrument that could enhance meaningful accountability, the NJDOE does not have the personnel capacity to enforce it fully. A KPMG audit of the NJDOE found that the department does not have the ability to fulfill its responsibilities. As the ELC reports, the evaluation of the NJDOE was required by legislation passed in 2007 after the implementation of the new accountability system for monitoring school districts (QSAC) and other legislation. Among other findings, KPMG reported that the NJDOE had vacancies in 84 out of 678 budgeted staff positions (12.8%), that there was lack of training or technical assistance to staff. There can be no serious accountability enforcement if there are staffing inadequacies such as those listed above. One cannot expect a state’s education department to adequately provide oversight without sufficient human resources.

In addition, while the fiscal management section of the DPR includes indicators that pertain to the school district’s finances and expenditures, it does not include funding allocation per instructional program or targeted student population. Specifically, it includes indicators about the district’s budgeting process and its allocation of resources which have to be aligned with the district’s instructional priorities and student needs. However, the documentation required for these indicators includes only district policies, board meetings agenda and minutes, strategic plans, curriculum plans, textbook replacement etc. In order to receive points, the district must answer “yes” to each numbered indicator in this section. This section includes federal reporting requirements under NCLB, IDEA, and other grants. The State does not require each district to break down spending by instructional program and affected populations so as to assess whether these programs have the intended effect.

The only evaluation of whether increased funding and instructional programs has been done by the ELC which evaluated four Abbott districts. The report highlighted the progress made and the challenges faced by Abbott districts in 2005-06. The report illustrated that Abbott districts made significant progress in Preschool and elementary school levels. Specifically, Abbott districts expanded their preschool enrollment by more than 2% as compared to enrollment in 2004-05. Almost all Abbott preschool teachers have their college degree and their early childhood certification. In addition, preschool classroom quality rose by 20% between 2003 and

2005. Also, the preschool program has had a positive impact on children's language, literacy, and math skills development, skills that have been proven to lead to later success in reading and math. Abbott elementary class size decreased from 24 students per class in 1994-95 to 19 in 2004-05. The achievement gap between fourth grades in Abbott and non-Abbott districts is closing (NJDOE).

However, Abbott districts continue to face many challenges as the report states. On average, Abbott preschool enrollment is 78%, while the state standard for Abbott districts is 90%. In middle and high school reform, Abbott remedies have not had as much impact as in preschool and elementary school level. There is little instructional reform in middle and high school levels. The ELC reports that Grade 8 language arts literacy has stagnated or slightly worsened between 1999 and 2004. In addition, there are staff positions that were not uniformly filled in all Abbott districts. These positions, parent liaisons, teacher tutors, and attendance/dropout prevention officer, were mandated by the Abbott rulings.

The ELC makes some recommendations to the DOE in order to maximize the positive impact the Abbott reforms are making. The first recommendation they make is a call to the NJDOE to take corrective action so that the Abbott districts that have not yet reached the 90% pre-K enrollment standard do so quickly. The second recommendation is to maintain policy and program stability by making sure that the public has input in the regulations adopted, and by making sure that the Special Review Assessment (an alternative state test), continues to be an option for students.

The third recommendation the report makes is a call for increased accountability. The ELC report calls for the creation of an Abbott management plan, which will provide a "coherent, detailed strategy to demonstrate how it will use state funds to ensure educational improvement" (ELC report, 2006, p.8). In this plan, the ELC asks for clear strategic priorities, budget, and staffing for leading urban education reform, and clear benchmarks to assess DOE's own performance. The ELC is asking that DOE performs district remediation which will identify specific areas that certain Abbott districts lag behind and their solutions; and establish performance benchmarks to gauge progress.

The Abbott experience is valuable for the following reasons:

1. It illustrates that when districts with high concentrations of poverty are given enough funding, the achievement gap can begin to decrease.
2. It takes into consideration a number of indicators that affect students learning and educational experience.

However, there is a continuing need for more transparency particularly pertaining to fiscal matters. There is no way of knowing whether funding is spend in the classroom and schools without requiring school districts to report where they spend it. Moreover, there is an urgent need to assess and evaluate the programs and strategies that work and the reasons why they do not. While QSAC affords districts with this opportunity, the fact that it relies on a point system without allowing for any comment or narrative section casts the process as more punitive rather than constructive (ELC).

New York State

Comprehensive Education Plan

The Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) is one of New York State's accountability systems. There are two types of CEP: the first type is created at a school level, as the second type is created at a district level and is called Comprehensive District Education Plan.

Schools in accountability status (Schools In Need of Improvement 1 & 2, Corrective Action, Planning for Restructuring, Restructuring, School Requiring Academic Progress, or School Under Registration Review) must create a CEP. The CEP aims at helping schools improve using systematic and longitudinal data. The CEP includes goals, strategies, and actions that will be taken to achieve the goals the school sets to meet state and federal standards. In addition, schools must identify their funding sources in the CEP.

CEPs are created by School Leadership Teams (SLT) in most schools. SLTs are comprised by parents, teachers, students, union representatives, school administrators, and other stakeholders. SLTs should review data from at least the previous three years and current student data and scientifically-based research; they are able to assess the effectiveness of the current instructional programs, discuss proposed modifications and/or alternatives, develop goals and objectives; and create action plans that will translate into observable, effective strategies to improve student achievement (2008-09 CEP template for Upstate/Long Island schools). The strategies SLTs determine must lead to high-quality instruction for all students. These strategies must be research-based. Also, the CEP must include a mechanism for monitoring implementation and for assessment of their impact on student performance so as to adjust strategies to ensure success.

The CEPs include rich information about their school. There are five parts to the CEP. Part 1 includes information on the profile of the school:

1. enrolment in each grade and special education
2. number of immigrant students and their native country
3. the average attendance rate
4. number of suspensions and length
5. poverty rate measured by Free and Reduced Lunch
6. number of English language learners
7. number of teachers with full certification
8. number of uncertified teachers
9. number of teaching assistants
10. number of teaching aides
11. number of teachers with higher degree
12. funding sources
13. school expenditure per student

Schools are given space in the CEP to produce information in a narrative format to provide a more complete school profile.

Part 2 of the CEP requests analysis of the data provided in the first section and planning for improvement. Schools are required to complete the sections for which they were targeted (Math, ELA, or graduation rate). For instance, if a school is in accountability status because of low scores in English language arts, it is required that the school completes the section of the CEP that addresses ELA. After doing so, schools must identify “promising strategies” that will be used to increase student performance. Schools are also supposed to address other factors that may affect student achievement such as school safety or attendance.

Part 3 includes the action plan that schools create to improve student achievement in the three areas identified above (ELA, Math, graduation rate, or other areas the school has identified in part 2). The school must identify what activities will be conducted, what resources will be used, the timeline the activity will need, who will be responsible for implementing it, and what

evidence will be gathered to document implementation of the activities. Parts 4 and 5 only address schools in Corrective Action and restructuring.

In 1998 the New York State Department of Education started a pilot program called the Comprehensive District Education Plan. The goal of this program was to create a single reporting mechanism for districts that needed improvement and eliminate the multiple plans they needed to submit so as to increase efficiency and effectiveness, as well as demonstrate how state, federal, and local resources would be used to meet student need. By the summer of 2000, 150 school districts submitted their Comprehensive District Education Plans. While the pilot program is finished, many districts continue to use the CDEP.

The model for comprehensive planning the pilot program used posed the following six questions:

- 1. Where do we want to go? (key indicators)**
- 2. Where are we now? (data)**
- 3. What is stopping us from getting there?(root causes)**
- 4. How do we overcome what is stopping us? (strategies)**
- 5. How do we implement our strategies? (action planning)**
- 6. How are we doing? (evaluation) (Pilot program guidance document, 2001)**

The questions above aim at helping school districts consider how to meet student need and improve achievement in a global manner. These questions also aim at helping school districts collect the data and information they need to create their comprehensive plan.

The Comprehensive District Education Planning process has five steps: collecting background and demographic information, doing an initial data analysis, finding root causes, implementing the plan, and assessing and reporting results (Guidance document). The district and primarily the superintendent is responsible for comprising a planning committee which must be representative of the school district constituency.

This plan was never made mandatory for school districts, but many continue to use to plan for meeting student need.

Contract for Excellence and District Improvement Plan

New York State has recently created an accountability law, the *Contract for Excellence*, under which new foundation aid is tied to educational programs and performance. The law ensures that funding goes to schools that are low performing and serve student populations with the highest needs. In addition, the law ensures that the public has the opportunity for adequate and meaningful participation in education.

The *Contract for Excellence* was the result of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity 14-year-long litigation. In the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit, the Court of Appeals—New York’s highest court—found that the State of New York was violating the rights of students under the Education article (Article XI of the State constitution) to a “sound, basic education” and a “meaningful high school education.” The court rulings in the CFE lawsuit clearly reiterate that the ultimate responsibility for educating our public school students rests with the state. Local school districts were created by the state in order to fulfill the state’s obligation to educate the children. The *Contract for Excellence* provides the State Education Department, under the supervision of the Board of Regents, with oversight and enforcement powers needed to ensure that the state is indeed fulfilling its constitutional obligations to the schoolchildren. 2008 is the second year that the *Contracts for Excellence* legislation is enforced.

The *Contact for Excellence* law (chapter 57 of the Education Law, section 211-d) requires a school district with at least one low performing school, as determined by state standards, and

receiving a 10% or \$15 million dollar increase of foundation aid, to target new foundation aid predominately to the highest need schools. That is, to schools with the highest concentration of students in poverty, students with disabilities, students with limited proficiency in English, and with schools with low achieving students. The regulations require that school districts under the *Contract for Excellence* target 75% of their new foundation aid to the top 50% of schools with the greatest educational need. The law obligates school districts under the *Contract for Excellence* to choose programs from a menu of items to which to direct their funding. These menu items are:

1. Class Size Reduction
2. Increased Time on Task
3. Improving Teacher/Principal Quality
4. Restructuring Middle School/High School
5. Full Day Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten
6. Programs for Students with Limited English Proficiency
7. Experimental Programs (only 15% of the new money can be used for experimental programs).

The aforementioned programs are supported by research that illuminates paths to educational success for all students. For each program, there is a list of available options from which school districts can choose, depending on their needs. For each menu item (above) there is a list of program areas from which district are allowed to choose. These are:

1. Class size reduction:
 - Create or construct more classrooms.
 - Assign more than one teacher in a classroom to reduce student/teacher ratio.
 - Commissioner appoints a panel to recommend appropriate standards for New York City.
 - New York City is required to develop and plan and make continuous progress to reduce class size.
 - New York City shall not exceed the targets by the end of the 2010-11 school year.
2. Increased Time on Task:
 - Lengthened school day.
 - Lengthened school year.
 - Dedicated instructional time.
 - Individualized tutoring.
 - After-school programs.
3. Teacher and Principle Quality Initiatives:
 - Recruit and retain highly qualified teachers and principals.
 - Professional mentoring programs for beginning teachers and principals.
 - Incentive programs for highly qualified and high performing teachers to transfer to low performing schools.
 - Instructional coaches for teachers.
 - School leadership coaches for principals.
4. Middle school and High school restructuring:

- Implement instructional program changes.
 - Make structural changes to schools.
 - The above programs must include:
 - Instructional program changes, and
 - Challenging academic content and learning opportunities.
5. Full day kindergarten or pre-Kindergarten:
 - Pre-Kindergarten: full day instructional program for four-year-old children.
 - Kindergarten: full day instructional program for five-year-old children.
 - Both may include extended hours at school or community based organizations.
 6. Programs for English language learners:
 - Expansion or replication of effective model programs for students with limited English proficiency.

The law also requires districts to set performance targets for the target populations. The district must make public, as part of its Contract, the measure of expected improved performance.

The *Contract for Excellence* law requires school districts under the Contract to follow a public participation process so as to include parental and community input. The public participation process requires the district to develop its Contract in consultation with parents, teachers, and persons in parental control. Also, the district is required to give public notice to the community that a public hearing will be held regarding the Contract explaining the comment procedure and Contract content. Community members are also given 30 days for written public comment. The public participation regulations require school districts to translate their public notices in languages that prevalent in the community. The public comment transcript and assessment has to be submitted to the Commissioner of Education for review along with the Contract.

The *Contract for Excellence* law combines three forms of accountability: financial, programmatic, and performance. The legislation was introduced with the intent of ensuring transparency and accountability, and adequate funding. In an attempt to tie funding to the best educational practices, the regulations require the following breakdown of funding, as well as a detailed description of the programs each district will invest, as the SED *Contract for Excellence* website states:

- (a) on a school level;
- (b) by program area, including details concerning proposed program additions and/or enhancements;
- (c) by student achievement performance targets; and
- (d) by affected student population groupings, including but not limited to:
 - (i) students with limited English proficiency and students who are English language learners;
 - (ii) students in poverty;
 - (iii) students with disabilities; and
 - (iv) students with low academic achievement; (retrieved on July 14, 2008)

In addition to determining the allowable programs to address educational need, school districts under the *Contract for Excellence* are allowed to take a percent of the State allocated

funding for “maintenance of effort.” Maintenance of effort deduction of funding refers to a deduction of the second year funding to support and/or enhance the programs implemented in the first year a school district was under the *Contract for Excellence*. Also, districts are allowed to take certain flexibility deductions. There is great differentiation in the amount of deductions districts are allowed, varying from \$617,385 for South Colonie to \$10,157,365 for Syracuse, which was the result of districts’ representatives’ advocacy rather than the result of an educational policy.

The Office of School Operations and Management Services of NYSED has developed an online system through which all Contracts for Excellence will be submitted starting with the 2008-09 contracts (submitted in the summer of 2008 and continue to date). The online system provides a template for school districts so that discrepancies in the level of detail offered in each school district’s Contract is now eliminated. The online system is elaborate and detailed which ensures enhanced accountability and transparency.

The enhanced accountability system included in the 2007 legislation requires districts that have been identified as requiring academic progress or have one or more schools in accountability status (under registration review, in need of improvement, in corrective action, or restructuring status), have to create and submit to the Commissioner of Education a *District Improvement Plan (DIP)*. The DIP must include redirection of resources to the menu items of the *Contract for Excellence*. If districts do not choose redirecting resources to any of those menu items, they must include in their DIP an explanation of that decision. Districts are also required to hold a public hearing during which they must solicit testimony and include a transcript of the testimony in the DIP when they submit it to the Commissioner for review before approval. Currently, regulations regarding the DIP have not been developed.

The legislation defines certain consequences for school districts that fail to make progress for four consecutive years. One of the actions that such school districts are required to take under this legislation is the collaboration with a “distinguished educator” the Commissioner appoints. Distinguished educators are people in the education community such as principals, superintendents, and teachers, either current employees or retirees, who have demonstrated exemplary performance in their respective positions. The legislation requires the Department (SED) to recognize these educators and ask for their help in districts that require academic improvement. School districts at which these educators are appointed are required by the legislation to fully cooperate and support the educator.

The 2007 legislation also requires the creation of a “growth model” as part of the enhanced accountability system. Growth models generally refer to accountability models that assess the progress of a cohort of individual students over time with the intent of measuring the progress these students have made (e.g. performance in 4th grade compared to performance in 3rd grade). USDE is permitting all states to submit growth models (SED presentation, 2007).

The current accountability system measures how many students achieve proficiency on the performance tests. This system takes a snapshot of student performance at the time students take tests. The proposed growth model will not only measure performance of a cohort over time, but it also gives credit for students who are on-track to become proficient within four years. This model allows schools to claim those students who are on-track to become proficient as already having reached that level at the state assessment time. Schools that demonstrate that their students are or are on-track to be proficient by having made significant progress take credit. The way the model calculates whether a student is on-track to become proficient by 8th grade is based on the growth the student made between 3rd and 4th grade.

Lessons learned from the Maryland, New Jersey, and New York experience

The Maryland experience shows that strong leadership and good planning yield good results, evidenced by the successful closing of the achievement gap (MSDE, 2007). While the Bridge to Excellence does not require districts to implement practices and programs as the Contract for Excellence does, it is more comprehensive and meaningful in the sense that it applies to the entire budget that school systems must submit. The Master Plan is a long term plan that forces school systems to plan ahead, consider their needs, and take action that illustrates purpose and destination of funding. The Contract is an annual plan that does not necessarily allow school districts to plan ahead and resolve longer-term problems.

In addition, both Maryland's and New Jersey's accountability systems (NJQSAC & BTE respectively) require a rigorous collection of data in addition to the NCLB, contrary to New York's accountability laws. Despite the shortcomings of the NJDOE in its ability to implement QSAC, provide stronger leadership and oversight through the evaluation of the Abbott program and the creation of a student database as the Abbott rulings mandate, the mere existence of the law and the state's attempt to equalize funding and ensure equity is a step in the right direction.

The Maryland experience indicates that it is possible, albeit tedious, to track funding and hold districts accountable for their students' performance.

Tracking the Money

- New Jersey's QSAC has some positive aspects to it, but the NJDOE does not have the capacity to implement it. Thus, NYSED would benefit from creating a new office or department whose only responsibility will be to provide guidance and monitor allocation of resources per program, student, and school in light of the staffing cuts that NYSED suffered in recent years.
- Create an extensive guidance document similar to the Master Plan (Maryland) which obligates districts to, not only show where they are spending funding, but also how. The *Contract for Excellence* already has this function, but there is no clear guidance regarding what districts should be including.
- Create an online tool for districts to submit their allocations, so that replication and redundancy are avoided. Also, information will not be missing from and for any district.
- New York can follow the Regents' proposal and create the Financial Condition Indicator System. The Regents describe this system as an online database in which school districts will be entering information regarding their revenues and expenditures, as well as their regional cost. If it is public, this system will allow the state and taxpayers to see how resources are spent and what children get in return. Thus, fiscal accountability will be increased.
- Extend the *Contract for Excellences* from one year to either three or five years so that districts have time to not only implement different programs, but be able to evaluate them, improve, and show progress.

B. PRE-K

There are many examples of successful implementation of pre-Kindergarten in the United States. Currently there are 38 states that fund pre-Kindergarten. Of those 38 states, 27 state programs have an income requirement. Two state funded pre-Kindergarten programs will be described in this section: the North Carolina More at Four program, and the New Jersey Abbott preschool project. The North Carolina More at Four pre-K program is one of two public pre-K programs that received the highest quality grade by the National Institute of Early Education Research. The New Jersey Abbott preschool project has the highest per pupil spending in the nation. The North Carolina More At Four (MAF) pre-Kindergarten program and the Abbott preschool program illustrate ways that high quality pre-Kindergarten can be successfully implemented.

The NC and NJ experience illustrate that there are five components to successful implementation of pre-Kindergarten:

1. high-quality standards⁵,
2. adequate funding level,
3. tracking funding to ensure that money supports successful evidence-based practices,
4. mandatory implementation and attendance, and
5. leadership from state Education departments .

General research on pre-K

There is extensive research on the value of pre-Kindergarten for both student performance and savings in funding of special services in later academic years. There is a movement across the nation to offer pre-Kindergarten to all children, particularly to those who are at risk. State spending rose to \$4,018 in 2007 from \$3,642 in 2005 (NIEER, 2007). According to NIEER (2007) access to preschool rose in 2007. About 22% of the nations’ four-year-olds now attend preschool. According to the same report, the quality of pre-Kindergarten continues to improve.

The High/Scope foundation published a study in 2005 showing the lifetime effects of preschool. The Perry Preschool study followed children who attended quality preschool through age forty. The study compared a group of children in a preschool program to a group of children with similar demographics and conditions that were not participating in a preschool program. The study found that:

⁵QUALITY STANDARDS POLICY STATE PRE-K REQUIREMENT
 Early learning standardsNational Education Goals Panel content areas covered by state learning standards for preschool-age children must be comprehensive
 Teacher degree.....Lead teacher must have a BA, at minimum
 Teacher specialized trainingLead teacher must have specialized training in a pre-K area
 Assistant teacher degreeAssistant teacher must have a CDA or equivalent, at minimum
 Teacher in-serviceTeacher must receive at least 15 hours/year of in-service professional development and training
 Maximum class sizeMaximum number of children per classroom must be 20 or lower
 3-year-olds
 4-year-olds
 Staff-child ratioLowest acceptable ratio of staff to children in classroom
 3-year-olds (e.g., maximum number of students per teacher) must be 1:10 or better
 4-year-olds
 Screening/referral and support servicesScreenings and referrals for vision, hearing, and health must be required; at least one additional support service must be provided to families
 Meals.....At least one meal must be required daily
 MonitoringSite visits must be used to demonstrate ongoing adherence to state program standards

- Sixty seven percent of the program group children were ready for school by age five, whereas only 28% of the no-program school were ready by the age five.
- Sixty percent of the program group made more than \$20,000 at age 40; whereas only 40% of the no-program made as much.
- Seventy seven percent of the program group graduated high school, whereas only 60% of the no-program graduated.
- Sixty one percent of the program group made basic student achievement at age 14, whereas only 38% percent of the no-program showed the same levels of student achievement.
- Sixty one percent of the program group did their homework at age 15, whereas, only 38% of the no-program did their homework.
- Sixty seven percent of the program group had an IQ above 90 at age 5 compared to only 28% of the no-program group.
- Fifty five percent of the no-preschool program children had five or more arrests by age forty, compared to 36% of the children attending the preschool program.

The aforementioned results were replicated many times.

In addition to the above benefits, *Pre-K Now*, a program of the Pew Charitable Trust and other funders dedicated to the advancement of quality pre-K for all children by conducting research which offers evidence of the benefits of pre-K, notes that there are benefits for both children and society in general when high quality preschool is available to all children. Specifically, children who attend preschool are more likely to be successful students:

- Children who attend preschool do better on standardized tests as a Yale study on Michigan fourth graders found than their peers who did not attend.
- Children who attend preschool are less likely to repeat a grade. A Yale study compared Maryland fifth graders who attended pre-K found that they were 44% less likely to repeat a grade when compared to their peers who did not attend pre-K.
- Children who attend preschool are less likely to be placed in special education. A Chicago longitudinal study found that children who went to preschool were 41% less likely to require special education services when compared to their peers who did not attend.

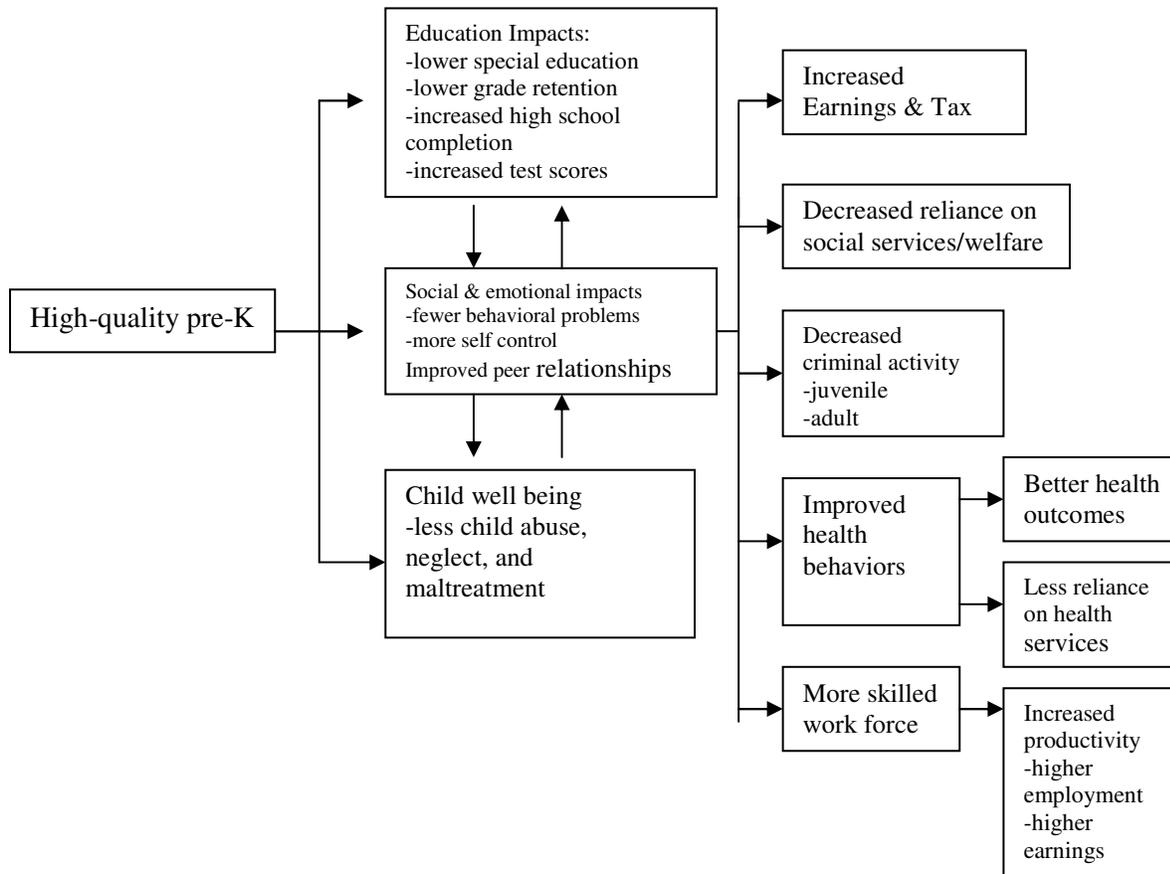
Children who attend pre-K become responsible adults:

- Chicago Children who attend pre-K were 70% less likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18 than their peers who did not attend.
- A study in North Carolina found that children who attend pre-K are less likely to become teen parents than their peers who did not attend.
- Children who attend pre-K are more likely to report getting along very well with their families than their peers who did not attend.

Furthermore, children who attended preschool at Head Start centers, a federally-funded, high-quality preschool program similar to those in the aforementioned studies, had more advanced skills in areas such as following directions, problem-solving, and joining in activities. This allows teachers to spend less time managing the classroom and more time working with children directly.

Clive Belfield (2004), an education economist from the Teachers College at Columbia University, reported that public pre-K-for-all is not an “unaffordable luxury.” He reviewed a number of studies from around the nation analyzing their relevant outcomes, and concluded that “making quality pre-Kindergarten universally available to the state’s four-year-olds would result in later savings in remedial costs and other school services that would pay back 41% to 62% of the pre-K investment” (*Winning Beginning NY*).

In general, high quality, public, universal pre-Kindergarten has an impact on education and on children’s well being, as well as a positive effect socially and emotionally. The graph below is an adaptation from a comprehensive report done by *Pre-K now*.



According to the same study, if a high quality program was made available to all three- and four-year-olds in 2008, which would cover about 7 million children nationwide, it would cost about \$43 billion. By year 2050, the program would cost \$95 billion, but annual benefits would total \$ 779 billion. All state governments would experience a positive return on their pre-K investment within 29 years, with some states experiencing them in as few as ten. By 2050, the benefit-cost ration for state governments would be between 1.4:1 to 2.7:1 (Lynch, 2007, reported in *Benefit-Cost Analyses of pre-K programs* by *Pre-K now*).

The More At Four program

The More At Four (MAF) program was established in North Carolina in 2001. Since then, the MAF program has been offered to at-risk four-year-old children. This program can be

offered by public schools, Head Start⁶, and private child care facilities. The MAF program is designed to help children be more successful when they enter school, by providing a classroom-based educational program during the year prior to kindergarten. Children are eligible for the program if their family income is at 75% the state median income, or up to 300% of the federal poverty level, or if other risk factors exist such as limited English proficiency, identified disability, chronic health condition, and developmental/educational need. The program first targets “unserved” children, children who are not already in a preschool program, and then “underserved” children, children who are in a preschool program but not receiving subsidies and/or in lower quality settings (Peisner-Feinberg & Schaaf, 2008).

The North Carolina MAF program is one of only two state programs whose pre-Kindergarten standards met all ten quality benchmarks set by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). The ten quality benchmarks include:

1. comprehensive early learning standards
2. a preschool teacher with a Bachelors degree
3. teacher specialization in pre-K
4. an assistant teacher who has a Child Development Associate or equivalent
5. the teacher in-service is has 150 clock hours/ 5 years or 15 credit hours/5 years
6. maximum class size is 20 or lower
7. the staff –child ratio is 1:10 or better
8. there are screening/referral and support services
9. at least one meal a day is offered
10. there is monitoring of sites.

Peisner-Feinberg and Schaaf (2008) found that the MAF program allowed high-risk children to make similar or greater skill gains than their peers. These children entered the program with lower skill levels than their peers and were able to show substantial developmental growth. This allows high-risk children to continue to make progress in kindergarten and later levels of schooling.

Currently, the MAF preschool program covers 15% of all four-year olds in the NC (NIEER *Yearbook*, 2007). The MAF program has recently expanded the slots it offers, making more available through a lottery system. According to the NIEER (2007) North Carolina increased per-child spending, something that makes high quality standards more sustainable. By the year 2007-08, the MAF program expected a 10,000-slot expansion.

The MAF program is offered in all counties throughout North Carolina. The program is based on a six- to six-and-one-half-hour day for the length of the academic year. Extended-year, transportation and/or wrap-around (hours additional to the educational day) services are paid by local contributions in the form of tuitions.

⁶ Head Start agencies are facilities created by the Head Start Act enacted by Congress. Under the Act, funds are appropriated for the promotion of school readiness of low-income children by enhancing their social and cognitive development. The Act also directs programs to offer individualized health, educational, nutritional, and social services to low-income children and their families (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs/legislation/index.html>).

Funding for the MAF program comes from the state, local governments, and federal grants. The state of North Carolina covers about half of the cost of high-quality pre-Kindergarten, which is estimated at \$4,450 per child. Counties or regions (in which the MAF program is offered) are required to access other funding to cover the remaining cost of high-quality pre-K. Public schools, Head Start agencies, private child-care facilities can apply to the program. 95% of state funding goes into classroom operations according to the MAF report to the joint legislative education oversight committee given on February 1, 2008. Five percent of the aforementioned allocation is a one-time allocation to districts or regions that choose to implement the program. The remaining 5% of funds is directed towards other, to the professional development of pre-K teachers, to administrative costs, to T.E.A.C.H. scholarships (scholarships devoted to providing educational opportunities to directors, teachers and family child care providers in early care and education programs), and external evaluations and maintenance of the MAF database.

Table below shows the amount of money the state spends on the MAF program.

Table I. More at Four Budget for SFY 2007-08, as of December 16, 2007

Budget Category	Budgeted Amount	% of Total
Classroom Start-Up (one-time allocation)	6,501,329	4.6 %
Classroom Operations	127,062,935	90.3 %
Subtotal Classroom Funds –	133,564,264	94.9%
T.E.A.C.H.® Scholarships	1,938,000	1.5%
Professional Development	1,294,743	.9%
External Evaluation and Database	916,665	.6%
Administrative Costs	2,922,037	2.1%
Transferred to Subsidy2	--	--
Total Budget	140,635,709	100 %

As mentioned above, the districts that implement the MAF program use funds from additional sources to support the program fully. Smart Start is a public-private initiative that makes a variety of services (such as helping parents find and pay for quality child care, health and family support services) available to children under six years and their families. Pre-school disabilities is the federal funding stream made available by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Head Start is also a federally funded program serving children of low-income families. Title I preschools are federally funded and serve primarily four-year-olds. Eligibility of attendance and admittance to Title I preschools is based residency in the area where the program is offered. Selection is based on academic need of the child, determined by a locally designed selection process that utilizes multiple criteria, such as parent interviews, teacher observation, and developmentally appropriate measures. These sources are shown in the table below.

Table 2. shows the amount of money invested in the MAF program by other sources.

Type of Funds	Projected Amount	% of Total
Smart Start4	\$14,906,727	27%
Pre-School Disabilities	\$3,448,279	6%
Subsidy	\$2,792,568	5%
Head Start	\$10,286,241	19%
Title I	\$8,217,630	15%
City/County Appropriations	\$8,416,931	15%
Other	\$7,403,682	13%
Total	\$ 55,472,058	100 %

Each county makes a contract with the state for providing the program. Then, each county can subcontract with pre-approved providers such as public schools or private preschools that have high attendance from students that are in the groups the program aims to serve. The North Carolina Office of School Readiness has published a detailed Fiscal and Contract manual, in which they describe the process and requirements of getting and maintaining a MAF program.

The program has a reporting system called MAFKids. MAFKids is an online database that captures information to assist program evaluation. The online database was developed by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. MAFKids is linked to MAFPlan (the online More at Four plan) and collects information about MAF students. The *monthly attendance report*, which is required to determine monthly payment to the contractor or subcontractor) and the *summary of attendance report* that are submitted with *request for payment* are generated by MAFKids. It is through this online database that student eligibility is validated. The manual clearly delineates deadlines for submission of reports. The manual also clearly states the conditions under which a refund to the state must be made.

The MAF State program, the local contractors, and site administrators are required to monitor compliance with the MAF program and fiscal and contract guidelines and requirements. The MAF State Program developed monitoring tools which contractors and subcontractors are encouraged to use for monitoring of the program. These tools provide:

- a. checklists for those components of the program that must be reviewed for compliance annually at site and classroom level (The More at Four Site Monitoring Tool),
- b. checklists for the fiscal and programmatic components of the program that must be reviewed annually for compliance at the local contractor level,
- c. contractor and site tools organized by specific program or fiscal guideline, including lists of specific documentation necessary.

The Fiscal and Contract Manual also states the responsibilities of the site administrator, the local contractor, and the state.

The MAF program has targeted at-risk children with the provision of high quality pre-K to ensure future success in school.

The Abbott Preschool

The Abbott preschool program is also among the highest-ranking preschool programs according to the NIEER (2008). The Abbott preschool program was created in 1998 after it was mandated by the NJ Supreme Court decision in *Abbott v. Burke*. The court decision required the provision of preschool to eligible three- and four-year-olds in the districts with the highest concentration of poverty. All three- and four-year-olds residing in an Abbott district are eligible for Abbott preschool. The court rulings mandate at least 90% of eligible three- and four-year-olds be enrolled in the Abbott preschool. According to the NIEER report for 2007, the program is offered in 31 districts where at least 40% of children qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. The Abbott preschool program met nine out of the ten high quality benchmarks set by NIEER (the benchmark the program has not met is the assistant teacher CDA or equivalent degree).

The Abbott Preschool has been consistently providing high-quality services that produce high standard outcomes. A longitudinal study conducted by NIEER researchers, found that the program has substantial effects on vocabulary, math, and literacy skills and that those key effects persist at least to end of kindergarten (Frede, Jung, Barnett, Lamy, & Figueras, 2007). The Council of Chief State School Officers Whelan's (CCSSO) report corroborates the Frede et al. (2007) findings. According to the Whelan report "*before entering kindergarten, children who attended the program performed statistically significantly better on language and math measures than those who did not. At the end of kindergarten these differences were still observed. Children who attended preschool for two years perform nearly double that of children who do not attend preschool on measures of language and 70% better on math measures.*"

In addition to the good results that the Abbott preschool has with children's outcomes, Whitebook, Ryan, Kipnis, and Sakai (2008) found that the program directors (who worked at facilities offering the program) they interviewed made overwhelmingly positive assessments, citing the increased quality in their centers and impressive gains in the learning and school readiness of the children they served.

If one would like to know what makes the Abbott preschool program as successful as it has been, one must look at the level of funding per student it receives. The New Jersey Abbott Preschool program receives the highest amount of funding per student in the nation (NIEER, *Yearbook 2007*) at \$10,494 per student. Reports published by both the NJDOE and the ELC illustrate that the increased funding of preschools enables high needs students acquire the skills needed for later success in school.

The Abbott preschool program receives funding from two state sources, the *Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA)*, which also goes to non-Abbott districts, and the *Preschool Expansion Aid (PSEA)* (ELC report). The ECPA is allocated to all Abbott districts- in addition to 102 districts that serve low-income students. The PSEA began in 2003 and provided Abbott districts with additional funding to meet full enrollment. The state of New Jersey directly funds school districts, which serve students directly or contract with private providers. Abbott preschools receive additional funding from the Department of Human Services to cover the cost of four hours of wrap-around services of the ten-hour day and the remaining 65 days to reach 245 days of operation per year, in addition to the six-hour educational day, 180 days a year, as the Abbott rulings mandate. Wrap-around services are activities offered in Abbott preschool programs before or after the mandated six-hour educational day and through the summer.

The Abbott court decisions mandate that at least 90% of eligible three- and four-year-olds are offered preschool services. According to the Abbott ruling, all three- and four- year olds residing in an Abbott district are eligible for preschool. School districts need to identify unserved families and obstacles to enrollment to reach the goal of 90% enrollment, make intensive outreach and

recruitment efforts. The ELC reports that some of the outreach and recruitment methods that districts use are door-to-door visits, distribution of informational brochures in English and Spanish where needed, placing public service announcements in local print and mass media, and public transportation, as well as hanging banners on the preschool buildings. Some districts, such as Trenton city school district, have been successful with these outreach and recruitment methods covering, in the case of Trenton, up to 98% of the three- and four- year old children in the district.

Belfield & Schwartz (2007) reported that about 75% of the three- and four-year old children residing in Abbott districts are currently enrolled in preschool. Specifically, the ELC (2005) reports⁷ enrollment rates for three other Abbott districts, Union City, Camden City, and Newark City. In 2003-04, Union city met its requirement for at least 90% enrollment of all three- and four-years- olds in 2005, serving 1,631 children. In 2003-04, Camden city covered 2,042 or 72 % of all the three- and four-year-olds in the city. Camden's projected coverage for 2004-05 was estimated at 73%. The In 2003-04, Newark preschools served about 6,000 children or 72% of the children that live in the city. The projected coverage for 2005 for Newark was at 76%.

New Jersey has 20% of the state's total population of three and four-year-olds enrolled in pre-Kindergarten. The Abbott preschool program covers about 18% of the States four-year-olds and about 15% of the State's three-year-olds. While the number of coverage seems small, the significance of providing quality pre-Kindergarten in districts where there is high concentration of poverty (at least 40%) offers a chance for school success to children who are most at risk of failure. The Abbott program consists of a ten hour day- with a six-hour educational day plus four hours of wrap-around services- 180 days a year.

As mentioned in the previous section, the state of New Jersey does not have a way of tracking how much money goes in to each program other than the per student spending. However, the Abbott preschool experience is an excellent example that illustrates the significant impact preschool has for unserved and underserved students. According to Zalkind, Rice, and Nash quality is particularly important to children from low-income families who are harmed more from poor quality care. Conversely, the same children benefit the most from high quality care when compared to middle or upper-income families.

Even though the Abbott preschool program has proven its value, challenges with its implementation continue to exist. The offer of preschool for all three and four-year-olds that need it in the Abbott districts was mandated by the court decision in 1998. Several districts have not reached the 90% coverage of the eligible children residing in Abbott districts (Whelan, 2008). Yet, Zalkind et al. report that among the comments participants (in their study) made was that "programs would have never been implemented in their district had it not been for the money and the mandate."

New York State Universal Pre-K

New York State offers pre-Kindergarten to about 35% of the state's four-year-olds. Even though NYS was one of the first states to establish pre-Kindergarten programs, it now ranks ninth in the nation for providing access to four-years, 25th regarding enrollment access of three-year-olds, and 20th in spending per student (NIEER, *Yearbook* 2008). NIEER concludes that NYS does not spend enough per student to provide coverage to all four-year-olds in the state. The same report illustrates that NY meets only six of the ten benchmarks (listed earlier) regarding quality of preschool. New Jersey ranks first in spending, 13th in access given to four-year-olds and third in access given to three-year-olds, and is one of eight states that met nine out

⁷ Data from the New Jersey Department of Education were not readily available for more recent years.

of ten quality benchmarks. North Carolina ranks 10th in state spending on preschool, 21st in access given to four-year-olds, does not provide access to three-year-olds, and is one of two states that meet all 10 quality benchmarks (the other state is Alabama). While NYS provides access to pre-Kindergarten to more four-year olds than the MAF and Abbott preschool project, the quality of services offered ranks much lower than those programs, according to the NIEER report (*Yearbook, 2007*). In addition, while NJ ranks lower in overall coverage of pre-K age children, namely four-year-olds, it covers about 78% of four-year olds in the Abbott districts, children who are more likely to be at-risk of failing in school.

As of the 2007- 2008 school year NYS has one consolidated pre-K program, the Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program (UPK). UPK aims at enrolling all four-year-olds of the state. The program that was phased out, Targeted Pre-Kindergarten, served low-income four-year-olds in 14% of the state's school districts. Currently, all pre-K funding is referred to as UPK.

North Carolina , New Jersey, and New York do not mandate enrolment of four-year-olds in a pre-Kindergarten program. However, both North Carolina and New Jersey vigorously target at risk preschool-age children, something that is not done in New York. At this point the State of New York is moving towards ensuring that all four-year-olds have a universal opportunity to access pre-Kindergarten (Commissioner's regulations, 2007). However, since school districts are not required to offer pre-K, many of them end up returning unused money to SED because of a lack of additional resources to cover for the full cost of pre-K, according to a source at SED, a fact that indicates that the UPK program is a high quality program inadequately funded.

While there are improvements to be made, the program meets more than half of the quality benchmarks. Specifically, New York is lacking in meeting the quality benchmarks NIEER has set. New York does **not**:

- have comprehensive early learning standards
- require all pre-K teachers to have at least a Bachelor's degree- **only** teachers in public schools are required to have a BA and MA.
- Require all assistant teachers have a Child Development Associate. Assistant teachers in NYS are required to have a high school diploma or equivalent and pass the Assessment of Teaching Assistant Skills Test,
- Require preschool facilities to offer at least one meal per day. Instead, if a preschool facility operates for less than three hours per day, it is required to provide a meal and/or a snack.

It is worth noting that the Targeted Pre-Kindergarten program that was phased out met eight out of ten quality benchmarks. The TPK program required all teachers to have a BA and also offered at least one meal to children.

As mentioned above, there is no mandate in New York for enrolling all four-year-olds in a pre-Kindergarten program. Districts that offer pre-K, have the option to operate a half- or full-day pre-Kindergarten program. State funding is provided to offer half-day pre-K programs. Half-day in NY is considered a two and one half hour day; whereas, a full-day program consists of five hours. All facilities that receive UPK grant funding must operate for five days a week, 180 days of the school year. The school year starts on July 1 and ends June 30, which allows pre-K facilities to operate outside traditional school period (September to May) and count summer programs in the 180 day operation. The law also requires districts to use at least 10% of their UPK grant funding to contract with one or more eligible agencies for the provision of instructional program for a specified number of enrolled children. That is, districts must subcontract with private childcare centers, Head Start, or other community agencies.

Recommendations for improvement of NYS Pre-K

There is an abundance of evidence, as shown in the descriptions of the aforementioned State pre-Kindergarten programs and research, that pre-Kindergarten has many benefits to students, states, and society in general. There are valuable lessons learned from the NC and NJ experience:

- A Pre-K mandate, for either at-risk and lower income four-year-olds or for all children in NYS, would expand access of enrollment. Without a mandate some districts have chosen to return UPK funding or not actively reach out to families with children at-risk and not provide pre-K to eligible children.

- Determine a reliable source of funding for pre-Kindergarten to ensure that it is available to all four- and three- year olds. UPK program provides a good vehicle for universal half-day pre-K for four-year-olds but it has to be **adequately** funded.

As the Abbott experience illustrates, mandate plus funding equals implementation (mandate + funding = implementation), districts will not offer services to children.

- Incorporate a mechanism for tracking funding.
- New York State is in the process of updating its early learning standards. This process should be expedited so that children, particularly those at-risk, receive the high quality preschool that will help them achieve later academic success.

C. HIGH QUALITY TEACHERS

A good accountability system must incorporate a standard for high quality teachers. Rice (2008) argues one of the reasons that the NCLB included standards that define “highly qualified” teachers is because teachers are the most important factor in student success. However, having qualifications such as certification and experience does not guarantee teacher quality. Rice and other researchers define quality of teachers as “a teacher’s ability to realize desired outcomes—that is, effectively educate his or her students” (Rice, 2008, p.154). However, teacher quality is difficult to measure. This difficulty is the reason that the NCLB includes measurable standards. However, the NCLB standards have been shown to be weak predictors of student achievement (Rice, 2008). Teacher qualifications such as degree, certification, or experience are often considered proxies for teacher quality, but that does not necessarily reflect how well a teacher can affect students’ learning in any given school environment. Research has shown that students who have access to high quality teachers have higher achievement results over time (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff, Wyckoff, 2008). There is evidence that schools with high concentrations of minority students and students in poverty benefit the most from high quality teachers as compared to schools with low poverty and low minority (Peske & Haycock, 2006). It is therefore important to consider the quality of teachers when looking at accountability. The highly qualified teacher definition the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) offers, conceptualizes quality at a very low level. The standards, as shown below, are minimal.

The *No Child Left Behind act* defines highly qualified teachers as teachers who:

- have a bachelor’s or higher degree;
- meet State certification requirements; and
- demonstrate knowledge of the core academic subjects they teach in one of the ways required by the NCLB.

While most states have adopted the above definition, others have expanded it to include other attributes that affect student performance, something that incorporates the vast body of research on teacher quality. The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) has published a report in which it grades 20 randomly selected states. It is worth noting that Illinois received an “A,” whereas New York receive a “D.” Tracy & Walsh (2004) of the NCTQ, graded the states using a set of principles created to measure teacher’s subject matter knowledge. These principles were based on their interpretation of the NCLB which intended to raise student achievement. As a result of this aspiration, Tracy and Walsh (2004) note that standards for highly qualified teacher were included in the NCLB.

Tracy and Walsh suggest five principles.

1. The first principle is rigor. Rigor concerns the standards that each state employs to assess a teacher’s subject matter knowledge.
2. The second principle concerns whether a state has standards that help them identify teachers who are weak in subject matter knowledge and need support.
3. Whether states use standards that reflect an understanding of the law’s intent (NCLB) and demonstrate a commitment on the part of the state to address the problem in a timely manner, is the third principle.
4. Principle concerns the clarity of a state’s standards, a characteristic of the standards that ought to allow both the general public and the teachers to know what is expected of teachers.

5. The final principle concerns accessibility of standards for teachers and the general public.

Tracey and Walsh conclude that only a few states have implemented standards that meet the five principles and the intent of No Child Left Behind. Instead, they found that most states do not have effective ways of ensuring that teachers have the subject-matter knowledge they need for effective teaching and positive outcomes. While the principles articulated by Tracey and Walsh are a sound basis for teacher quality, there has been research that combines more variables that measure quality more accurately.

The Illinois Education Research Council (IERC) created the Teacher Quality Index (TQI), a measure for the teacher quality at the school level which measures teacher quality accurately (DeAngelis, Presley, & White, 2005). The TQI includes indicators such as:

- Teacher's average ACT (a test comparable to the SAT) composite score,
- Teacher's average ACT English score,
- Percent of teachers failing the basic skills test on their first attempt,
- Percent of teachers with emergency or provisional credentials,
- Teachers' average undergraduate college competitive ranking (Barron's ranking),
- Percent of teachers with three or fewer years of teaching experience.

The purpose of the TQI is to have a way to measure teacher quality, "as indicated by measurable characteristics of teachers" (p.21), in each school. The TQI has negative attributes, which are inexperience, failure of the Basic Skills Test, and the percentage of teachers with emergency certification, and positive attributes, which are the ACT composite and English scores, and the Barron's ranking. DeAngelis et al. (2005-1) found that the most TQI variation is within a district rather than across districts, even though some regions had much lower TQIs than others. According to DeAngelis et al., the variation in schools' TQI indicates that schools are seen as attractive or not-attractive workplaces; this study finds that concentration of low-income and minority students is a factor for recruiting and retaining high quality teachers. DeAngelis et al. suggest that policies aimed at improving overall TQI must "be targeted to attract the highest quality teachers in a district or region with the neediest schools" (p.21).

Presley, White, and Gong (2005-2), in a study following up the introduction of the TQI, found that the performance of schools with higher concentrations of poverty depend more on the attributes measured by the TQI than the performance of schools with less poverty. The authors found that the percent of students meeting state standards increases from 13.7% to 32.5% as the TQI increases in high schools with at least 50% of students in poverty. That is, as the TQI increases (teachers had more of the positive attributes of the TQI, fewer of the negative) in schools with at least 50% of students in poverty, student performance increases. The same happened in schools with high concentration of minorities: as the TQI increases, student performance increases as well. The authors also found that as the TQI increases in schools with both high minority and high poverty students, student performance increases as well. In fact, the authors found a stronger relationship between the TQI and performance in the most low performing schools.

Presley et al. (2005-2) suggest a few strategies for changing the fact that the neediest schools do not have as many highly qualified teachers as schools with less need. They suggest that the state and the community ensure that schools are safe, clean, and fully equipped for 21st century education. One of the ways that this can be done is to ensure that districts with schools in need have the same level of funding as school in districts that are more affluent. They recommend a

change in teacher training; teacher training should be more rigorous, with higher expectations for academic achievement for all students, and content expertise for middle and high schools.

To ensure that teachers scoring higher on the TQI are hired in schools where they are needed the most, Presley et al. (2005-2) suggest that school districts and schools consider teachers' own academic achievement as one of the criteria for recruitment. They also suggest that school districts and teachers' unions examine hiring rules and budget allocations that may be an obstacle in bringing teachers with higher TQI to needy schools. The authors suggest that one of the inducements that may be offered to such teachers is financial compensation.

White, Presley, and DeAngelis (2008) revised the TQI to better analyze teacher quality and its impact on student performance. White et al. (2008) refer to the revised TQI as the Index of Teacher Academic Capital (ITAC). The ITAC is comprised of the five teacher components related to teachers' own academic qualifications (teachers ACT composite score, ACT English score, percent of failure on the Basic Skills Test, teachers' college competitiveness rankings, proportion of teachers with emergency or provisional certification) and teacher experience (which they made a separate variable in ITAC). This new report showed that ITAC in Illinois' most low performing schools improved over the period 2001-2006, even though there is still a significant ITAC gap between the state's highest poverty/highest minority schools and the other schools.

The report found that the improvements in Chicago's ITAC are largely the result of hiring inexperienced teachers with stronger academic background. Chicago hired new teachers with higher ACT scores (tests used in Midwestern states equivalent to the SAT test used in the Northeast) and from somewhat competitive undergraduate institutions, the primary force behind the district's overall improvement. For about a decade, the city of Chicago hired teachers with three or fewer years of experience (this is the definition of inexperienced that the authors use for the ITAC), who had high ACT scores, and who graduated from higher ranked colleges teachers' colleges. Also, Chicago has experienced a surge of applications, going from 2.5 candidates for each available position to 10 for each opening. As the authors note, as schools had a bigger pull of applicants from which to choose, more strongly qualified teachers are hired. Lastly, the report found a positive link between teachers' academic background and student achievement. On average, schools that show gains in their teacher academic capital also shows gains in student achievement.

Gong and Presley (2006) studied access of students of Chicago public high schools (CPS) to high quality teachers and their readiness for college. They found that Black and Latino middle/high-income students in CPS have less access than similar Asian and white students in CPS to higher TQI high schools. Lower income students of CPS have even less access to TQI high-schools than low-income students nationwide. Additionally, the TQI of a high-school is closely related to students' college readiness, regardless of school poverty and minority characteristics. However, TQI matters more for schools serving mostly high need students. It is, therefore, reasonable to say that schools with higher TQI help students be better prepared for college than schools with lower TQI (Presley, 2006).

The Illinois Education Research Council (IERC) is not the only organization studying teacher quality. The impact of quality teachers on student achievement, particularly for students in low performing schools, is recognized by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). AFT notes that it is a challenge to recruit and retain high quality teachers in schools that serve low income or high minority populations, in schools that are in geographically isolated or densely populated

areas, or are perceived to be unsafe or with discipline problems. These characteristics make the school appear as an unattractive workplace.

Specifically, an AFT report (2007) notes that there are many reasons unrelated to pay that drives teachers away from schools. These factors are:

- Student discipline problems and personal safety concerns;
- Lack of on-site support and intervention for students experiencing learning difficulties;
- Unhealthy physical plant;
- Lack of faculty influence on decisions that affect student learning;
- Inadequate ongoing, job –embedded professional development and other supports;
- Lack of student academic success;
- Inadequate time for planning, preparation, and instruction; and
- Excessive classroom intrusions from people with(*Meeting the Challenge*, AFT, 2007)

AFT notes that staffing turnover at hard-to-staff schools is significantly higher than at other less challenging sites. In fact, teacher attrition is about 45% for teachers in their first five years (*Meeting the Challenge*, AFT, 2007). There are many studies showing that teacher effectiveness improves with experience. A NCTAF report states that “with the high rate of new teacher turnover, our education system is losing half of all teachers before they reach their peak effectiveness” (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2007, *The high cost of teacher turnover*, p.4).

In addition to the quality loss that urban districts experience with teacher attrition, they also face high financial cost. The annual cost of a teacher leaving in urban districts such as Chicago comes up to \$17,872 per departing teacher (NCTAF, 2007). In fact, the annual cost of teacher attrition nationwide comes up to \$5 billion. In New York City the annual cost of teacher turnover is \$115,221,250. Hence the problem is both economic and educational (NCTAF, 2007).

AFT proposes solutions to the problem of recruiting and retaining high quality teachers. These are grouped in three categories. The first category refers to strategies that establish and maintain safe and orderly schools. The strategies in this category are:

- a. developing school safety plans, enacting and enforcing district-wide discipline codes so that order is maintained in school buildings.
- b. Implementing effective classroom management practices.
- c. Implementing programs that modify student misbehavior.

The second category AFT proposes concerns professional development. This category includes strategies such as induction programs that help new teachers realize whether teaching suits them (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2007) and provides supports and resources; time for collaboration with other teachers; and effective learning opportunities.

The third category AFT proposes regards recruitment and hiring practices. Incentives such as loan forgiveness programs or scholarships such as those NYC and Chicago Public Schools offer can draw high quality teachers in high needs school districts. NYC and Chicago also have housing and home-ownership programs that help new teachers live within city limits, often in close proximity of their schools. AFT notes that it is not sufficient to merely have these incentives, districts have to market them to teachers.

Regarding hiring practices Levin and Quinn (2003), from The New Teacher Project, a non profit organization dedicated to increasing the number of high quality teachers in public schools and to maximize student achievement, note that delays in the hiring process causes districts and schools that need high quality teachers, to lose them to others that have more effective hiring processes. A remedy to this problem is offered by Peske and Haycock (2006). They propose the creation of a “draft” system in which high needs schools are first in line for the best teachers within a district. They also propose balancing the challenges that teachers in high needs schools face by reducing their workload and giving principals more authority in the hiring process.

Both AFT and Levin and Quinn (2003) underscore that hiring process must be reexamined so that districts do not lose the opportunity to hire the stronger candidates. AFT proposes new notification and assignment policies, interview-team selection criteria, and candidate screening tools. AFT also notes that the state and district must do their respective parts, particularly regarding funding for salaries and school supplies.

A NCTAF (2007) report on reducing the achievement gap through district and union collaboration, notes that one of the ways that a district and the union collaborated to retain high quality teachers in high needs schools was through the creation of a mentoring program.

Peske and Haycock (2007) also propose more long term strategies that will help recruit and retain high quality teachers. These are:

1. Implement district budget policies that set budgets at the school level in proportion to student need.
2. Create a single measure of quality of teachers similar to the ITAC of the IERC.
3. Develop a more direct measure of teacher quality, one that captures teacher effectiveness at growing students’ knowledge (one that goes beyond standardize testing)
4. Make data collection and distribution quick and publicly available.

Rice (2008) suggests that highly qualified teachers become high quality teachers when they are trained to teach diverse populations in different settings. This empowers teachers to be more effective and not avoid urban, high poverty, high minority schools. Hence, there is an urgent need for teachers’ colleges to offer real, on site training for new graduates. Also, mentor teacher programs or other induction programs are seen as highly desirable for new teachers in demanding settings.

Recommendations for Attracting and Retaining High Quality Teachers

New York State must create a plan to deal with problems that arise from the difference in teacher quality employed. As mentioned earlier, high needs and at-risk students need the most preparation to succeed. As Carroll, Fulton, Abercrombie, and Yoon (2004) in *Fifty years after Brown v. Board of Education: A two-tiered education system*, the large cities in upstate New York and in New York City face challenges with teacher turnover and with lack of resources to prepare their students for testing. The teachers in the big five (Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Yonkers, and NYC) report that teachers leave high-risk schools because of a lack in leadership in those schools, lack of supplies and material, bad school facilities, and poor compensation. The problem is most pressing in urban areas or areas with high concentration of poverty and at-risk students. Not resolving the lack of high-quality teachers in high needs schools will only perpetuate the existence of a two-tiered system: “one for the more affluent, who enjoy the privileges of a relatively sound educational environment, and the other for the least privileged who suffer conditions that foreclose their chances of learning” (Carroll et al., 2004, p. 23).

- Create incentives for highly qualified teachers to work in high needs schools, such as housing initiatives, loan forgiveness, sabbaticals, and scholarship funding available to new high quality teachers. Many positive examples already exist in different school districts in NYS. One of them is the Master in Literacy that Middletown school district made available to its new teachers through a deal with St. Mary's College in Newburgh, NY. Middletown will pay the tuition for the teachers that want to enroll in this program.
- Create rigorous induction programs that will not only help teachers adjust, but help them develop their skills in ways that help the students in the specific school learn better. For instance, NYC in collaboration with UFT has implemented a "lead teacher program" in the Bronx.
- Reduce class size and work load for teachers in high needs schools, so that teachers have the ability to provide more individual attention to students without risking excessive workload and burnout.
- Provide substantial bonuses for newly hired teachers of hard-to-staff schools and sustain them so that teachers are retained.
- Establish and enforce an early timeline for hiring teachers in high need school districts.
- Create comprehensive tool that teachers can use to assess whether they are highly qualified and provide all the required information and resources to help them become highly qualified. The NCLB provides a similar tool (HOUSSE: high objective uniform state standard education), but it lacks the support aspect.
- Academic qualifications and scores of the certification tests should be considered in the assessment of teacher candidates during the hiring process.
- Revise teachers' college curricula so that they prepare teachers for the diversity of urban schools and students.

CONCLUSION

This report described programs and laws from states around the country that are pioneers in implementing a more comprehensive system of accountability instead of implementing a more fragmented version of accountability.

The report presented:

- the Maryland *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002* and described the Master Plans through which accountability is enforced,
- the New Jersey *Quality Single Accountability Continuum* and described the District Performance Review, as well as the Abbott project which ensures that poor urban school districts receive as much funding as wealthiest school districts use to succeed,
- the New York *Comprehensive Education Plan, Contract for Excellence, and District Improvement Plan*,
- Pre-K programs from North Carolina and New Jersey, and
- a different measure of teacher quality created and implemented in the state of Illinois.

These are components of a more comprehensive approach to accountability at which New York ought to take a careful look. The programs and laws described in this report are in agreement with the Board of Regents 2007-08 proposal on State Aid to school districts. The Regents proposal is based on four principles:

1. **Adequacy** - Effective distribution across all districts will ensure adequate resources for acceptable student achievement.
2. **Fairness** - The funding system must be fair for students and taxpayers. State resources should be allocated on the basis of fiscal capacity, cost and student needs. The emphasis is placed on providing a set of inputs to educate students.
3. **Accountability** - The education system will measure outcomes and use those measures to ensure that financial resources are used effectively. As part of the Regents goal that education resources will be used or maintained in the public interest, the Regents employ a two-prong strategy. The Department will give greater flexibility to districts with acceptable student achievement and will work closely with districts not yet meeting State standards to ensure the most efficient and effective use of resources.
4. **Balance** - The State should balance stability in funding and targeting aid to close student achievement gaps. It should drive aid based on current needs, and use hold-harmless provisions that provide stability (Board of Regents proposal on State Aid to school districts).

The Regents take a strong stand on how school aid should be distributed and what should the state and tax payers expect in return. There is an abundance of evidence on how much impact increased school funding has, something that the Regents' report cite. A few examples are included in this report, namely the Maryland and New Jersey experiences, the North Carolina pre-K experience, as well as the Illinois investment in high quality teachers.

After the settlement of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit, New York provided a record increase in fiscal year 2008 of \$1.2 billion to all school districts in the state (not just for NYC which the court order mandated). Along with the increase in foundation aid, the NYS legislature voted on reforms such as the *Contract for Excellence* and the restructuring of the foundation formula. While there has not yet been an evaluation of the impact of the *Contract for Excellence*

on student performance, the NY State Education Department is anticipating that such an evaluation “will reveal that targeted expenditures focused on research based programs serving low achieving subgroups will show positive gains for students” (NYSED presentation to the School Boards Association, 10/17/2008).

In addition, and as a large body of research has shown, providing universal pre-K for three- and four-year-olds will be a significant step towards closing the achievement gap. The Board of Regents has consistently and continually recognized this fact. So has NYS to an extent. In 1997, the legislature and the Governor recognized the effect that pre-K has on student success and moved toward providing universal pre-K. However, the funding for pre-K comes from three different grants, which complicates more an already complicated process. In 2006, the Regents adopted a policy on early childhood education which recommends:

- A statutory authorization for voluntary, statewide universal pre-Kindergarten for three- and four-year olds.
- Combining the three (or two, since TPK was eliminated in 2007) different grants for pre-K (UPK, TPK, and supplemental pre-K) to provide access to all three and four-year-olds. The Regents recognized that offering targeted pre-K for the at-risk students does little to close the achievement gap since at-risk students come from many socio-economic groups (Garcia, 2005, cited in Regents proposal 2007-2008).
- Securing a consistent funding stream for universal pre-K through a foundation State Aid approach similar to the Regents proposal for funding K-12.

The Regents and NYS, recognizing the importance of providing universal pre-K, proposed that the amount of funding going to pre-Kindergarten be increased. However, the funding provided seems not to suffice for successful coverage of all children in a given district, which puts a burden on districts to cover the remaining cost. As a result, some school districts do not implement a pre-K program, which eliminates the opportunity of closing the achievement gap by providing solid foundations through a quality pre-K program.

The solution to this problem seems to be obvious, albeit difficult and costly in the short term. The NYS legislature has to provide adequate funding for the quality pre-K and mandate the provision of universal pre-Kindergarten for all three- and four-year-olds, as is the case in the Abbott districts in New Jersey. This is the surest way to close a painfully large achievement gap in a way that in the end will cost the state less than what it is currently paying.

Having a comprehensive accountability system means that, in addition to building a solid foundation through universal-pre-K, we need to know how schools and school districts spend the funding they receive through a public and open process. The *Contract for Excellence* requires the connection of funding, educational outcomes, and performance. As conventional wisdom says, regulations and laws are only as good as their enforcement. The Alliance for Quality Education has reported that the State Education Department has not fully enforced the public participation requirements of the *Contract for Excellence* during the second year of implementation, thereby decreasing transparency and accountability (Contracts for Excellence year 2: Will accountability be enforced).

This report proposes that a system is put in place so that districts report all of their funding resources, where they plan to spend it, for which goal, through what strategy, for which group of students, and to what effect. Also, districts should be expected to report how they will monitor and evaluate their actions. New York already has a system on which it can build. The online reporting system for the Contract for Excellence includes a wide range of information including funding sources and allocations by school and program. The same system can be used for all

other district and school reporting so that there is a uniform and coherent set of information available to SED and to New Yorkers, provided that it is a public system. Yet, NYSED must provide more oversight and enforcement of the law. At the same time, NYSED should provide leadership and guidance for all school districts and schools. This means that NYSED must first address and resolve its capacity problems. The New Jersey Department of Education example is clear that capacity issues can stand in the way of enforcing both good legislation and programs and prevent positive results from happening.

Lastly, a comprehensive accountability system cannot leave out one of the most important predictor of student success, the teachers. NYS has to ensure that its teachers get the highest quality education so that they have the academic knowledge they need to teach students in the twenty first century. The Illinois experience illustrates clearly that if teachers have enough knowledge their students do better. These knowledgeable teachers are particularly important for high needs students. Research has shown that when high quality teachers teach high needs students, they help them catch up to the rest of the student population.

It is essential that if the state is serious about closing the achievement gap, it has to put together a system that not only offers a solid foundation for all students, but equips schools with adequate funding, guidance on how to spend it, and arms them with high quality teachers that will ensure school success.

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APPENDIX I

Baltimore City Public School System

Master Plan 2006-2008

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Master Plan Priorities: *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008*, in accordance with State guidelines, provides the core of the school system’s plans for improving the academic achievement of all students. The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* goals, which reflect the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*, are the organizing elements on which the *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008* is based.

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Foreword

With the submission of the *Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) Master Plan 2006-2008*, the BCPSS explains in detail its two-year strategic plan to accelerate student achievement and improve management efficiency in support of quality instruction. The BCPSS has accomplished the following in its development of the *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008*:

- Adhered fully to the document titled *Two-Year Master Plan Guidance for the BCPSS*, which was developed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).
- Based the two-year master plan on a solid structure of thorough data analysis, particularly in regard to the achievement of students by subgroups and grade bands, teacher qualifications, and school safety.
- Established systemic priorities that serve as the foundation of the sustainable systemwide reform needed to accelerate student achievement.
- Developed objectives that are specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound to assist in accomplishing the master plan’s six goals.
- Demonstrated the school system’s thoughtful plan development and clear accountability by incorporating corresponding logical measures to determine the effectiveness of master plan strategies.
- Integrated into the master plan state-mandated corrective actions in the areas of instruction, leadership, school safety, high school graduation and student support, and support to schools in school improvement status.
- Integrated other state-required, court-ordered, and local plans into one document so that there is unity and context to all plan development and implementation efforts.
- Defined its plan and procedures for monitoring and evaluating implementation master plan strategies through SchoolStat and Master PlanStat.

Certain statutory and regulatory requirements have affected the development and content of the *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008*, including the *No Child Left Behind*, *Bridge to Excellence*, and *City-State Partnership* legislation, as well as Code of Maryland Regulations governing a school system in corrective action. Additionally, the BCPSS *Bridge to Excellence* Planning Team addressed the findings of the Review Panel, which the MSDE assembled to review the *BCPSS Master Plan* in March 2006.

Full and consistent implementation of the *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008* will occur with the assistance and support of all school system staff and other stakeholders, including the Office of the Mayor and other city agencies, as well as the MSDE Intensive Management and Capacity Improvement Team, which provided able assistance and support during the plan development process. The *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008* promises to serve as the guiding document for accelerating student achievement for the next two years.

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Foundation of the *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008*

The *Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) Master Plan 2006-2008* is guided by a vision that describes where the full and consistent implementation of Master Plan priorities and strategies will lead the school system and its students, in partnership with its many interested and supportive stakeholders. This vision is clear, desirable, and inspiring.

VISION and Mission of the Baltimore City Public School System

Accelerating the academic achievement of all students, in partnership with the entire community, to ensure that students have the attitudes, skills, and proficiencies needed to succeed in college and in the 21st century global workforce.

To accelerate student progress through effective implementation of the Master Plan, focusing on quality instruction, managing systems efficiently, and sustaining a culture of excellence.

Organization of the BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008

The *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008* provides a framework for meeting the federal law, *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*, and Maryland's *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act (BTE)*. It is the expectation of the Board of School Commissioners and the Interim Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Charlene C. Boston, that the BCPSS reflect a culture of excellence in order to accelerate student achievement. To that end, the Board of School Commissioners is committed to supporting fully the following efforts:

- ⌚ Continuing elementary and secondary reform efforts.
- ⌚ Ensuring that the middle level grades are a springboard to high school success.
- ⌚ Creating a culture in the BCPSS that supports the development of the whole child.
- ⌚ Improving teaching and learning for all special education students.
- ⌚ Developing a culture conducive to full community engagement, contribution, and communication that fosters effective communications and a clearer understanding of all stakeholders.
- ⌚ Supporting and developing school-based leadership and ensuring the quality of senior-level personnel.

The BCPSS has designed its *Master Plan 2006-2008* to ensure that its priorities and strategies are clearly focused, supportable, attainable, and reflective of high expectations for students and staff, thereby accelerating student progress and closing student achievement gaps. The resources that support the strategies and priorities are included in this plan. In some cases, staff members or

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other resources have been reallocated to further support the critical priorities of the plan. The strategy plans that follow the Executive Summary delineate specific timelines for implementation as well as coordinated staff responsibilities that will be measured against the evaluation component of each strategy. Essential to accomplishment of the objectives and priorities of the *Master Plan 2006-2008* is communication with internal and external stakeholders. How that will be accomplished is threaded throughout the strategy plans contained in the entire document.

This *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008* describes the progress and challenges to date and major priorities for implementation, including the following:

- ⌚ Procurement or alignment of curriculum and development or purchase of student assessments matched to the voluntary state curriculum (VSC).
- ⌚ Reallocation and expansion of program materials and interventions for reading, mathematics, English II, government, biology, and algebra/data analysis courses.
- ⌚ Integration of responsibilities for teaching all students under the leadership of the Chief Academic Officer, rather than separate reporting structures and programs for special education students and general education students.
- ⌚ Enhancement of the programs for the middle level grades with more opportunities for students in the fine arts and physical education; with targeted improvement schools to receive additional professional development, student interventions, and wrap-around services for students and families through the Community Schools program.
- ⌚ Creation of the School Improvement Office to provide intense support for those

schools in school restructuring.

⌚ Provision of professional development for all principals, area academic officers, and classroom teachers (general education teachers, special education teachers, and English for students of other languages teachers) regarding the VSC, effective teaching practices, and use of assessments to identify student needs and program changed/interventions needed.

⌚ Development of programs to increase and retain highly qualified teachers as well as supports to further enhance their learning.

⌚ Expansion, enhancement, and integration of programs that address specific students through Career and Technology Education, Early Learning, and Gifted and Talented Education.

⌚ Revisions to and further development of the programs that support the cross-cutting themes of Educational Technology, Educational That Is Multicultural, and the Fine Arts.

⌚ Creation of systemwide school safety plans and programs, school-specific plans to match identified needs of particular schools, and case-management for students whose behaviors are not conducive to student achievement.

⌚ Expansion of programs to support higher attendance and graduation rates and reduce student dropout rates, supported by partnerships with foundations and organizations that extend the work of the BCPSS in these areas.

⌚ Revision of courses and expansion of intervention programs/recovery courses for students who are required to take and pass the high school assessments in order to graduate.

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⌚ Development of individual learning plans for students to provide specific supports that will lead to further success in school.

⌚ Implementation of phase two of the facilities solutions planning process and development of the long-range vision for facilities that match educational programs in the BCPSS.

⌚ Continuation and enhancement of transportation services that include efficient routing and effective communications among drivers, the transportation office, schools, and parents.

⌚ Dissemination and articulation of the focus on student wellness and the provision of healthful food products and improved service levels in school cafeterias.

⌚ Increase in the level of accountability in the BCPSS through use of the SchoolStat program, which has expanded to include Master PlanStat to increase responsibility of system leaders for the priorities in *Master Plan 2006-2008*.

⌚ Enhancement of the student information system and aspects of technology management that will ensure articulation of various student data systems to provide student information more quickly, as needed at the school or system levels.

⌚ Improvement in the communications to internal and external stakeholder groups, and expansion of engagement with parents, community, business groups, and foundations.

⌚ Implementation of the fixed assets tracking and inventory system.

The BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008 includes six goals. Goals 1 through 5 are the same goals as in the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act; Goal 6 is a local school system goal.

The six goals are as follows:

⌚ ***Goal 1*** — By 2013-2014, all students will reach high standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.

⌚ ***Goal 2*** — All limited English proficient students will become proficient in English and reach high academic standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.

⌚ ***Goal 3*** — By 2005-2006, all core academic subject classes (CAS) will be taught by highly qualified teachers.

⌚ ***Goal 4*** — All students will be educated in learning environments that are safe, drugfree,

and conducive to learning.

⌚ **Goal 5** — All students will graduate from high school.

⌚ **Goal 6** — Effective management of systems will support student achievement.

Strategies in Goals 1 through 5 include specific supports to enhance student performance and achievement in grades pre-Kindergarten through twelve. Goal 6 focuses on how various departments in the school system support students, staff, and the community in this same singular purpose—student performance and achievement. Synopses of the progress, challenges, and resources to attain these goals are provided in the following sections. Details that support the five ESEA goals include specific student group progress and challenges. Strategies, evaluations,

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timelines, and resource components to accelerate student performance are found in all sections of the *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008* under each goal. Goal 6 is designed to improve management systems as part of the overall effort to accelerate student achievement.

Progress, Challenges, and Master Plan Priorities

Goal 1 — By 2013-2014, all students will reach high standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.

Progress and Challenges: Summary of Student Performance from 2003-2006 on the Maryland School Assessments

▮ Students in grade 3 have increased their reading scores from 39.1 percent proficient or advanced in 2003 to 65.1 percent proficient or advanced in 2006 and increased their mathematics scores from 41.9 percent proficient or advanced in 2003 to 60.4 percent proficient or advanced in 2006.

▮ Students in grade 4 have increased their reading scores from 60.5 percent proficient or advanced in 2004 to 65.4 percent proficient or advanced in 2006 and increased their mathematics scores on the Maryland School Assessment from 47.6 percent proficient or advanced in 2004 to 62.7 percent proficient or advanced in 2006.

▮ Students in grade 5 have increased their reading scores from 44.4 percent proficient or advanced in 2003 to 58.7 percent proficient or advanced in 2006 and increased their mathematics scores on the Maryland School Assessment from 31.3 percent proficient in 2003 to 53.7 percent proficient or advanced in 2006.

▮ Students in grade 6 have increased their reading scores from 43.5 percent to 45.5 percent proficient and their mathematics scores from 19.8 percent proficient or advanced in 2004 to 31.4 percent proficient or advanced in 2006.

▮ Students in grades 7 and 8 have increased their reading scores from 42.5 percent to 46.4 percent and their mathematics scores from 17.9 percent proficient or advanced in 2004 to 24.8 percent proficient or advanced in 2006.

▮ Students in grade 8 have increased their reading scores from 32.8 percent proficient or advanced in 2003 to 39.4 percent proficient or advanced in 2006.

▮ Students in grade 8 have increased their mathematics scores from 11.5 percent proficient or advanced in 2003 to 21.6 percent proficient or advanced in 2006.

Summary of Student Performance on the High School Assessments

▮ Students taking the Algebra/Data Analysis High School Assessment (HSA) increased their passing rate from 22.5 percent of students in 2003 to 36.8 percent in 2006.

▮ Students taking the Biology HSA increased their passing rate from 26.7 percent in 2003 to 47.9 percent in 2006.

▮ Students taking the Government HSA increased their passing rate from 42.0 percent in 2003 to 53.9 percent in 2006.

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¶ Students taking the English II HSA increased their passing rate from 34.6 percent in 2005 to 37.3 percent in 2006 (only two years of data are available).

Summary of Other Academic Indicators of Student Achievement

¶ The high school graduation rate has increased from 54.18 percent in 2003 to 60.63 percent in 2006.

¶ The percentage of students completing University System of Maryland (USM) requirements has increased from 40.3 percent in 2002 to 65.6 percent in 2005 (2006 data not yet available).

¶ The percentage of students completing both the USM and Career Technology Education (CTE) requirements has increased from 12.5 percent in 2002 to 22.5 percent in 2005.

¶ Participation in Advanced Placement (AP) courses has steadily increased from 348 students in 2001 to 1,009 students in 2006.

¶ The number of AP tests taken by students has increased from 329 AP tests in 2001 to 1,073 AP tests in 2006.

It is clear from the information above that there has been improvement in student proficiency in the elementary grades more than there has been in the middle level grades. While student achievement levels in the aggregate (the “all students” category) continue to increase, the performance discrepancies for various student groups, including African American students, English language learner (ELL) students, and students with disabilities continue to be a focus for elimination. The student dropout rate has decreased, but greater supports are needed to help students remain in school to ensure an increase in the high school graduation rate for all student groups. The strategies in *Master Plan 2006-2008* focus on the achievement of all students, particularly those with disabilities and those who are English language learners.

Careful analysis of data reveals that although student achievement has risen over the past several years, particularly in the elementary schools, the pace for acceleration of this achievement must increase to ensure that Baltimore City students meet the standards set for 2013-1014. Improving the performance of all student groups on the Maryland School Assessment and high school assessment tests as well as increasing the graduation rate and decreasing the dropout rate are critical to the overall improvement of the BCPSS.

The achievement scores of students in the middle level grades are being given greater attention in the BCPSS as they are of concern in districts statewide. In order to support these middle level grades, a special professional development program, supported by Title I funding, is being offered for staff members in those schools that serve low-income students. Three additional hours a week are being provided for professional development for team learning about the objectives and assessment limits in the VSC, understanding the scope and sequence of new reading and mathematics courses being offered, planning lessons together, learning strategies for teaching some of the critical aspects of the content, and analyzing the assessments (teacher-made, district-designed, or state-mandated) in order to adjust teaching and enhance learning.

Furthermore, there are after-school and Saturday programs that will help close student achievement gaps. A newly hired area academic officer (AAO) is working with most of these middle schools.

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Curriculum/Program: Using Maryland’s voluntary state curriculum (VSC) and the core learning goals (CLG), the BCPSS has revised its curricula or obtained curricula from other successful school districts in Maryland in reading/language arts (PK-8), English II, mathematics (PK-8), government, and biology to provide teachers and students with high quality courses. At the elementary school level, the use of the Open Court reading materials has been extended into pre-Kindergarten, and grades 4 and 5. Nineteen (19) schools continue to use the Reading Mastery Plus materials instead of the Open Court materials. Appropriate support materials and textbooks have been purchased to support each curriculum. The directors of mathematics and literacy have been appointed, and 20 lead coaches have been reassigned to lead and support the work in these content areas. Area and central office staff are monitoring implementation of these

curricula along with building principals and instructional support teachers (ISTs), who are the job-embedded professional developers in each school.

Assessments: Benchmark assessments have been developed or obtained from other school systems and will be given quarterly to students in reading/language arts (grades 3-8), mathematics (grade 3-8), and courses in English II, government, biology, and algebra/data analysis. These assessments will be analyzed to identify how much students are learning, to adjust teaching strategies, to group and regroup students according to learning needs, and to identify interventions needed. The unit assessments that are part of the Open Court reading materials will be administered and analyzed more frequently for identification of student needs and re-teaching or interventions.

Professional Development: Bi-monthly professional development is provided for the ISTs to ensure systemic support and implementation of BCPSS curricula. Coupling these efforts with effective and ongoing job-embedded professional development at the school level for classroom teachers, special education teachers, and ESOL teachers provides learning and coaching opportunities for teachers to effectively teach the courses, assess student learning, and adjust teaching strategies based on current student performance.

Interventions: In reading/language arts, specific interventions were identified and purchased, and are being implemented in reading/language arts according to student needs and student performance. The programs include *Horizons* and *Language for Learning* (elementary grades), *Corrective Reading* (middle grades), and *Wilson Reading* (high school grades) for students performing two or more years below grade level. In addition, after-school programs include *Voyager Passport* and other interventions that provide extended learning time for students. In mathematics, students will be given additional assistance that focuses on the identified objectives of the quarterly assessments or through additional programs like the Progress Pro tutorials. Identification of additional interventions is being determined (e.g., Cognitive Tutor, Larson Mathematics). For the algebra/data analysis course, students will be provided interventions that include the MSDE online course to match identified student needs. HSA recovery courses are being provided for all students who did not yet pass the HSA and need to pass it to meet graduation requirements. Intervention teachers have been assigned to schools for reading assistance according to the school improvement status of that school. Additional staff has been assigned to schools to serve as intervention teachers or to further reduce class size.

Resources: The detailed strategy plans for the content areas of reading/language arts, English II, and mathematics include specific budgetary support for new or revised curricula, purchase of

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materials, textbooks and other supports needed, including professional development. Additional intervention teachers for reading have been assigned to those schools in school improvement status. The resources listed in the plan also include the partnerships (foundations and grants) for which the BCPSS is grateful and which help to support the priorities of the *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008*.

Goal 2 — All limited English proficient students will become proficient in English and reach high standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.

Progress and Challenges: There are performance discrepancies between the scores of English language learners (ELLs) and students in the “All Students” category at various grade levels. In some grades that difference has been reduced. These data changes year-to-year include students who are learning English at least in their second year in America. Data review clearly indicates that the greater the student knowledge of the English language (i.e., the number of years a student studies English), the higher the performance on most measures of achievement in English, including the MSA.

Curriculum/Program: There were 1,320 English language learner (ELL) students in the BCPSS as of October 30, 2005, who are becoming proficient in the English language within three to five years, reflecting current language acquisition research. The ESOL curriculum includes guides for all five proficiency levels for students. Students are taught in separate classes (pull-out classes) by ESOL teachers until they demonstrate success in their mainstream programs. At such time,

they are provided assistance in the regular BCPSS courses. The ESOL curriculum is aligned with the Maryland voluntary state curriculum in ESOL. The mainstream teachers who work with ELLs in their grade-level classes provide necessary modifications and accommodations in daily instruction and in the assessments to ensure equitable student participation.

Assessments: Students in the ESOL program take the Language Assessment Scales test (LAS) to measure their proficiency in language development. Information from these annual tests is used by the ESOL teachers to target interventions for the ELLs that will accelerate their proficient use of English. The BCPSS schools are providing accommodations for test taking for the English language learners and teaching them strategies to be more successful on quarterly benchmark tests and annual assessments.

Professional Development: ESOL teachers are included in the professional development opportunities in reading and mathematics in order to support accelerated achievement for ELLs. School staff members continue to receive professional development to ensure that each ELL student's home language is identified upon registration so that resources can be provided immediately. ESOL teachers participate in regular general education professional development sessions to learn skills needed to teach English to Speakers of Other Languages. General educators also participate in specific professional development sessions to learn accommodations for English language learners.

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Interventions: English language learners are provided at least one class period each day for those who speak no English at all to mainstreamed classes as students become more acclimated to the country and proficient in the English language. English language learners are provided interventions in mathematics, reading/language arts, and the high school assessments, based on MSDE guideline documentation and their classroom performance, assessment results, and recommendations of teachers. Students with disabilities who are also English language learners receive appropriate services and interventions.

Resources: An additional seven ESOL teacher positions were added into the FY 2007 budget to meet the needs of the increasing ELL population. The Newcomer center for secondary students augmented staff to provide for some additional content specific teachers. Three additional bilingual assistant positions are working with high school students and one additional teacher to support early childhood classes. Another ESOL mentor teacher has been added as well. Communications with parents/guardians will continue to be expanded to meet the language needs of the students and their families.

Goal 3 — By 2005-2006, all core academic subject classes (CAS) will be taught by highly qualified teachers.

Progress and Challenges: There has been an increase in the percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers in core academic subjects (CAS) from 34 percent in school year 2003-2004 to 46.8 percent in school year 2005-2006. In the summer of 2006, one thousand new educators were hired, of whom 92 percent met the highly qualified eligible status. Based on these recruitment efforts, it is projected that the percentage of highly qualified teachers will be 60 percent in school year 2006-2007. The Human Resources Department has implemented a variety of programs and management tools to support the recruitment of highly qualified eligible teachers. There has even been a "Voluntary" Teacher Transfer fair that provided opportunities to assist highly qualified teachers in transferring from a non-Title I school to a Title I school or for highly qualified teachers who want to transfer from one Title I school to another Title I school. One BCPSS challenge is the need to continue funding for many worthwhile initiatives that could yield qualified teachers. A second challenge is the ability to recruit teachers in critical needs areas such as mathematics, science, special education, and early childhood education. The BCPSS realizes that atypical recruitment opportunities and programs may be the most promising in the future.

Beyond recruitment of teachers is the need to retain highly qualified teachers as well. The teacher retention program, which is coordinated between the Human Resources Department and the Teacher/Principal Quality Office, strives to retain good teachers in the BCPSS. The well developed Blum Mentoring Program provides coaching and other specialized assistance to new

teachers in their novice years in the teaching profession and provides high quality professional development. These efforts are insufficient to stop the steady loss of highly qualified teachers. Beyond the 181 highly qualified teachers who left the BCPSS during the school year 2005-2006, an additional 393 teachers (who were not highly qualified) also left the school system. Considerable investments of time, energy, and resources were committed toward helping these teachers to become highly qualified as well as to help the highly qualified teachers further their growth.

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The BCPSS has coordinated information and services for paraprofessionals to become highly qualified. By June 2007, if these staff members are not yet highly qualified, the BCPSS will have to reassign some of these staff members to other positions or, if no other positions are available, terminate them.

A challenge to providing timely and appropriate professional development is the availability of a building site in which professional development sessions can be provided. When the former Dr. Samuel L. Banks School was closed as part of the BCPSS plan to reduce the number of schools and their square footage to be proportionate to the number of students enrolled, the Professional Development Center housed at that site was also closed. Since that time, content directors, area offices, and the Chief Academic Officer have experienced difficulty finding sites for system wide meetings and professional development for teachers and administrators. It is difficult to use regular school sites because of the restriction of time and availability. The BCPSS Department of Facilities is working to identify possible professional development sites.

Curriculum/Program: An international recruitment strategy, in addition to the Teach for America program and the Baltimore City Teacher Residency program, will continue. These programs have helped develop or brought highly qualified teachers into the BCPSS. The Parato-Teacher model, the Graduate Intern Program, and a variety of other strategies will be used by the BCPSS Human Resources Department to attract and retain highly qualified teachers. New teachers are provided mentors and instructional support teachers who assist them in learning curricula, implementing effective teaching strategies, and becoming aware of various supports in the BCPSS and the community to help them adjust to the new school and to thrive as a teacher. Additional mentors have been hired to further expand this critical support not only to those teachers new to the school system or profession, but for those teachers struggling in their work.

The Human Resources Department will continue to collaborate with the Teacher/Principal Quality Office on many initiatives. A prime example of this is the recently created Professional Development “Neighborhood” in the community of Cherry Hill, which is a Title I partnership between Towson University and five Cherry Hill Schools, designed to provide community access for the teachers seeking to meet highly qualified requirements. Teachers new to the BCPSS in 2006-2007 were provided with a new laptop along with the two-week paid pre-service opportunity in the summer prior to the start of school. Goal 3 also accents the importance of high quality professional development, which the BCPSS assesses regularly.

Assessments: Teacher certification, courses listed in the course catalog, and teaching schedules will be analyzed to ensure accuracy of data for this ESEA goal. The Praxis exam is offered to facilitate completion of teachers’ highly qualified status. The Human Resources Department will effectively track teacher certification, matching it to classes taught and the coding used for courses themselves. In coordination with MSDE, the BCPSS has piloted a scanning process for certification documents. A new on-line exit interview survey procedure has been instituted to capture self-reported inform that can help analyze the reasons for teacher attrition.

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Web-based surveys are being used by teachers to evaluate the professional development being provided. The Gallup Teacher Insight is being used as part of the application procedure as an additional measure of information regarding the applicants.

Professional Development: The Baltimore Model Schools Initiative provided professional

development to the principals in 40 Title I schools over the past two years, targeting improvement in the screening, identification, and interviewing of highly qualified teacher candidates. Another 20 schools are being added in school year 2006-2007 to benefit from this model.

High quality professional development is being provided in the areas of reading/language arts, mathematics, and the high school assessment courses to principals, area staff members and classroom teachers. In consultation with MSDE, monthly schedules and topics for these meetings have been determined. These sessions and ongoing support from the area academic officers is intended to build the leadership capacity and practice of the principals as instructional leaders. A program for leadership development has been designed by the Chief Academic Officer in collaboration with MSDE to ensure that school leaders and area leaders, particularly the AAOs, are appropriately provided the highest quality professional learning. The BCPSS leaders are increasing their content knowledge, improving their ability to identify effective teaching practices and coach instructional staff, analyzing achievement data effectively, and learning how best to determine how well learning is occurring in each classroom and how to coach for more effective teaching to increase learning. Following this learning, there is a need to clearly identify how to coach for higher student achievement.

Resources: The Human Resources Department was reengineered into teams to mirror the tasks associated with the recruitment of highly qualified teachers. Among the budgetary aspects of the Human Resources Department that provide support for the recruitment and retention of teachers is the following: \$4M for tuition reimbursement, \$2.6 M for Smart Start, \$400K for the Baltimore City Teacher Residency, \$300K for the Teach for America program, and \$495K for expansion of the Baltimore Model Schools Initiative.

An additional 12 mentors were hired to further support the new teachers in the BCPSS. These were placed in schools identified as having 35 percent or more of its faculty new or as being a school in school improvement. Additional money is being used to expand professional learning opportunities for teachers and administrators, including after school seminars throughout the year.

Goal 4 — All students will be educated in learning environments that are safe, drug-free, and conducive to learning.

Progress and Challenges: The BCPSS has reduced the number of schools required to develop corrective action plans to address violent behavior from 17 school to 6 schools. There were two BCPSS schools removed from the classification, “persistently dangerous,” at the end of the 2005-2006 school year. There are five BCPSS schools on that list. Some of the five schools have further reduced their suspension rates, but have not yet met the standard to be taken off the list. Schools with increasing percentages of suspensions will be monitored and supported to address

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the issues underlying these suspensions. There has been a significant reduction in the number of schools classified as “probationary” (with a suspension rate of 2.5 percent for violent offenses for two years) in school year 2005-2006; there is only one school in this status for school year 2006-2007. There was a decrease in the number of student suspensions for sexual harassment from 189 in school year 2002-2003 to 83 in school year 2005-2006; and a reduction in the number of harassment reports from 151 in school year 2003-1004 to 117 reports in 2005-2006.

Curriculum/Program: Schools that have increasing percentages of suspensions for two consecutive years develop corrective action plans. In addition, grade-level appropriate lessons dealing with harassment and bullying are being provided in September of each school year. Students in grades 5 and 6 will receive additional information through a customized magazine and parent information guide to provide information to students about bullying and strategies for parents to recognize bullying and take appropriate actions, including notification to the student’s school.

The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program has been introduced in 30 schools. Additionally, there will be case management protocols used to assist individual students in eliminating chronic, escalating, disruptive behaviors. The Student Support Team has a greater focus on these students to provide them needed assistance immediately rather than when there is

a pattern of behavior.

The BCPSS is committed to the development of a comprehensive school safety plan that will promote positive behavior and specific case management support for students exhibiting chronic, escalating, disruptive behaviors, as part of the integrated student support services model.

Assessments: Of those 19 schools involved in the PBIS program and evaluated by Sheppard Pratt Health Systems, Inc., the evaluation score of 80, indicating a high level of implementation, was met or was exceeded by every school on the School wide Evaluation Tool, with seven of the 19 schools scoring 90 percent or higher. Analysis of the Maryland Student Adolescent Survey is used to improve the programs and strategies for students to further address their identified needs. The BCPSS Office of Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention will develop a measurement tool to monitor schools in their implementation of the programs.

Professional Development: Extensive professional development has been and will continue to be provided to those schools implementing the PBIS model. Coaching support is provided on a continuous basis to schools identified as probationary and persistently dangerous and in writing and implementing their corrective action plans. Additional professional development has been provided to those teachers who use the curriculum on harassment/intimidation and bullying.

Interventions: A Web-based application will be developed to document incidents of harassment/intimidation reported by parents, students, and other close family members. Reports generated from this documentation will assist the BCPSS in targeting schools with interventions to address the aforementioned behaviors.

The PBIS program will be provided for additional schools that will be identified collaboratively with staff from MSDE. This program takes three to five years to reach full implementation.

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There were ten schools in the category of 18 percent suspension rate or higher in school year 2005-2006; there are three schools in that category for school year 2006-2007.

The Office of Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention will develop a plan to support students who are transitioning from long-term placement in the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) facilities to schools in the BCPSS.

Resources: There is a full-time PBIS coordinator and three PBIS coaches to successfully implement the program in the schools. The budget for the support of these programs is approximately \$1.5M.

Goal 5 — All students will graduate from high school.

Progress and Challenges: The graduation rate of students has increased from 58.99 percent in school year 2004-2005 to 60.63 percent in school year 2005-2006. While this increase maintains the successive year increases since 2003 when it was 54.1 percent, it is below the MSDE annual measurable objective (AMO) each of those years. The *NCLB* requirement by 2014 is that student graduation rates must be at 90 percent. The graduation rate for students with limited English proficiency was 89.74 percent in school year 2005-2006, 6.5 percentage points above the AMO. The graduation rate for students with disabilities (35.2 percent) is lower than other student groups. This marks a challenge in the BCPSS to provide appropriate support for special education students to complete their education through graduation.

Ninety (90) percent of all eighth grade students completed a high school application indicating their choice of high school programs. Seventy-five (75) percent of seniors in school year 2005-2006 took the SAT, opening up possibilities for students to pursue their education beyond high school.

While the BCPSS dropout rate decreased from 11.6 percent in school year 2004-2005 to 10.5 percent in 2005-2006; the dropout rate for students with disabilities was 16.41 percent in 2005-2006. The BCPSS focus for improving these performance indicators centers around greater access for special education students to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment. Collaboration between regular classroom teachers and special education classroom teachers and ESOL teachers will further enhance achievement levels of special education students and English language learners.

Students taking the English II High School Assessment (HSA) increased their passing rate from 34.6 percent in school year 2004-2005 to 37.3 percent in school year 2005-2006. Students taking

the Algebra/Data Analysis High School Assessment increased their passing rate from 22.5 percent of students in school year 2002-2003 to 36.8 percent in 2005-2006. Students taking the Biology High School Assessment increased their passing rate from 26.7 percent in school year 2002-2003 to 47.9 percent in 2006. Students taking the Government High School Assessment increased their passing rate from 42.0 percent in 2003 to 53.9 percent in school year 2005-2006. Disaggregated analyses are provided in great detail under Goal 5 with specific strategies that will be used to decrease achievement gaps and increase student performance for all groups of students.

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For school year 2005-2006, student attendance in the elementary schools is 94.1 percent; in the middle level grades it is 88.2 percent; and in the high schools it is 83.6 percent. For most student groups, this attendance rate does not vary very much except for the students with disabilities. For special education students, attendance ranges from two to eight percentage points lower than the “All Students” category. Elementary schools have achieved the satisfactory standard for student performance. Attendance for middle level students has increased two percentage points since school year 2002-2003, and for high school students it has increased 3.4 percentage points since school year 2002-2003.

Curriculum/Program: Individual learning plans will be developed for students in grades seven, eight, and in the high school to track and support student success in school. High school choice will provide students equity in access to high schools. Students will be provided HSA recovery courses if they did not pass the high school assessments. Student support deans and student support teams will be a part of the integrated student services model to assist students in meeting their goal of graduation from high school with completion of the University System of Maryland and/or Career Technology Education requirements. Partnerships with institutions of higher education and other organizations will further enhance student opportunities, including dual enrollment opportunities.

Curricula have been aligned with the Maryland core learning goals or have been obtained from successful districts in Maryland with additional resources purchased or developed to match identified student needs. The English II curriculum will be evaluated in school year 2006-2007. A new biology curriculum and textbook support materials are being used for the first time. A new algebra/data analysis course is being implemented in school year 2006-2007 as well as a revised government course. Sequencing of the courses in these four areas have been reevaluated based on review of best practices. Additionally, most high school assessment courses are yearlong courses that provide 90 minutes of instruction daily. Principals and area academic officers will use the curriculum “look-fors” to monitor implementation of these curricula and support teachers in their practice of effective teaching strategies.

Redevelopment of the attendance office will provide dedicated support for improvement of student attendance and coordinating services to students that increases attendance can lead to increased performance.

Assessments: Students will have expanded opportunities to take the SAT and additional sections of advanced placement courses to challenge them to higher performance. Guidance counselors and other student support team members will review student grades at each marking period to identify students in need of individual learning plans.

Quarterly assessments will be developed for the courses in which high school assessments are taken, that reflect the core learning goals, and are in the format of the high school assessments. During the third marking period, each student will take “practice” high school assessments that mirror the actual assessments to measure student achievement to date and to prepare students for the actual test.

AttendanceStat is a formal process used to analyze, report, and monitor student attendance as well as focus attention on problem areas and guide decision making.

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Enhanced record keeping and analysis of student attendance data will be used to identify root

causes for student absences and provide solutions, in collaboration with community organizations, to provide dedicated supports for students to attend school.

Professional Development: Professional development will be provided to all secondary administrators on interpreting high school transcripts and accuracy of same. Monthly professional development is being provided to school principals and area office administrators, department heads and instructional support teachers, special education teachers, and ESOL teachers where applicable.

Weekly meetings will be held with ISTs and department heads to discuss best practices, share lesson plans, observe demonstration lessons, and analyze student work. Teachers, including classroom teachers and intervention teachers, will meet in school-based professional development and receive coaching from the instructional support teachers. Further, there were summer institutes for ISTs and department heads to build capacity of these teacher leaders to become more proficient academic coaches for classroom teachers.

Interventions: The Alternative Options Network and the Novel Online Credit Recovery Program will help support promotion and retention of students who need a non-traditional approach to schooling. Partnerships with many Baltimore City agencies and institutions in the area are critical to the student success and will continue to be expanded.

HSA recovery classes will be offered to students who did not pass the English II high school assessment during 2006-2007. HSA recovery classes are already being provided, including some on-line courses, for students who did not pass the algebra/data analysis, government, or biology high school assessments given in school year 2005-2006. Students who are part of the recovery classes are those who began high school in the fall of 2005 and must pass these assessments in order to graduate in 2009.

Baltimore City has invested more than \$1.75 million in community school coordination and millions more in the programs and services that will be located in them. This project brings resources that increase students' readiness for learning, provides opportunities for youth development, health and mental health, family support, and workforce and community development.

Resources: Core novels and classroom libraries for English I and English II classes have been purchased, and two additional specialists were hired to provide systemic coordination of the efforts of the instructional support teachers and these curricula. New textbooks that support revised curricula as well as ancillary materials have been purchased to ensure that teachers have the materials necessary to provide excellent teaching and learning opportunities for students.

Addressing Specific Student Groups

This section of the *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008* addresses Career and Technology Education, Early Learning, and Gifted and Talented Education.

Progress and Challenges: BCPSS students have performed higher than the State on the percentage of Career and Technology Education (CTE) concentrators who meet the University System of Maryland (USM) requirements. With the budget crisis a few years ago, there was a

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reduction in force of teachers who teach CTE programs. However, there is a plan to expand current course offerings and programs.

There are pre-Kindergarten programs in all but 11 elementary schools with a total of 112 full-day programs and 64 half-day programs. The BCPSS will maintain systemic full-day kindergarten classes, with an increase from 261 to 304 classes for school year 2006-2007, thereby offering these full-day programs universally three years before they were required by the State. A total of 96 percent of the BCPSS pre-Kindergarten students have been rated in the "approaching" or "fully ready" categories of the pre-Kindergarten assessments for school year 2004-2005 and school year 2005-2006. The Office of Early Learning is addressing the need to increase the percentage of students with disabilities receiving instruction in the least restrictive environments (LRE A and B).

As a result of the review by MSDE, the BCPSS began to implement the Schoolwide Enrichment Model as the identified systemic model for its gifted students. In order to meet the needs of more gifted students, additional appropriately challenging programs and services have been identified. The programs and services include Primary Talent Development, (PTD), Advanced

Placement (AP), Internationale Baccalaureate (IB), and the Ingenuity Project (IP).

Curriculum/Program: The Local Advisory Council has been reactivated and is made up of 48 members representing a variety of program businesses and industries. Programmatic Advisory Councils (PACs) are operational for nine of the 40 pathways and will be expanded to include others during the school year 2006-2007. Plans have been developed to create more partnerships with post-secondary institutions. The BCPSS has analyzed the CTE programs offered and identified needs across the ten MSDE clusters that reflect all CTE pathways.

The *Blueprint for Early Literacy* is being used in pre-Kindergarten classes. The comprehensive literacy program is supported through the use of the Open Court reading materials that are now being used in most of the BCPSS schools in grades K-5. The Office of Preschool Special Education and the Office of Early Learning have been combined to ensure appropriate opportunity for students with disabilities (SWD) and to ensure a seamless system of support for all young learners.

There are multiple programs offered under the umbrella of Gifted and Talented programs: Primary Talent Development, Systemic Gifted and Talented Program, the Ingenuity Project, the schoolwide enrichment model/advanced placement, and the expansion of the International Baccalaureate Programme for students in the primary and middle level years.

Assessments: Analysis of student achievement will be ongoing to further support CTE students to increase their cumulative grade point average, to obtain a higher technical GPA in their program courses, and to increase the percentage of student who not only complete the CTE concentrators program, but also complete the University System of Maryland (USM) requirements.

There were specific data collection needs that have been addressed, thus ensuring a fuller representation of information from special education students. Staff continues to analyze student data and classroom performance. Such monitoring includes teachers' utilization of the

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curriculum and use of end-of-unit and benchmark assessments in pre-Kindergarten and kindergarten classes. Work Sampling System (WSS) data entry will continue to increase from 96 percent to 98 percent in school year 2006-2007.

Teachers will analyze student performance, using the behavior checklist to differentiate instruction and identify students who are eligible for the programs offered. There will be expansion of the systemic gifted and talented program as well as the processes needed for expansion of the Internationale Baccalaureate Programme into the Early Years and Middle Years programs.

Professional Development: Forty-five (45) percent of the 126 CTE teachers have more than 26 years of service in the BCPSS. More than 90 percent of the CTE teachers are non-industry certified but meet MSDE credentials for standard or advanced certifications in an academic subject area. Professional development opportunities are centered on industry or MSDE ovided training. The CTE department has a ten-year agreement with the Southern Regional Education Board/*High Schools That Work* (HSTW) consortium to further support student achievement.

There will be use of the Early Learning Instructional Program monitoring rubrics to gauge implementation of the VSC and the overall BCPSS programs in reading and mathematics. Support for teachers will be provided at the school level, based on these findings. Annual professional development is provided to learn how to judge students' readiness as measured by the Maryland Model of School Readiness (MMSR) use of MMSR exemplars, to prepare teachers for the summer learning program, to accommodate student needs so that more students with disabilities can be educated in LRE A.

In the gifted and talented programs, extensive professional development will be provided to teachers regarding the instructional areas that challenge students to achieve higher performance, compacting the curriculum, systemic identification procedures, and other topics that assist further development of gifted and talented programs. Additional support will be provided to teachers as needs are identified. Ninety (90) teachers have received professional development from the College Board to prepare them for teaching the advanced placement courses. As these

courses are expanded, more teachers will be provided such opportunities.

Interventions: In order for students to learn more about the various CTE programs, two booklets have been produced in collaboration between the Department of Student Support, Office of Student Placement, Office of Partnerships, and the Department of Special Education. These two booklets, "Choosing the High School That Is Right for You" and the "American Careers" magazine are available to all eighth grade students and the larger community. These communications will assist in increasing the number of attendees at the High School Fair. Beyond the student achievement analysis and greater communications, students in the CTE programs are given the same interventions developed for the high school assessment courses. The BCPSS has offered the Summer Early Learning K Program for students entering kindergarten. Additional opportunities will be provided. There is an Early Learning Intervention Plan that will identify what is needed to not only close the achievement gap among different student groups, but how to increase the percentage of students performing in the "fully ready"

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category on the MMSR. Students identified as needing additional assistance will be provided appropriate interventions.

Students in the Gifted and Talented Programs in the BCPSS receive the same interventions as all other students in reading and mathematics. More particularly, teachers are becoming more proficient in compacting curriculum, in learning differentiated strategies to meet the needs of the gifted students, and enhancing further their ability to identify students with the potential for giftedness.

Resources: The CTE programs are sponsored through the Perkins Grant and local funding. For the school year 2006-2007, five additional teachers have been hired to further expand these programs. In addition, the Office of Career and Technology Education is beginning to add staff to provide systemwide support to teachers and ensure the programs reflect national and industry standards.

For school year 2006-2007, there will be the first BCPSS Early Learning Center created to serve approximately 180 pre-Kindergarten and kindergarten students. It is important that the Early Learning Initiatives reflect a seamless program for all early learners. To that end, there has been extensive collaboration among the Office of English as a Second Language, the Office of Special Education, and the Office of Early Learning. The number of pre-school inclusion classes is increasing from nine to 12, and the number of ESOL pre-Kindergarten programs for ESOL students is increasing from one to four. The budget for these Early Learning programs is approximately \$5M.

There is both local and grant funding for extensive professional development. The largest expenditure is for salaries of teachers who provide the many programs offered. Salaries for teachers in these programs are approximately \$1.7 M.

Cross-Cutting Themes

This section of the *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008* addresses Educational Technology, Education That is Multicultural, and Fine Arts.

Progress and Challenges: The infrastructure has been completed in the remaining 40 schools, and those schools wired through the Technology in Maryland Schools (TIMS) are being reevaluated since the current TIMS standards reflect upgrades needed for broadband access in those schools originally wired. Technology specialists are working in the schools to provide jobembedded professional development and coaching in the effective use of technology to enhance teaching and learning.

Education That Is Multicultural (ETMA) provides the backdrop for the BCPSS to eliminate student achievement gaps. The BCPSS continues to implement Maryland's African American Curriculum, sponsors visits to the Reginald F. Lewis Museum, and helps teachers learn instructional strategies and understand different cultures in support of greater student achievement. The reorganization of positions under the Deputy Officer for Academic Achievement include the renamed position, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Multicultural Education and Diversity, further identifying the focus that the BCPSS places on these critical issues.

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Elementary and middle level students attended matinee concerts by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and Morgan State University's productions of the musical, *Ragtime*. Leadership Teachers in the Arts Discipline (LEAD) played a large role in organizing adjudicated citywide solo and ensemble band, choral, and jazz festivals. The citywide art exhibit, *As We See It*, was reinstated to help make the fine arts program visible beyond the classroom. A citywide *Dance Symposium* was held as well. Such activities will be implemented in school year 2006-2007.

Curriculum/Program: The Information Technology Department (ITD) has added enhancements providing and expanding access in the use of the Riverdeep Learning Village tool, supporting the library/media program, preparing for the online statewide assessments, providing laptop computers to new teachers and access to the curriculum on the Web, as well as lesson plans and activities that can be accessed by teachers and students using the Teacher Support System (TSS). Access for teachers is not universal at this time and will continue to be addressed.

The African American curriculum that has been written by teachers across Maryland is used in the BCPSS at appropriate grade levels. Students have access to the Reginald F. Lewis Museum in Baltimore where they are able to better understand and to make connections in their learning. Furthermore, the Education That Is Multicultural (ETMA) plan will identify culturally responsive learning environments and assist schools in learning how to take into consideration the affective and cultural domains of the "whole child," so critical to fostering high achievement. The programs in dance, music, theater, and visual arts were aligned to the voluntary state curriculum by the end of the school year 2005-2006. Progress was also made in the area of arts integration, supporting learning across the curriculum. The Arts Integration initiative, supported by the Ford Foundation, evolved into a new partnership organization, Baltimore Partners for Enhanced Learning that will continue.

Assessments: The Instructional Technology Department collaborated with the Teacher/Principal Quality Office and other departments that provide professional development to include Webbased and e-learning strategies among learning opportunities provided to teachers. The ITD staff is developing a systemic professional development plan that will reflect the needs as identified by a technology skills inventory as well as those that reflect the MSDE Technology Literacy standards expected for students by grade 8. Credit recovery programs, like Novel, are available for students to recover credits needed for graduation. The MSDE Technology Literacy Profile will be given to all instructional staff in October 2006 and again in May 2007.

During the 2005-2006 school year, 91 schools participated in the school self-assessment protocol from the ETMA program. A learning styles inventory will be used in school year 2006-2007 to assist teachers in planning their lessons to include various student learning styles in order to differentiate instruction to increase achievement of various student groups. The coordinators of multicultural education and diversity will work with the directors of literacy and mathematics, low incidence and inclusion, and secondary education to analyze student performance and identify strategies that can more effectively meet the needs of different groups of students. While there have been numerous venues for students to demonstrate their proficiency in the arts in adjudicated settings, for the first time in the school year 2006-2007, systemic arts assessments will be developed. These assessments will be aligned with the VSC and piloted in grades 3 and 5.

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Professional Development: Technology integration analysts (TIAs) work with administrators on the effective use of technology to better collect and manage data to inform and support teaching and learning. They also work with teachers to integrate technology into student lessons.

Teachers and administrators attend professional development opportunities that not only help those who are teaching the African American curriculum to do it well, but to understand how to further integrate appropriate strategies to accelerate achievement of all student groups.

Workshops will be continued by professionals in their fields to further enhance the instructional expertise of the teachers in the BCPSS. Teachers will also learn how to increase and enhance content knowledge that supports the Maryland Fine Arts standards and implement effective instructional strategies.

Interventions: Protocols will be established to assess effective culturally supportive environments. Use of learning structures from the *Framework for Understanding Poverty* is providing needed intervention approaches (learning structures) for some students to increase their success in the classroom.

The Educational Technology department has developed a plan that will provide enhanced technology opportunities for teachers and students to further integrate technology into instructions.

Resources: Enhancements to current technology used in the schools and by staff in central office will continue to be added based on budget plans. A comprehensive plan for expanding technology to ensure students meet the newly revised Maryland technology requirements will be included in the development of the FY08 budget.

For the past six years, the Fine Arts Initiative Grant has helped in the growth and improvement of the visual and performing arts programs in the BCPSS. These resources have been complemented by support from the BCPSS, the City of Baltimore, and many partners, including cultural institutions, colleges and universities, philanthropies, and individuals. With the expansion of programs, there were an additional 47 visual and performing arts teachers in the schools in the school year 2005-2006.

To articulate and direct the Education That Is Multicultural (ETMA) initiatives, the BCPSS has restructured the position of Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Multicultural Education, and Diversity. Under the supervision of this director, the newly restructured positions of coordinators of Minority Achievement and Multicultural Education will coordinate efforts with the BCPSS stakeholders to assure implementation of the By-law. The BCPSS will continue to provide release time for the local school ETMA representative to attend the monthly meetings of the ETMA Network.

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Goal 6 — Effective management of systems will support student achievement.

This goal in the *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008* is designed to improve management systems as part of the overall effort to accelerate student achievement. Its strategies are focused on the priorities listed below.

- ⌚ Implementation of phase two of the facilities solutions planning process and development of the long-range vision for facilities that match educational programs in the BCPSS.
- ⌚ Continuation and enhancement of transportation services that include efficient routing and effective communications among drivers, the transportation office, schools, and parents.
- ⌚ Dissemination and articulation of the focus on student wellness and the provision of healthful food products and improved service levels in school cafeterias.
- ⌚ Increase in the level of accountability in the BCPSS through use of the SchoolStat program, which has expanded to include Master PlanStat to increase responsibility of system leaders on the priorities in the *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008*.
- ⌚ Enhancement of the student information system and aspects of technology management that will ensure articulation of various student data systems to provide student information more quickly as needed at the school or system levels.
- ⌚ Improvement in the communications to internal and external stakeholder groups, and expansion of engagement with parents, community, business groups, and foundations.
- ⌚ Implementation of the fixed assets tracking and inventory system.

Accountability Measures: Implementing and Monitoring the

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Master plan objectives and the strategies are clearly designed so that they can be monitored and supported. These objectives include student performance on the annual state tests and ongoing evaluations of strategies that support student progress. Weekly MasterPlanStat meetings are focused on the implementation of the critical priorities in the *BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008* to assist in refocusing resources or adjusting strategies as needed.

Rather than maintain different plans for federal and State requirements of the BCPSS, *Master Plan 2006-2008* integrates those requirements into one coherent and comprehensive plan.

Integrating these efforts ensures that the BCPSS is coordinating its efforts across offices and for the sole purpose of student achievement. Throughout *Master Plan 2006-2008* are elements of the Corrective Actions (CA) and the Enhanced Monitoring for Improvement and Results (EMCIR) plan. Appendix A at the end of the Master Plan 2006-2008 document is the Implementation Status of Corrective Action. Appendix B cross-references Goals 1-6 with these previous required through the CA and the EMCIR.

The BCPSS *Master Plan 2006-2008* is written with the expectation that it will continuously be evaluated and revised to reflect the needs of students and staff, emerging state and federal requirements, and best practices in education. Extensive analyses of data are part of the ongoing evaluation and recommendations for changes to the *Master Plan 2006-2008*.

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Regular reports will be provided to the Board of School Commissioners about progress toward achievement of the goals of *Master Plan 2006-2008* in December 2006, March 2007, and June 2007. These implementation status reports will be shared with the Baltimore City community to further engender both confidence in the accountability systems in the BCPSS and progress toward meeting the goals.

The Data Management System: A student data warehouse system and individual student data, including frequent teacher assessments (benchmark tests), are being developed for use in the reading/language arts classes, mathematics classes, and all the courses in which students take the high school assessments. The ability to cross-reference this data warehouse with the general student information system will enable greater access to detailed student information in order to present a comprehensive picture that informs classroom decisions and identifies significant implications leading to new learning.

Access of student information through a data management system will enhance systemwide and schoolwide opportunities to manipulate various information sources in an expeditious way in order to analyze student performance. Administrators, teachers, and instructional support teachers (job-embedded staff developers) are able to make important instructional decisions without any delay. In school year 2006-2007, this plan begins to provide access to data for teachers and guidance counselors and multiple opportunities for professional development. The BCPSS staff are committed to a process that will carefully manage and effectively use student data to improve teaching and learning. Staff at the central office and in the schools will continue to focus on data-driven instructional improvement. These student data reports are shared with principals, directors, area academic officers, and teaching staff in the schools. There has been, and will continue to be, an insistence on reaching higher goals each year, with longrange goals raising the ceiling and floor for each student.

NCLB requires more of communities, districts, schools, teachers, and students so that every student can demonstrate mastery of State standards, as measured by the Maryland School Assessment. The *Bridge to Excellence* elements were forerunners of the *NCLB* federal law and its mandates, and reflect the new State initiatives for school reform that accelerate the pace of needed change in education. Each of these initiatives calls for raising academic standards and achievement, and addresses the inequities in student performance in Maryland among student groups.

Data analyses are critical to annually identify the steps needed to improve student performance and to serve as indicators of how well BCPSS has attained its performance objectives. The BCPSS student data system provides the backdrop for identified priorities and their strategy plans to support those priorities.

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Communication and Consultation with Internal and External Stakeholders

Development of the *Master Plan 2006-2008* resulted from the diligent efforts of the Board of School Commissioners, the BCPSS *Bridge to Excellence* Planning Team, parents, teachers, administrators, community members, and the BCPSS Parent and Community Advisory Board, who have contributed through their input in the course of the past school year. In order to

identify the school system's priorities through the school year 2007-2008, the *Bridge to Excellence* Planning Team, interim Chief Executive Officer, and Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners carefully reviewed the following:

- ⌚ Student achievement and other pertinent data.
- ⌚ Recommendations of external and internal stakeholders.
- ⌚ Corrective actions required of the BCPSS by the Maryland State Board of Education.
- ⌚ Findings of the March 2006 Review Team assembled by the Maryland State Department of Education to review the 2005 *BCPSS Master Plan Update*.

BCPSS senior staff and representatives of the School Board presented and discussed the identified priorities and related information with the House Appropriations Committee of the General Assembly, the Baltimore City Delegation to the General Assembly, the full Baltimore City Council at a FY 2007 budget hearing, the Education Committee of the Baltimore City Council, the BCPSS Parent and Community Advisory Board, and participants attending Facilities Solutions area and citywide meetings of the Phase I, Facilities Solutions meetings. During the development of the FY07 budget, numerous meetings were held across Baltimore City to ensure that the community had input in the development of the budget and the strategies for the Master Plan. Regular meetings have been held with the Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB) to explain various programs that were being developed or implemented. The latest discussion took place with PCAB at its regularly scheduled meeting held on September 25, 2006. At that meeting, staff members reviewed with PCAB Board Members the many elements included in *Master Plan 2006-2008*, including the ESEA and BTE goals, as well as the strategies that address the State-mandated corrective actions and the EMCIR, and reflected the many programs already discussed during the budget hearings or at subsequent meetings with PCAB during school year 2005-2006.

The BCPSS *Master Plan 2006-2008* will be discussed further with staff in all schools throughout the school year. In addition, community forums will be held so that the Board of School Commissioners and the interim Chief Executive Officer can obtain continuous feedback from the community regarding student needs, and to engage the community in a singular dedication to ongoing student achievement. The input from these various meetings will be used to inform and potentially modify the implementation of the current master plan, as well as influence the direction and support of priorities in subsequent updates of the school system's master plan.

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BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008

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Regular content area and grade-level teacher meetings, workshops, school improvement teams, various parent and community groups, national and State reports will all be used to provide additional clarification and/or focus for *Master Plan 2006-2008*. The master plan will be written with the expectation that it will be updated annually and will continuously evolve to reflect the needs of students, staff, families, and constituents, as well as emerging state and federal requirements and best practices in education. Extensive analyses of data are part of the ongoing evaluation and recommendations for needed changes to the BCPSS *Master Plan 2006-2008*.

An abbreviated summary of the BCPSS *Master Plan 2006-2008* will be sent to community leaders as well as a flyer that can be used for easy distribution. In the future, this summary will be included in the *Information Guide for Parents and Students*. A CD that provides a PowerPoint review of *Master Plan 2006-2008* will be provided to every school so that everyone in each school community (staff and parents) can continuously focus on the school system's master plan, obtain a copy of the plan, review it, seek clarification, and provide feedback. Ongoing reports to the Board of School Commissioners and the interim Chief Executive Officer will be provided. Furthermore, *Master Plan 2006-2008* will be posted on the BCPSS website, and stakeholders will be invited to provide comments and suggestions.

Overall Progress Toward Establishing and Maintaining a Safe Learning Environment

1. Describe the progress that the school system has made toward establishing and maintaining a safe learning environment. The BCPSS has reduced the number of schools required to develop corrective action plans to address

violent behavior from 17 to 6. The practices, programs, and strategies identified in Item #2 as well as administrative changes contributed to the school system's progress in this area. Fifteen (15) schools will be classified as watch list, probationary, or persistently dangerous for the 2006-2007 school year as compared to 24 schools classified under one of the aforementioned categories during the 2005-2006 school year. Although five schools will be classified as persistently dangerous for the 2006-2007 school year, suspensions for violent offenses are down at Thurgood Marshall Middle by 67 percent and down by 36 percent at Calverton Middle School. The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program has been introduced in 30 schools. Nineteen (19) of those 30 schools (Phase I) participated in their initial PBIS professional development during summer 2005. Eleven (11) additional schools (Phase II) participated in an introductory professional development activity during January 2006. At the end of the 2005-2006 school year, an evaluation of the implementation of the Phase I schools, using the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET), was conducted by the Sheppard Pratt Health Systems, Inc. A score of 80 on the Schoolwide Evaluation Tool is considered high implementation. The mean SET score for the Phase I schools increased by 52 percentage points from a 30 percent baseline score to a score of 82 percent. Seven of the 19 schools scored 90 percent or higher, and five schools scored between 80 percent and 89 percent. A system support model involving a PBIS coordinator and three full-time PBIS coaches has provided schools needed support in effectively implementing PBIS. Full implementation of PBIS is a three-to-five-year process. The BCPSS looks forward to a reduction in office referrals and suspensions as a result of PBIS participation. Participation in the systemwide climate survey increased, providing schools, area offices, central administration, and community stakeholders a better understanding of issues concerning safety

2. Describe where challenges in establishing and maintaining a safe learning environment are evident. While two schools experienced a reduction in violent suspensions great enough to remove them from the persistently dangerous schools list, and nine schools were removed from the probationary schools list, suspensions in two schools increased, adding them to the list of persistently dangerous schools for the 2006-2007 school year. These schools have revised their corrective action plans to address the violent suspensions that led to their classification. A number of schools, particularly middle schools, have expressed an interest in implementing PBIS. It is imperative that the BCPSS establish PBIS firmly in those schools that are currently implementing the program in collaboration with the Maryland State Department of Education and the Statewide PBIS Leadership Team. Doing so will assure fidelity and integrity in the implementation of PBIS in the participating schools before expanding to additional schools. Therefore, the expansion of PBIS will be limited to the degree of central office supports that can be provided those schools desiring to implement the program. Meanwhile, the PBIS staff will assist schools in implementing some PBIS-like strategies and in preparing those schools for future implementation. An additional challenge encountered in establishing and maintaining a safe environment is in developing strategies and partnerships to deal with the issues of violence within the communities from which many BCPSS students come. Students report through the Maryland Adolescent Survey (MAS) that they feel unsafe traveling to school and returning home from school. The MAS is given every other year to a random sampling of students in grades six, eight, ten, and twelve. The resulting behavior is that students may stay home from school or occasionally bring weapons, particularly knives, to protect themselves. Bringing weapons to schools creates unsafe situations. Schools immediately deal with this issue as prescribed through the Student Discipline Code.

3. Describe the resources allocated to ensure continued progress as well as those resources allocated to address challenges.

Resources allocated to ensure continued progress come from the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Grant as well as local funds, providing schools staff (hall monitors, Student Support Deans, etc.) and in implementing programs like PBIS. Schools classified as persistently dangerous and probationary receive priority participation in programs and activities that address violent student behaviors. Students exhibiting chronic, escalating violent behaviors will receive services through a case management model within the framework of the Student Support Team. The primary sources of funding to address the challenges of school climate come from the Safe and Drug-Free Schools budget and local funds allocated to support PBIS. The Safe and Drug-Free Schools budget at \$940,532 is used to provide drug abuse and violence prevention education programs for all students, to organize and sponsor related activities systemwide, to conduct professional development activities for staff, and to target schools and students with the greatest needs. The PBIS budget of \$500,000 supports the implementation of PBIS in 30 schools.

APPENDIX II:
More At Four attendance report

**MORE AT FOUR MONTHLY
ATTENDANCE REPORT**

General Information

Attendance Report Printed On:

Service Period:

Number of Allocated Slots
Number of Children Attended:

Attended at least 5 days
Number of TANF Attended:

Attended at least 5 days
Class Reimbursement per Slot:

Site Information

Facility/Site Name:

Classroom:

Teacher Names:

Site Director Name**:

Signature of Site Director:

Date:

Contract Information

More at Four Contract:
Contract Administrator Name:
Contract Number:
Site Operational Days

Signature of Contractor:

Date:

First Name	MI	Last Name	DOB	Exit Date	TANF Elig.	Days Attended this Report Period											
						01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	
M A F K i d s																	
Number in Attendance Daily																	

Shaded calendar days indicate when the site was not operational. A dash (-) indicates that the child was not enrolled on that calendar day. An asterisk (*) next to a "Y" indicates that the child was not enrolled on that calendar day, but has been marked as having attended that day. An Asterisk (*) next to First Name indicates a date for either a Health Assessment and/or a Developmental Screening has not been indicated for this child.

*In order to be counted toward TANF MOE, a child must meet certain criteria including 1) be a US Citizen, 2) be a North Carolina resident, 3) be eligible for free lunch or eligible for reduced priced lunch, 4) the Primary caregiver must be employed and 5) the child must live with an adult blood relative or with a non-relative who has legal custody or guardianship. Note that TANF MOE criteria are different than *More at Four* eligibility criteria.

**** Site Director signature certifies each child's attendance and that the classroom is in compliance with the More at Four Pre-Kindergarten requirements.**

More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program

Monthly Attendance Report (M@4-7 Rev 7/07) Instructions

MAFKIDS automatically generates the Monthly Attendance Report after monthly data is entered into the system. The **Contract Information** relates to the agency that has entered into a contract with the NCSBE *More at Four* Program. The **Site Information** relates to the actual classroom site/subcontractor. Below is a list fields that should be verified and/or completed.

General Information	
Attendance Report Printed on	Verify
Service Period	Verify
Number of Allocated Slots	Verify
Number of Children Attended	Verify
Number of Children Attended at least 5 days	Verify
Number of TANF Attended	Verify
Number of TANF Attended at least 5 days	Verify
Class Payment per Slot	Verify. The amount should reflect only More at Four funds paid to the Subcontractor.
Site Information (Subcontractor or classroom facility)	
Facility/Site Name	Verify
Classroom	Verify
Teacher Names	Verify teacher and assistant, if applicable
Site Director Name	Verify
Signature of Site Director and Date	Secure authorized official signature and date
Contract Information (Lead Agency for the County)	
<i>More at Four</i> Contract	Verify
Contract Administrator Name	Verify
Contract Number	Enter Contract ID number found on the contract with the State.
Site Operational Days	Verify
Signature of Contractor and Date	Secure authorized official signature and date.
Submission to the OSR State Office:	by the 10th working day of each month following the month of service submit :
US Mail Service Address: <i>More at Four</i> Pre-Kindergarten Program NC Office of School Readiness 2075 Mail Service Center Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2075	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an original, signed, completed Request for Payment Form (M@4-1 Rev 7/07) • an original, signed, completed Summary of Attendance Report Form (M@4-6 Rev 7/05) generated by MAFKIDS and manually completed by Contractor • a signed, completed Monthly Attendance Report (M@4-7 Rev 7/07) form per classroom generated by MAFKIDS.
Overnight delivery address: <i>More at Four</i> Pre-Kindergarten Program NC Office of School Readiness 1110 Navaho Drive Suite 301 Raleigh, NC 27609	

