

Executive Summary

What do we want for all children?

As a public educational system, our vision is to produce graduates who have the content knowledge, skills, and attitudes to reach their full potential as responsible, productive citizens. The Baltimore County Public Schools believes that all students can and will learn and achieve when the necessary conditions for that learning are provided: a rigorous curriculum, highly qualified teachers, and proven strategies for learning. While student success ultimately depends on the individual, it is the relationship between and among teacher, child, and parent that will provide the supportive environment necessary for high achievement. The continuing commitment of the school system in support of this relationship will have a significant effect on ensuring that all students succeed at high levels.

The *Blueprint for Progress*, which is aligned with the *Bridge to Excellence* and serves as the framework for the Baltimore County Public Schools Master Plan, sets forth a number of performance goals and specific performance indicators for each goal. These goals and indicators are the concrete, measurable statements of the expectations we have for all students in the Baltimore County Public Schools. Taken as a whole, these goals, which include the five ESEA goals, and performance indicators are an overview of the standards that will be used to measure student achievement and define school system accountability for that achievement. Rather than focus on specific achievement gaps in the strategies, the *Blueprint for Progress* establishes that the school system is accountable for meeting these high standards for *all* students. Taken literally, “all means all,” and achievement gaps among student subgroups will cease to exist when all students are meeting the established standards.

As an educational system, what do we want for all of our children? We want all students to reach high academic standards, to meet the state and local proficiency levels established for reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, and to graduate from high school well prepared for further education, a meaningful career, and a productive life. We want all students to be taught by highly qualified teachers and to be educated in school environments that are safe and conducive to learning. Above all, we want every student to receive a quality education. To reach these challenging goals, we commit to engaging stakeholders in the educational and decision-making processes and to using our resources effectively and efficiently in the delivery of services that support our core business: teaching and learning.

The Master Plan is the vehicle for BCPS to focus its efforts and continue to assure equity and adequacy of resources by linking resources to student needs. The results will be accelerated student achievement, the elimination of all student performance gaps, and graduates who meet high standards and have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to reach their potential in our multicultural society and global economy.

What do we need to do to achieve our vision and meet the stated goals and performance indicators for all children?

After examining and analyzing student achievement data, the results show that BCPS has achieved significant gains for all groups of students in assessed areas. Yet, consistent with state and national trends, achievement gaps remain among groups of students. These performance

disparities continue to be critical to the success of school reform efforts. In Maryland, *The Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act* requires that local school systems develop a five-year comprehensive master plan that includes goals and strategies to promote academic excellence among all students and to eliminate performance gaps that persist based on students' race, ethnicity, socio-economic circumstances, disability, and native language. The BCPS *Blueprint for Progress*, which grew out of the National Education Goals document, identifies the goals, indicators, and strategies that provided the framework for the Master Plan and established the standards by which we will measure results. Because the original *Blueprint for Progress* was introduced in 2000, the school system began developing and implementing strategies and activities several years ago. For this reason, a number of activities in the Master Plan, even in the initial year 2003-2004, are continuations of ongoing initiatives. All of the specific strategies in the Master Plan are focused on the following core areas:

- preK-12 curriculum development;
- high quality professional development for teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and other staff;
- research-based, differentiated instructional methodology; and
- parent and community involvement.

The Master Plan includes many different strategies, initiatives, and actions for each performance goal. Regardless of the specific outcome, the strategies, initiatives, and actions address accelerated student achievement and the elimination of performance gaps. All specific actions must be replicated throughout the school system in a consistent and systematic manner in order to meet the learning needs of all students. These processes involve careful data collection and analysis; the use of appropriate intervention strategies to improve performance of identified students; and the monitoring of results in light of established standards.

The BCPS Master Plan identifies a variety of significant initiatives focused on teaching and learning that will be implemented throughout the five-year period. Major new initiatives in the five-year Master Plan include the following:

Goal I:

- Use of the **data warehouse** to access all state and local assessment data at the system, school, classroom, and individual student level in order to improve student achievement
- Development and implementation of a systemic intervention **plan to support schools** at risk of not achieving Adequate Yearly Progress, including a cabinet level review of schools failing to make AYP for two consecutive years
- Implementation of a plan to provide access to comprehensive **prekindergarten** programs for all eligible students as defined by *Bridge to Excellence*
- Implementation of a five-year plan to expand current half-day kindergarten programs into **full-day kindergarten** at all BCPS elementary schools, including inclusion opportunities for students with disabilities
- **Reduction of the student-teacher ratios** for kindergarten to grade 2
- Implementation of the **Super Stem Academy** at identified elementary schools in partnership with UMBC and NSF
- **Review and assessment of K-12 science curriculum** in preparation for the MSA science assessment to improve performance on the High School Assessment; development of a five-year plan for science curriculum and professional development

- **Departmentalization of the teaching of mathematics and science in all elementary schools** with support for elementary and middle school teachers in mathematics and science content, virtual manipulatives, and new technologies; and cohort graduate classes for teachers of mathematics and science to increase student success on **MSA and HSA**
- Professional development in classroom accommodations to increase student achievement in the **Least Restrictive Environment, alternative assessments, and skill documentation for special education students participating in IMAP**
- Expanded **access to adaptive technology and computer-assisted appropriate assistance** and other support systems to improve student achievement and increase mastery on all functional tests
- Implementation and expansion of **AVID** (Advancement Via Individual Determination) to ensure student access to and participation in rigorous courses
- Use of **AP Potential** data and software to identify and counsel more students in Advance Placement courses and other rigorous programs; continued use of TEST U software for student self-examination
- Continuation of **partnership with College Board** to provide student workshops and conferences for PSAT, SAT, and AP, professional development for middle and high school teachers in vertical teaming and higher level thinking strategies, parent outreach, and curriculum development support
- **Implementation of College Ed**, a 12 week College Board program for all seventh grade students and their families to assist them in making informed post-secondary decisions
- Recruitment of teachers to teach **AP courses** and to participate as scorers of AP exams
- **Expansion of AP course offerings** in all high schools, including AP JAVA; and exploration for possible expansion of International Baccalaureate (IB) program
- Development and implementation of an **extended-year program for middle school students to increase mathematics achievement** including a summer course, “Preparing for Algebra,” for incoming ninth graders
- Implementation of **extended day, Saturday, and tutoring support** for identified students based on level of funding support
- **Enhanced programs in the fine arts**, including the development of career complete programs
- Development of **summer reading** lists which reflect diverse populations and learning styles
- Implementation of the **Black Saga program** in elementary schools to increase student and parent awareness of African American history; exploration of other **multicultural** awareness programs
- Development and implementation of a **reading intervention program** at the middle and high school levels
- Implementation of the **CATALYST Gifted and Talented Education** resource teacher project in Title I elementary schools
- Implementation of **gifted education talent development summer programs** for students in underserved populations
- Implementation of **Project ATTEND** as an inter-agency team approach including the Baltimore County Police Department, Department of Juvenile Services, Department of Aging, and Department of Social Services

GOAL 2

- Expansion of **full-time ESOL teachers** working with students, and increased recruitment and training of interpreters and translators
- Implementation of system protocols for providing **translation and interpretation services** for ESOL families; increased publication of key school system documents in primary languages of students; bilingual lending libraries in Resource Centers
- Expansion of **services for newcomer ESOL families** at intake conferences and bilingual information sessions including information about college, careers, and community resources
- Development and implementation of additional **ESOL curriculum** including high school reading and the identification of bilingual reading materials for school libraries
- Collaboration with higher education to provide **ESOL pre-service teacher training** and ongoing **professional development** and to expand course offerings for ESOL adults
- Professional development on **second language acquisition, cross-cultural and differentiation strategies**

GOAL 3

- Use of the data warehouse to analyze **teacher quality** in all schools and develop action plans and automated tracking systems to ensure equity in the assignment of high quality staff to schools and to assist teachers and paraprofessionals in achieving certification standards
- Establishment of **Resident Teaching Programs** in critical needs subjects and other partnerships with higher education, employee organizations, and business and industry to increase opportunities for teachers and paraprofessionals to meet highly qualified standards
- Incentives to attract and retain **experienced high quality teachers** in targeted schools and critical needs subjects
- **Reading/language arts and mathematics academies** with ongoing follow-up at the school level for new teachers
- Additional professional development for administrators, including **Leadership Enhancement** with emphasis on differentiation
- On-line advertisement with weekly updates of all teacher vacancies with an **electronic application process**
- A systemic process for the delivery of **Professional Development Schools** that meet academic and clinical preparation of interns and continuous development of faculties

GOAL 4

- Expanded outreach to students, parents, and community in supporting **a safe and orderly learning environment** through the implementation of the *Student Behavior Handbook* and school code of conduct
- Additional professional development for new and continuing teachers and support staff, including paraprofessionals and bus drivers, on **positive discipline interventions**, classroom management and student engagement

- Development and implementation of a systemwide **marketing, communications, and public relations plan** to strengthen two-way communication, provide opportunities for stakeholders to express satisfaction, and build advocacy for the school system

GOAL 5

- Use of the data warehouse to enable teachers and administrators to access **timely student performance and participation data** including attendance, suspensions, course selections, grades, standardized test scores, and retentions in order to develop appropriate intervention strategies
- **Elimination of lower level courses** at the high school level; allocation of staffing based on the number of students participating in academic enrichment and acceleration programs
- Professional development for teachers to assist them in providing classroom accommodation for students with **504 plans** to increase student success on the MSA
- Pilot **student resource centers** at high schools with dropout rates greater than 3%

GOAL 6

- Continued collaboration with parents, business, community groups, and governmental departments to increase understanding, awareness, and engagement and expand **stakeholder participation in decision-making** and the educational process
- Professional development for administrators and new and current teachers in conducting **effective parent-teacher-student conferences**
- A directory for schools listing **community organizations** with an interest in supporting schools and student achievement
- Enhanced opportunities for parents/guardians and community to attend and participate in school events and programs, including a **coordinated area schedule for Back-to-School Night**

GOAL 7

- Presentation of an annual **system Results Report** focusing on student achievement results, stakeholder engagement, and benchmarks in Business Services
- Use of the data warehouse to provide schools with site-specific data for analysis by School Improvement Teams and inclusion in **school results report** and School Improvement Plans
- Expansion of **stakeholder representation** and input into the School Improvement Plan

GOAL 8

- Establishment of **performance indicators** for all departments of the **Division of Business Services**
- Research and collaboration with other school systems and private sector industries to establish and use **best practices in key service areas**
- Completion of **High School Facility Use Study**
- Publication of an annual five-year **capital improvement program (CIP) that aligns capital budget and instructional programmatic initiatives**

- Use of the **data warehouse** to access and analyze disaggregated data for tracking and reporting purposes, for the assignment of staff to schools, and for the development of financial documents
- Expansion of **web-based processes** for purchasing, payroll, benefits enrollment, and client service
- Planning, designing, and building of **new schools** to meet the increasing student population needs
- Development of **comprehensive maintenance plans** for grounds, housekeeping services, mechanical and critical equipment
- Implementation of **Advanced Technology Integration Institutes** for K-12 teachers to improve instruction and meet needs of diverse learners
- Development and implementation of an **on-line assessment tool** to determine and monitor teacher technology competencies based on Maryland Teacher Technology standards; collaboration with higher education to offer graduate-level cohort programs in instructional technology
- Development of web-based delivery systems for professional development and increased **teacher access to electronic information to integrate technology in daily instruction**
- Development and implementation of a new three-year **Framework for Technology Implementation** including an ongoing budgetary process for maintaining the current 5:1 student computer ratio and for improving the ratio of computers for teachers and other school-based individuals

While some of the strategies reflect new initiatives, others involve ongoing activities. Common to both new initiatives and ongoing efforts are the following elements:

- partnerships with higher education, business, arts, professional, and community organizations;
- greater, more integrated use of technology;
- differentiated instruction and attention to learning preferences and learning styles to meet specific student learning needs;
- increased communication with parents/guardians and the community; and
- high quality professional development specifically targeted to address the assessed needs of the system.

How will we know that we have achieved our goals?

For the Baltimore County Public Schools, and for schools across the state and the nation, the goals have been laid out for us in *No Child Left Behind* and the *Bridge to Excellence*.

Measurement is critical to the effective implementation of a Master Plan, and The Baltimore County Public Schools Master Plan identifies a number of specific measurements for each goal and performance indicator. Some of the measures are external; others are internally developed. All of the measurements are data-driven and results-focused. What follows is a summary of the measurements identified in the BCPS Master Plan:

External Measures: Student performance on the Maryland School Assessment and High School Assessments; Advanced Placement (AP) performance and participation data; PSAT and SAT performance and participation data; IMAP and Certificates of Attendance; graduation rates;

dropout rates; University of Maryland entrance requirements; Career and Technology Education Standards; MSDE Standards for School Library Media Programs

Internal Measures: School emergency plans, benchmark assessment results; final examinations; school results reports; suspension and expulsion rates, office referrals, and other measures of student conduct; student enrollment in specific programs; stakeholder satisfaction surveys, parent-teacher conferences; volunteer statistics; community meetings; student-computer ratios

How were stakeholders involved in the development of the BCPS Master Plan?

Stakeholder involvement in the development and review of the BCPS Master Plan was extensive and involved several “layers” of engagement with the process. Because the BCPS Master Plan is based on the framework provided by the *Blueprint for Progress*, any review of stakeholder involvement must include the significant level of community, parents, and staff involvement that was an integral part of the development of the revised *Blueprint for Progress*. The revision of the *Blueprint for Progress* took place from October 2002 to December 2002 and represented a key initial step in the development of the BCPS Master Plan.

Approximately 60 individuals were involved in the crafting and review of the revised *Blueprint for Progress* and included parents, community members, administrators, teachers, central office staff, and other employee groups. Following the presentation of the document to the Board of Education at a public meeting, the members of the Board of Education thoroughly reviewed and received public comment from parents, community, and staff. The revised *Blueprint for Progress* was adopted by the Board of Education on January 14, 2003.

Following the adoption of the *Blueprint for Progress*, the school system began the formal process of convening a Master Plan Oversight Committee and establishing multiple work groups for the development of the Master Plan. Invited to participate on the Master Plan Oversight Committee were representatives from parents and community, higher education, business, county government departments, and Baltimore County Public Schools staff. **The charge to the Master Plan Oversight Committee was to advise the Superintendent throughout the development of the Master Plan.** In addition, 22 work groups were established. Each of these work groups involved from 8 to 30 people and included representatives from stakeholder groups. (The specific members of the Master Plan Oversight Committee and the individual work groups are included immediately following the Executive Summary.)

Under the leadership of the Executive Directors, the various work groups met and were instrumental in developing the first draft of the Master Plan. All input from the work groups was considered in the plan development process. Many suggestions for information or actions were directly incorporated in the Master Plan. In other cases, items may not have been specifically included but were incorporated under a broader activity statement. In other instances, following a thorough discussion of the suggestion, the decision was made not to include it in the final draft of the Master Plan. This decision may have reflected policy, capacity, or funding issues; redundancy relative to other existing programs or initiatives; or a lack of research-based support for its inclusion.

The Master Plan Oversight Committee met four times (March 26, April 10, May 7, and May 28) to review progress on the development of the plan, to give feedback to the various work groups,

and to make suggestions for revisions. The BCPS Master Plan was presented to the Board of Education on June 10. On June 17, the Board of Education held a work session on the proposed Master Plan and conducted a public hearing on June 26 to allow for comments and feedback from all stakeholders. At the Board of Education meeting on July 8th, the Board approved the Master Plan. Following this approval, the Master Plan will be shared with the County Executive for feedback and comment.

As required by *The Bridge to Excellence in Public School Act*, the BCPS Master Plan will be managed by the Superintendent and Executive Staff and reviewed annually to monitor its effectiveness and to make necessary mid-course adjustments. **This review process will be coordinated with the system's Annual *Results Report* to the Board of Education. A management plan for the Master Plan will be developed in 2003-2004 including strategies, timelines, and persons responsible, as well as a process for actively involving stakeholders.**