

I.A Executive Summary

Introduction

The Harford County Public School (HCPS) System is dedicated to providing a quality instructional program to all students. The school system's mission is to foster a quality educational system that challenges students to develop knowledge and skills, and to inspire them to become life-long learners and good citizens. Four strategic system goals, aligned to the five goals and the corresponding performance indicators of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, support the mission and led to the development of strategies and programs identified in the original five-year Bridge to Excellence Master Plan, 2003-2008.

HCPS Master Plan Goals:

- Ensure a safe, positive learning environment for students and staff in our schools.
- Accelerate student learning and eliminate the achievement gaps.
- Ensure the effective use of all resources focusing on the areas of technology, fiscal and budgetary management, and community partnerships.
- Understanding that all employees contribute to the learning environment, we will maintain a highly qualified workforce.

It should be noted that it became apparent early in 2005 that the original HCPS five-year Master Plan was not the plan that would most benefit the system's strategic needs in this era of intense school improvement and system improvement initiatives. The primary benefit of the Master Plan to HCPS has been that it has demonstrated a longitudinal planning process, and it prompted the school system to want to improve upon a master plan process that was not meeting HCPS' strategic needs. With this in mind, the Board of Education decided to draft a five year strategic plan for the school system. Much of the work toward establishing the annual benchmarks for the HCPS Strategic Plan occurred during 2005-2007, and the plan became a living document in 2008. However last school year, 2008-2009, Harford County Public Schools was in a transition period with the sudden loss of our superintendent, Dr. Jackie Haas, and the subsequent search and acquisition of our current superintendent, Dr. Robert Tomback. Due to the loss of Dr. Haas, spring 2009 plans to revisit and refine the Strategic Plan were put on hold. Therefore, the 2009 HCPS Annual Review for the BTE Master Plan continues to address identified progress and challenges in regard to the above goals of the original master plan. It is prudent to state that guided by the leadership of Dr. Tomback and the oversight of the Board of Education, Harford County Public Schools' Strategic Plan will be revisited and refined in 2009-2010.

The following sections of the HCPS Executive Summary for the Bridge to Excellence Master Plan highlight the review of the current fiscal climate and demographic changes of the system, as well as a summary of the identified successes and challenges in our efforts to achieve the Master Plan goals.

Budget Narrative

Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) is a fiscally dependent school system with an actual enrollment of 38,610 students in FY 2009 and a projected enrollment of 38,351 in FY 2010. Enrollment has declined slightly since the 2004 high of 40,294 students. The student body will be served by a projected 5,355 FTE faculty and staff positions for FY 2010. Currently HCPS has 53 schools including 10 high schools,

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9 middle schools, 32 elementary schools, an alternative education center, and a special needs school. The economic downturn in the past year has resulted in challenging fiscal times at the national, state and local levels of government. In FY 2009, Harford County Government requested that Harford County Public Schools reduce spending \$3.9 million from the \$210.9 in approved local funding. In cooperation with the County Government, HCPS developed a \$3.9 million spending reduction plan for FY 2009. This was accomplished by imposing a hiring freeze, reducing expenditures for travel, conferences, professional development, equipment, supplies and savings from lower than expected fuel prices.

The FY 2010 Current Expense Fund budget reflects a 1.3% increase from FY 2009. Additional federal funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has provided additional support for FY 2010 at a time when state funding decreased 3% and local funding remained flat. Stringent cost savings measures imposed in FY 2009 will allow HCPS to use \$4.6 million in fund balance as a resource for the FY 2010 Operating Budget.

Due to the tight economic forecast for FY 2010, development of the Unrestricted Operating Budget required innovative thinking in order to cover an additional \$9.0 million increase related to health insurance, retirement, utilities and other fixed costs. In response to this challenge, all areas of the budget were examined with an emphasis on preserving critical programs related to student achievement, creating greater efficiencies in all operating areas, and making difficult decisions on cost reductions that would least impact students. Reductions totaling over \$10.8 million were made across all areas of the budget to balance the FY 2010 Unrestricted Operating Budget. The FY 2010 Unrestricted Budget decreased \$1.8 million from FY 2009.

Although the Board and staff worked hard to preserve jobs and limit the impact of the current fiscal situation on student achievement, all of our schools, students and employees will feel the financial constraints faced by Harford County Public Schools in FY 2010. The FY 2010 budget does not include step or other wage adjustments. Existing funds have been reallocated to cover new expenses throughout the school system. Elementary positions have been reassigned to secondary and existing secondary positions have been redistributed to address the needs of the twelfth grade at Patterson Mill High School and the International Baccalaureate Program at Edgewood High School. In addition, other administrative, instructional and custodial positions have been reassigned based on system priorities. A portion of After School Intervention funding will cover the cost of implementing a High School Bridge Plan for High School Assessment remediation. Funding has been reduced for curriculum and staff development, along with funding for travel and conference expenditures. In FY 2010, \$1 million dollar increase in non-public placement expenditures will be covered by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, IDEA Funds (Restricted Funds).

Throughout the budget development process, the Board and staff have attempted to balance the ambitious vision of Harford County Public Schools with real financial constraints. While this balance is not easy, the Board of Education has developed a budget that will empower Harford County Public Schools to effectively and efficiently strive to carry out the educational mission to provide high quality educational services for all students every day.

Review of 2008-2009 Goal Progress: Identified Successes and Challenges

- Maryland School Assessments/High School Assessments

HCPS Successes:

1. No elementary school is currently in school improvement, although four schools have been identified for Local Attention.
2. Following the implementation and monitoring efforts of school improvement initiatives, the HCPS middle school that had failed to meet AYP the previous six years achieved all standards in 2009 and met AYP.
3. At least 90 percent of students at all three tested grade levels in 11 elementary schools scored Proficient or better in both reading and math. At least 90% of students scored Proficient or better in reading OR math in 12 additional elementary schools.
4. In the elementary and middle schools, the percent of special education students proficient in reading and mathematics increased as compared to 2008.
5. In the elementary and middle grades, the percent of students scoring at the Advanced level increased in both mathematics and reading in grades 3, 4, and 7. In those same grades, the percent of students who failed to meet the proficiency standards in mathematics declined at every grade level, and the percent failing to meet the proficiency standard in reading declined in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8. Overall, nearly nine out of every 10 elementary school students and three out of every four middle school students tested in mathematics scores at the Proficient or Advanced levels.
6. All students enrolled in the 12th grade during the 2008-09 school year met HSA requirements. Harford County Public Schools had 97% of the senior population meet the High School Assessment target by either passing all four tests or achieving the combined 1602 option. Only 2% of the seniors met the requirement through the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation and less than 1% received a waiver. Likewise, no students in Harford County Public Schools failed to graduate solely because of not meeting the High School Assessment requirement. Administrators, teachers, and students worked extremely hard to ensure student success.
7. In five high schools, more than 90% of eligible students received a high school diploma.
8. As of September 2009, of the 2,578 students eligible to graduate in 2010, 82.8% had taken and passed the English Test, 88.6% had taken and passed Biology, 94.8% had taken and passed Government, and 93.5% had taken and passed Algebra/Data Analysis. Overall, some 94.9% of last year's 11th graders and 90.7% of last year's 10th graders had met HSA requirements by year's end.
9. HSA English:
 - ◆ 86% of all high school students scored as proficient on the 2008 HSA. This was a significant increase from the 2007 percent proficient of 79%.
 - ◆ The percent proficient for 'All Students' has increased each year since 2006.
 - ◆ In all subgroups, except American Indian/Alaskan Native and LEP, gains were made in 2008 as compared to 2007.
 - ◆ Significant increases are noted in our African American, Hispanic, FARMS, and Special Education subgroups.
10. HSA Algebra:
 - ◆ About 93% of students scored as proficient on the 2008 administration of Algebra/Data Analysis.

- ◆ In all subgroups, except LEP, gains were made in 2008 as compared to 2007.
 - ◆ Significant increases occurred in the following subgroups:
 - American Indian/Alaskan native with a gain of 5.1%
 - Asian/Pacific Islander with a gain of 9.1%
 - African American with a gain of 19%
 - White with a gain of 9%
 - Hispanic with a gain of 16.7%
 - FARMS with a gain of 15.3%, and
 - Special Education with a gain of 19.1%
11. HCPS students continued to score above the state and the national averages on the Critical Reading and Mathematics sections of the SAT.
- ◆ The Harford County Critical Reading SAT average score increased by 2 points in 2009 to exceed the state average by 7 points and the national average by 6 points.
 - ◆ The Harford County Math SAT average score remained at 521 in 2009, exceeding the state average by 19 points and the national average by 6 points. Over the past five years, the Harford County average Math SAT score is unchanged compared to a 13-point decline for the state and 5 point drop nationally.
 - ◆ Overall there was little change in SAT participation and performance in 2009 although there was a 13% drop in SAT-takers. Still, more than half of all graduates took the SAT in 2009. The number of African American students taking the SAT dropped by 15% whereas the number of Asians increased by 28% in 2009. African Americans in Harford County outscored their peers in the state by an average of 15 points in Critical Reading and 20 points in Mathematics.

HCPS Challenges:

1. The school system is challenged to improve the performance of students with disabilities. In 2009, students with disabilities failed to meet AYP in mathematics (elementary level) and in reading (high school level).
2. Seven secondary schools have been identified for School Improvement, and four elementary and one middle school have been identified for Local Attention. Five of these schools, including a high school, a middle school, and three elementary schools are contained within the Edgewood Learning Community. In addition, three of the four elementary schools are Title I schools.
3. Two schools are currently in Restructuring Implementation, and require intensive assistance.
4. Compared to their performance in 2008, seven of the 12 schools failing to meet AYP requirements in 2009 had previously met those requirements. The school system is challenged to work with these schools to improve their performance in 2010.
5. Although the performance of special education students improved in 2009 in the elementary and middle schools, the rate at which special education students are demonstrating proficiency continues to lag considerably behind their non-special education peers. Moreover, that “standards gap” continues to increase from elementary school, where it ranges from 15 to 20 points, to high school, where it is more than 30 points. The school system is challenged to track the progress of students as they move from elementary to high school and provide the necessary academic intervention and support to assure they do not fall behind.

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6. Upon entry into the 12th grade in September 2009, about one third of special education students have yet to pass HSA assessments for Biology and Algebra/Data Analysis, and about one in five still has to pass Government. Some 56% must still pass English 10.
 7. Reduce the “standards gap” in performance for all students, particularly Special Education and African American students.
 8. Increase the high school graduation rate, with special attention to Special Education students.
 9. Decrease the number of students who drop out of high school, particularly African American students, whose dropout rate improved in 2009 compared to previous years but who still exceed students as a whole in their rate of dropping out of school.
 10. Increase the overall attendance rate at the high school level which continues to be below the state target, especially for the African American, Special Education, and FARMS subgroups.
- Limited English Proficient Students

HCPS Successes:

1. The percent of LEP students at the elementary and middle levels who scored as proficient or better in both reading and mathematics in 2009 increased as compared to 2008.
2. The LEP population met both the AMAO I and AMAO II targets in 2009.
3. Based on AMAO 1 results for English Language Learners, 91.5% are progressing satisfactorily.
4. The LEP subgroup met the AYP targets in 2009 at all levels.

HCPS Challenges:

1. The LEP population continues to perform significantly below the county proficiency rate for all students on the reading and mathematics MSA, particularly in the middle school level.
2. The HCPS ESOL staff is continually attentive to promoting more instructional time for identified English language learners. The ratio of ESOL teachers working with LEP students continues to be one of the highest statewide (1 teacher: 40-45 students). The 8 itinerant staff is each assigned to anywhere from 3-7 schools. Acquiring funding for certified staff to decrease the ESOL teacher/LEP ratio remains a challenge.

- Adequate Yearly Progress

HCPS Successes:

1. HCPS is not a school system in improvement, nor has it ever been identified as a system in improvement.
2. No elementary school was designated as in ‘school improvement’ in 2009.
3. At the district level, all subgroups met the AYP targets at all levels in both reading and mathematics except for the special education subgroup who did not make AYP in elementary mathematics nor in high school reading.
4. The special education subgroup at the middle school level made AYP in both reading and mathematics in 2009 after having not made AYP in either area for the previous two years.

HCPS Challenges:

1. Three Title I schools were identified for Local Attention because of their failure to meet AYP. Two of the schools failed to meet the standard for multiple subgroups.

2. Prevent four elementary schools and one middle school from moving from local attention into school improvement.
 3. Assisting two high schools classified as Schools in Improvement Year 2 and an alternative school currently identified for Restructuring Implementation with planning to improve high school graduation rates.
 4. Providing continuing support to a middle school currently in Restructuring Implementation that successfully met AYP requirements in 2009.
 5. Assist three middle schools currently classified as Schools in Improvement to improve school performance.
 6. Meeting the AYP targets for the special education subgroup is especially challenging.
- Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT)

HCPS Successes:

1. The percentage of core academic subject classes taught by highly qualified teachers in HCPS was 91.9% in 2009 – the highest percentage since 2003.
2. HCPS is slowing closing the gap between the percentages of HQ teachers teaching core academic subject classes in low poverty schools as compared to high poverty schools. The percent of HQ teachers teaching these classes in high poverty schools has increased each year since 2005-06.
3. Title I schools have 100% of core academic subject classes taught by HQ teachers.

HCPS Challenges:

1. Fewer core academic subject classes are taught by experienced HQ teachers in high poverty schools as compared to low poverty schools. In 2008-09, 60.9% of classes at the two identified high poverty elementary schools were taught by experienced HQ teachers as compared to 83.1% of the classes at the identified low poverty elementary schools. Additionally, 59.1% of classes at the one identified high poverty secondary school were taught by experienced HQ teachers as compared to 83.0% of the classes at the identified low poverty secondary schools. In turn, there is a higher percentage of inexperienced HQ teachers teaching at high poverty schools than at low poverty schools.
2. HCPS continues to address the challenge of ensuring, to the extent possible, that all classes are taught by highly qualified teachers.

- Safe Schools

HCPS Successes:

1. No HCPS school has been identified as persistently dangerous.
2. No elementary schools were identified as having suspension rates exceeding the MSDE 2008-2009 identified limit of 12%.
3. No HCPS school had a truancy rate that exceeded state standards.
4. Content on bullying and harassment was updated and incorporated into the middle school and 9th grade Health classes.
5. All HCPS staff received training and/or review regarding the topics of discrimination, harassment, bullying, and bias.
6. HCPS students received information related to harassment policies and expectations at back-to-school orientation meetings.

7. In June of 2009, the BOE adopted a revised bullying and harassment policy that conforms with the MSDE model policy.

HCPS Challenges:

1. Additional funding will be needed to create in-school alternative settings to ensure FAPE compliance for students with disabilities.
2. Competing staff development priorities make it difficult to limit the amount of training time for behavior interventions.
3. Funding streams will need to be created to support and expand program costs associated with PBIS and Safe and Drug Free Schools.

- Specific Student Groups

HCPS Successes:

- High School Programs/Career & Tech Ed

1. HCPS completed the third full year of the Comprehensive Secondary School Reform program at the high school level and has refined the program for year four in 2009-10.
2. Magnet programs in HCPS are expanding. The Science and Math Academy magnet program completed its fifth year of implementation with its first graduating class in 2008. The International Baccalaureate, Biomedical Sciences, and Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness programs are being implemented at designated high schools in 2009-2010, and the Agriculture and Natural Resource Program is approved and slated to open in the fall of 2010. Additionally, the Academy of Finance complete program is in its 11th year at a select high school.
3. Existing Career and Technology Education programs are being updated and/or new ones developed. Updated programs include Careers in Cosmetology, Automotive Technician, Graphic and Printing Communications, Finance and Accounting, Business Management, Administrative Service, Career Research and Development, and Food and Beverage Management (ProStart). New programs include Teacher Academy of Maryland and Marketing.

- Early Learning

1. The percentage of kindergarten students with previous pre-k experience who enter kindergarten 'fully ready' in the area of mathematical thinking has steadily increased each year since 2004-2005, reaching a high of 79% in 2008-09. The percentage of kindergarten students with previous pre-k experience who enter kindergarten 'fully ready' in the area of language and literacy reached 74% in 2008-09, also the highest in five years.
2. HCPS successfully completed the first year of implementation of the newly adopted math and reading curriculum in kindergarten.
3. The implementation of new reading and mathematics assessments at the kindergarten level is enabling the identification of children in need of specific services for intervention or enrichment.
4. Continued communication with local early childhood providers has assisted with school readiness data for stable and increasing data.

- Gifted and Talented

1. 81% of the elementary schools have implemented G&T Service Identification Committees and have established criteria to match students to services.
2. 95% of elementary schools use a collaborative teaching model to offer gifted and talented students consistent services.

HCPS Challenges:

- High School Programs/Career & Tech Ed
 1. Continue to strengthen programs in the alternative high school to address identified student needs and increase achievement.
 2. Providing access to CTE programs to more students across the county is an identified challenge.
- Early Learning
 1. Increasing numbers of children with diverse needs will entail an increase need for resources.
 2. As more children are identified for prekindergarten, a plan to increase classrooms should be addressed.
- Gifted and Talented/Advanced Placement
 1. While progress has been made, much work still remains in providing middle school gifted and talented students with consistent and rigorous services.
- Special Education
 1. Funding for intervention programs and special education needs continues to be a challenge.

- Cross-cutting Themes

HCPS Successes:

- Educational Technology
 1. Technology refresh program replaced 2542 computers.
 2. HCPS continues on-pace to place a mounted LCD projector in every classroom by the end of FY11 with the installation of 791.
 3. To increase student engagement, 294 interactive whiteboards and immediate feedback responders were implemented across 17 schools.
 4. Professional development targeted for technology integration was provided to compliment the interactive whiteboards.
 5. MSDE's Technology Literacy Assessment was given to all 7th grade students.
- Education That is Multicultural
 1. Over 300 students, comprised mostly of students from the at-risk and minority subgroups, participated in the 21st Century Community Centers program at five elementary schools.
 2. Approximately 700 students from at-risk populations (underachieving, lower socioeconomic, and minority males) were involved in the Boys il Men mentoring and afterschool program.
 3. A partnership was formed with a community organization to provide the Parent and Child Therapeutic Mentoring (PACT) Program. PACT will provide support through wrap around services, mentoring and therapy while addressing the needs of the parents in order to provide a more stable and flourishing environment for 40 identified high-risk students in four middle schools.
 4. ETM infusion goals, learning styles, multiple intelligences and differentiated instruction are included in all newly written or revised curriculums.
 5. A total of 252 new teachers completed the ETM course requirements in 2008-2009.
 6. Five technicians provided tutoring and other academic support to identified students at two elementary and one middle school.
 7. Five permanent substitutes provided coverage for teachers receiving staff development, meeting with parents, and IEP meetings.
 8. Parent outreach provided at the annual Title I Conference and *Forty Developmental Assets* was shared with parents.

9. Eighteen new administrators and instructional facilitators completed training in 2008-2009 on ETM Look Fors, ETM bylaws and protocols, Achievement Gaps, Sensitivity, and Discrimination/Harassment/Bullying.
10. A total of 155 new support staff (including bus drivers, food and nutrition workers, custodians, clerical and instructional employees) received training in cultural proficiency in 2008/2009.
11. A committee was established and a strategic plan developed to address the recommendations of the MSDE Task Force on the Achievement of African American Males.
12. Twenty-one teachers and administrators attended the state NAME (National Association for Multicultural Education) Conference focusing on strategies to eliminate the achievement gaps.
13. Ten students from each of the 18 secondary schools attended the Harford Equity Leadership Program (HELP) Conference. Students attended sessions on harassment/bullying, disabilities, gang awareness, language and goal setting and developed action plans for use in their individual schools.

HCPS Challenges:

➤ Educational Technology

1. Ubiquitous Access is restricted by limited computer lab access, amount of intervention programs consuming computer lab time, limited classroom space to setup additional workstations, limited budget, and limited support resources.
2. The current resources of two full time 10-month technology coordinators and 'after-hours' technology liaisons are not sufficient to successfully meet the goals of the Technology and Master plans.
3. Building curriculum that is strong with technology infused activities requires time and resources.
4. Access to teachers to allow for job embedded professional development remains a challenge.
5. Support (Hardware, training, etc.) to keep pace with the growing demand and implementation of technology .

➤ Education That is Multicultural

1. The hiring of new central office personnel has been frozen to meet budgetary constraints. Therefore, the fulltime position of Coordinator of Equity and Cultural Proficiency has been vacant since July 2008. Instead, the previous Supervisor of Equity and Cultural Diversity was hired part-time for the 2008/09 and start of the 2009/2010 school year. The lack of a full-time coordinator has negatively affected program implementation, support, and monitoring.
2. The fulltime Making Progress Program teacher specialist position was not filled for the 2008/09 school year. This cut appears to be permanent. The teacher specialist facilitated the Making Progress Program in two elementary schools and provided professional development and support to meet the needs of diverse students while eliminating the achievement gaps. This has made program oversight and evaluation very difficult.
3. Out-of-state conference attendance has been eliminated. The attendance at conferences such as the International National Association of Multicultural Education is vital to keep the Coordinator and ETM course instructors current on cultural proficiency initiatives and strategies. Also, those teaching the Dr. Ruby Payne *Framework for Understanding Poverty*

course must attend out of state training sessions to receive certification in presenting these materials.

- Local Goals and Indicators

HCPS Successes:

1. After a comprehensive process, the Harford County Board of Education has acquired a new superintendent for the school system.

HCPS Challenges:

1. HCPS is continuing its work to revisit and refine the BOE Strategic Plan in efforts to meet system needs and address the ESEA goals in accordance with the BTE in Public Schools Act of 2002.
2. Continue to plan for the impact of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) decisions.