Report on the Final Evaluation of the City-State Partnership

Presented to:

The New Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners

and the

Maryland State Department of Education

Prepared by:

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December 3, 2001

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Carol Litman served as editor for the overall report. Sylvie Warren provided typing, report design, and desktop publishing support.

The Westat team gratefully acknowledges the guidance and support of the Joint Oversight Committee, dedicated staff of the Maryland State Department of Education and the Baltimore City Public School System who provided guidance and oversight. In addition, committee members provided liaison to other state and school staff in the review and feedback process. This committee was chaired by Rhona Fisher (MSDE) and Donald Manekin (BCPSS). John Sarbanes served as a special advisor.

We also want to thank Dr. Nancy Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools, Ms. Carmen Russo, Chief Executive Officer of BCPSS, and all the members of the New Board of School Commissioners of BCPSS for their generosity in sharing their viewpoints on the City-State Partnership with us and being available for discussion and clarification of issues.

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Executive Summary

Background

The Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) is an urban school system that serves over 98,000 students. Like many urban school systems across the country, this system, once recognized for educational excellence, has been struggling. For over 20 years, BCPSS has been a system in decline, without a sufficient supply of high-quality teachers, without adequately supplied and maintained school buildings, and without resources to make a change. Recognizing the failure of the system to adequately meet the needs of Baltimore's public school students, an aggressive effort at reform was initiated in 1997. This effort was designed to change the system dramatically, reforming and revitalizing everything from its curriculum, to its management, to its maintenance and business functions.

Maryland State Senate Bill (SB) 795—the City-State Partnership legislation—established and provided detailed guidance for this reform. In addition to laying out an explicit set of changes that needed to be addressed, SB 795 dissolved the existing management structure and removed the school system from control by the Office of the Mayor. A new relationship between the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the school system was established. In addition, the legislation specified steps that a New Board of School Commissioners was expected to take, and provided a detailed listing of the changes that were to result from them.

Some highlights of the legislation are as follows:

- The establishment of a nine-member New Board of School Commissioners, jointly appointed by the mayor and the governor, with assistance from MSDE. This Board was to include a specified number of experts in business, education, and working with disabled children. A student member (nonvoting) was also included.
- The development of a transition plan and a Master Plan to provide direction and oversight for the educational system. This Master Plan was to provide for the improvement of student achievement and the management and accountability of BCPSS.
- The establishment of a Chief Executive Officer, a Chief Academic Officer, a Chief Operating Officer, a Research and Evaluation unit, and a Parent and Community Advisory Board.
- In addition, starting with the transition year following the passage of SB 795, the state has provided BCPSS with $254 million in additional funding to support reform.

Recognizing that change does not happen over night, the legislation called for a multiyear effort. Included was a set of reporting requirements for the Board, for the school system's Chief Executive Officer, and for MSDE. In addition, SB 795 also required two external assessments of progress, 1) an interim assessment, and 2) a final evaluation.

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the second of these external assessments, the "final" evaluation. The evaluation provides a broad-based analysis of BCPSS' achievements and examines the degree to which, under the City-State Partnership, BCPSS is moving toward providing a more effective and efficient educational system. It examines issues concerning system management, system structure, and student outcomes to determine whether or not the underlying problems are being addressed and the extent to which current strategies are moving BCPSS toward success.

Approach

The evaluation of the City-State Partnership calls for examination of both detailed operational questions concerning changes in instructional and support services and broad-based research questions about the efficacy of the overall reform. To address these areas, a multilevel, mixed-method evaluation design was developed.

Exhibit E-1 lays out the conceptual framework underlying this design. It consists of three components: resources and inputs, areas of investigation, and research questions.

Mixed-method methodology was adopted to address these questions. Mixed-method approaches combine quantitative data collection approaches, such as surveys and analyses of test performance, with qualitative data collection approaches, such as interviews, site visits, focus groups, and document reviews. The former provide numerical estimates of outcomes that can be used to assess progress against standards or targets; the latter provide rich, narrative information that can be used to examine phenomena not readily amenable to quantitative exploration to provide a context and fuller explanation of the quantitative data. Multiple sources of data were used to address each of the focal areas of investigation and the study questions under them. The study used:

- Analyses of extant data, such as test scores;
- Review of documents such as plans, memos, and reports;
- Surveys of representative populations of parents, teachers, and principals;
- Site visits to a sample of schools;
- Executive interviews with key stakeholders within and outside of BCPSS; and
- Focus groups with teachers, principals, and community members.

Assessments of progress were made taking into account standards provided by:

- Maryland State Standards for Student Achievement;
- BCPSS' own targets for student performances;
- Practices in other Maryland districts and similar urban systems across the country;
- Guidelines for best practice; and
- The research and evaluation literature.

Overall Findings

The findings of our analyses show that the New Board of School Commissioners, in partnership with MSDE, has responded in good faith to the requirements of SB 795 and provided strong leadership in improving what, by all criteria, was an educational system beyond the brink of failure. With the support of MSDE, the New Board of School Commissioners has responded to every one of the requirements specified by the legislation and begun to establish a coherent administrative and management structure, based on a set of clearly articulated goals and objectives. The Master Plan has evolved into a framework that ties together what were previously disconnected, isolated, and, too often, dysfunctional units.

In 2001, the City-State Partnership is still intact and being guided by the spirit and the specifications of SB 795. Many new initiatives have been put in place, although few could be considered fully tested or established. The Master Plan continues to be revised on an annual basis, and a compliance monitoring system has been installed to examine the extent to which the needs of students with disabilities are being met.

While there has been considerable turnover at the management level of BCPSS, many of the leaders from the state and school community are still

Exhibit E-1.
Overview of the conceptual framework for the final evaluation of the BCPSS City-State Partnership

Resources and Inputs	Areas of Investigation*	Research Questions
• Funds — City — State — Federal — Foundation • Legal and Legislative Actions — Vaughan G. — Bradford — Senate Bill 795	• Student Achievement • Special Education Services • Instructional Program and Supports • Parent/Family/Community Support • School Environment and Safety • Human Resources • Management/Organization • Finance/Budgeting • Construction/Repairs/Maintenance • Management Information Systems/ Technology	• Improved Achievement? • Improved Management and Use of Management Tools? • Effective Governance? • Sufficient Funding?

*These areas reflect the objectives of The Master Plan.

active players in the reform and maintain a strong commitment to its goals. It is important to point out that belief in the ability of the system to change, at least among the players in the Partnership, not only persists, but has grown.

The extra funds provided through the City-State Partnership and Remedy Plans have been used appropriately to address areas of need. And where funds have been directed, such as programs for elementary school students, signs of improvement are emerging.

Compared to the situation that existed in the mid-1990s, BCPSS is tremendously improved. Compared to both external and self-established standards for educational excellence, BCPSS has a long way to go. Exhibit E-2 presents an overview of major system accomplishments since the enactment of SB 795.

It is by no means certain that the system will achieve the turnaround that all hope for. And, achieving this turnaround will require the support of those both within and outside of BCPSS itself. However, as this report will show, there are many hopeful signs that the efforts invested in the City-State Partnership have had a positive payback, and some concrete evidence that better teaching and learning are taking place.

Implications for Research Questions

The evaluation of the City-State Partnership was designed to answer four broad research questions. Presented below are the questions and answers from our study.

Question 1. Whether or not BCPSS has improved student achievement during the four years since SB 795 was enacted.

Student Achievement. Our evaluation shows that there has been improvement in student achievement in the 4 years since SB 795 was enacted. While a substantial gap exists between BCPSS and the state overall on both the MSPAP and CTBS/5, and selectively on the MFT, BCPSS has accelerated its rate of progress at the elementary grades where the vast majority of resources have been targeted (Figures E-1 through E-3). This is illustrated most strongly on the local testing program in which the CTBS/5 is administered in grades 1–7 (Figure E-4). In a number of cases, the rate of progress in BCPSS has exceeded that of the state overall on the MSPAP (Figure E-5). At the same time, the evaluation shows that there is considerable work left to do, and that the pace of learning must be increased if the system is to reach Maryland state goals and the 2004 targets for student achievement that BCPSS has set for itself.

Question 2. Whether or not BCPSS has improved system management since SB 795 was enacted, as evidenced by performance in previously identified areas of deficiency. And, whether or not BCPSS' current management tools are being used effectively as evidenced by the implementation of key Master Plan initiatives.

Management. There have been notable improvements in the management of the system, with an aim toward better supporting the BCPSS instructional mission. The roles of the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Academic Officer, and Chief Operating Officer have been defined and filled by competent, well-qualified staff. Although not complete, improvements have been noted in the financial reporting system, in procurement, in information technology services, and in management of surplus facilities. While staff turnover has been a major problem and change has been slow and uneven, there are at present a cadre of very capable leaders in key positions. Over the years, increasingly effective use has been made of The Master Plan as a tool for guiding, integrating, and prioritizing efforts within and across the instructional and operational support systems.

A major problem has persisted in the ability of the system to monitor itself and to assess progress against progress standards. Compared to BCPSS' needs, as well as other urban systems across the nation, the Division of Research, Education, and Accountability (READ) has failed to provide adequate information. By default, much of the monitoring, outside of test scores, has addressed activities completed as opposed to outcomes. The new targets identified in The Master Plan and

Exhibit E-2.
Major system accomplishments since the enactment of SB 795 through 2000–2001

Student Achievement

- Increased student achievement, especially at the elementary grades
- Adopted citywide curricula and purchase of textbooks K–12

  K–8
  - Language arts/reading
  - Mathematics
  - Science
  - Social studies

  High school
  - English I-IV, algebra, biology, and American government
  - Science
  - U.S. history, and world history
- Established and expanded whole-school reform models
  - Achievement First
  - Direct Instruction
  - Success for All
  - New Schools Initiative
- Carried out class-size reduction in grades 1 to 5
- Established 111 Pre-K and 73 all-day kindergarten programs
- Assigned reading teachers to each middle school and implemented Soar to Success
- Developed a Blueprint for Baltimore's Neighborhood High Schools
- Began preparation for high school assessments
- Targeted assistance to schools that are reconstitution eligible

Student Management

- Opened two Alternative Learning Centers and expanded programs for disruptive and at-risk students
- Adopted a new code of conduct and student discipline policy
- Developed a student promotion and retention policy
- Expanded before-school, after-school, and summer-school programs for students at-risk

Human Resources

- Increased incentive for new teacher hires and increased teacher salaries. The starting teacher salary raised to third highest in the state
- Reduced time it takes for teachers to reach maximum salary level from 27 years to 20 years
- Established a Performance-Based Teacher Evaluation System
- Increased teacher support
  - Professional development for new curricula
  - Mentoring programs
  - Instructional support for teachers in reading and mathematics

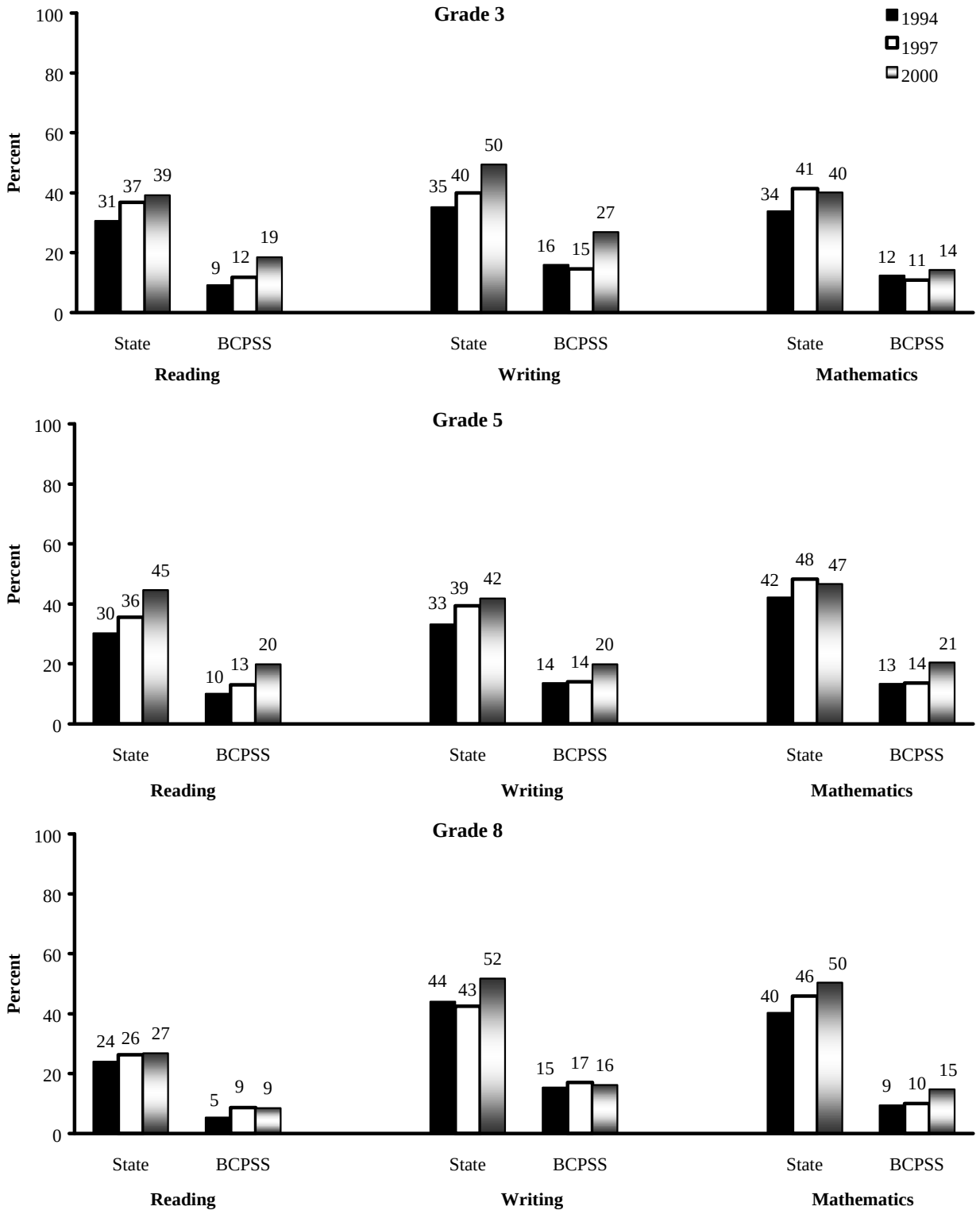
Governance

- Developed Master Plan and Master Plan Updates around a consistent system of goals and objectives
- Hired experienced and professionally recognized leaders for the positions of Chief Executive Officer, Chief Academic Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Technology Officer, and Chief Officer of READ
- Established the position of Chief Financial Officer
- Formed Chief Executive Officer's District for lowest performing schools

Infrastructure Support

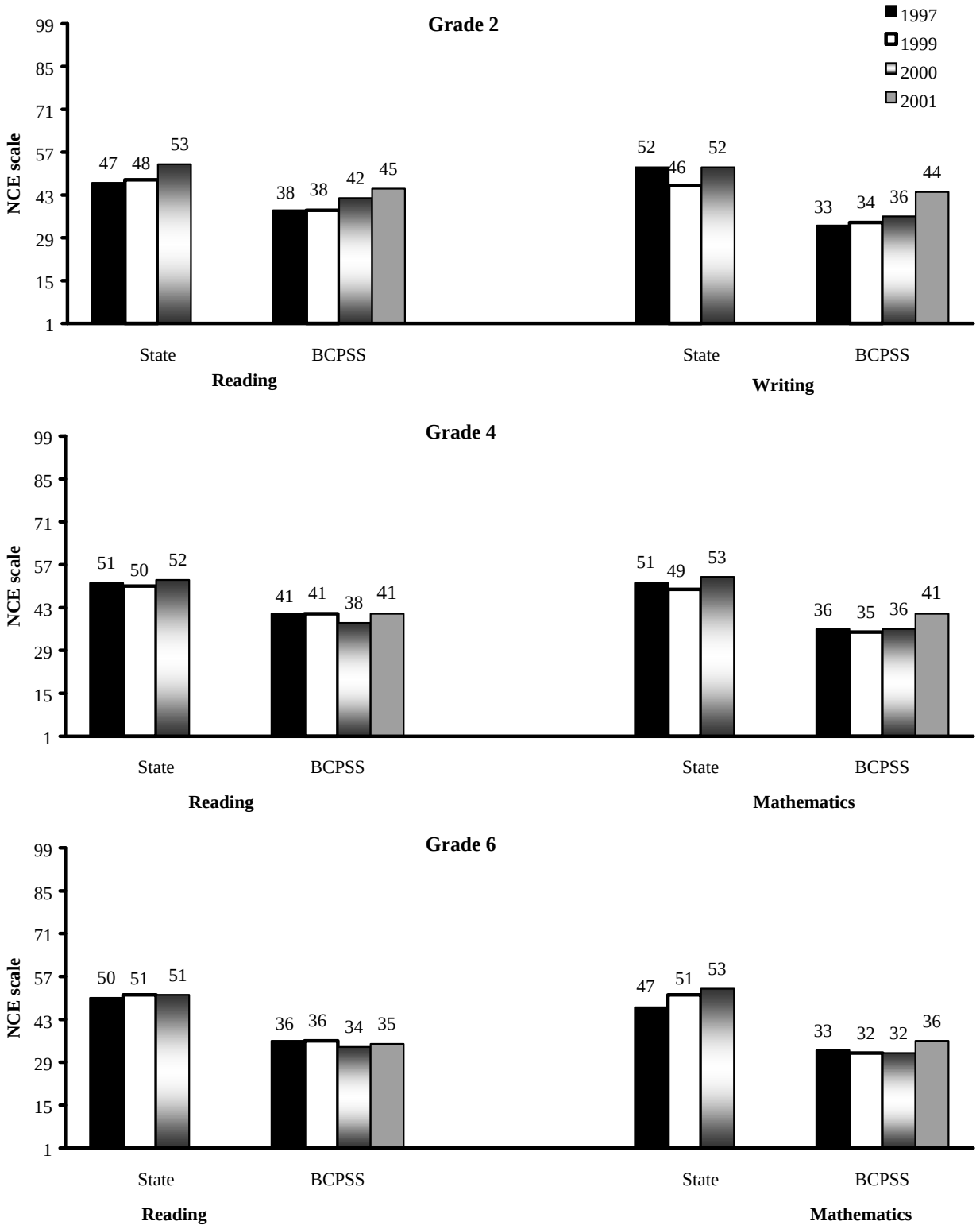
- Made Student and Staff Information System (SASI) operational; Upgraded Special Education Tracking System (SETS)
- Expanded number of schools with wired classrooms and provision of email access to principals
- Developed a Facilities Plan, including school closings, consolidations, and construction activities
- Managed the school-closure process with extraordinary sensitivity, openness, and patience.
- Improved timeliness and accuracy of financial reporting
- Increased compliance with special education requirements
- Reorganized the area offices to better serve instructional needs
- Assumed all responsibilities for procurement, making the process faster, more transparent, and more accurate
- Assumed all responsibilities for food services after a contractor pulled out, kept the operations within budget, and successfully managed the closure of the old and opening of the new main warehouse facility.

Figure E-1.
Percentage of BCPSS students and students statewide attaining satisfactory performance on the MSPAP, by grade and subject: 1994, 1997, and 2000



SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland School Performance Report 2000. Available: http://www.msp.msde.state.md.us

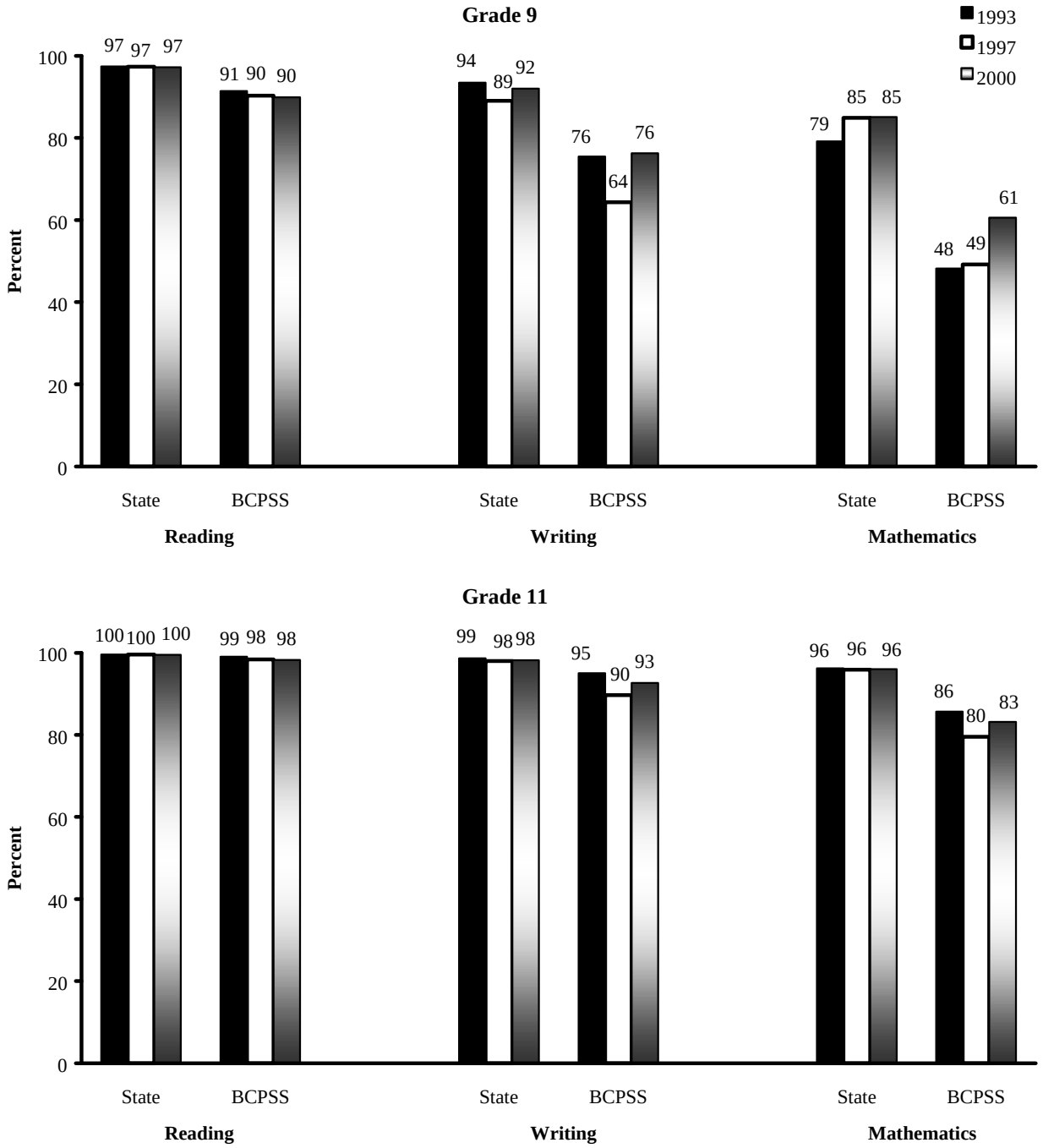
Figure E-2.
Normal curve equivalents on the CTBS/5 statewide and in BCPSS: Selected years, 1997–2001



NOTE: 2001 data not available from MSDE. Normal curve equivalents computed by Westat.

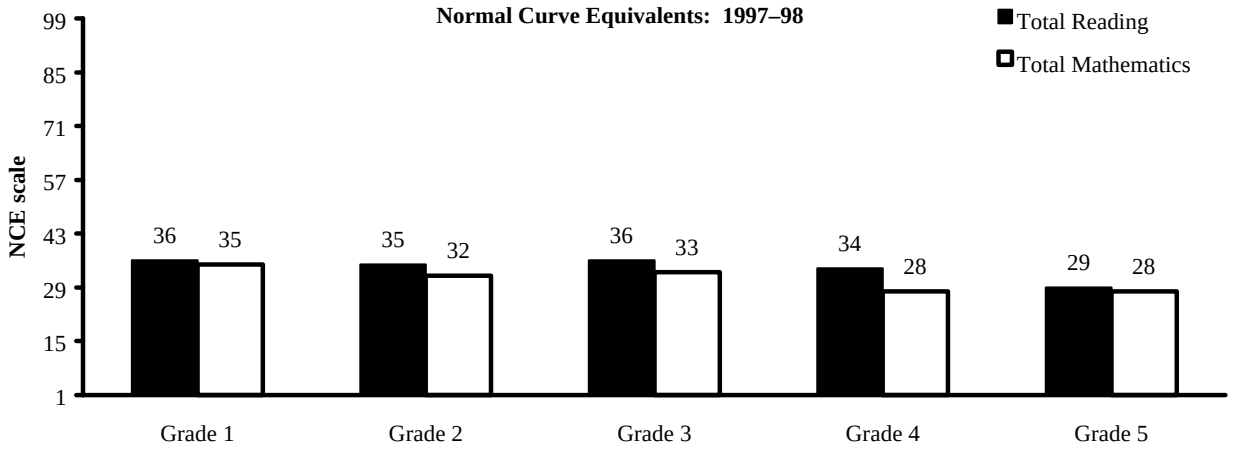
SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland School Performance Report 2000. Available: http://www.msp.msde.state.md.us

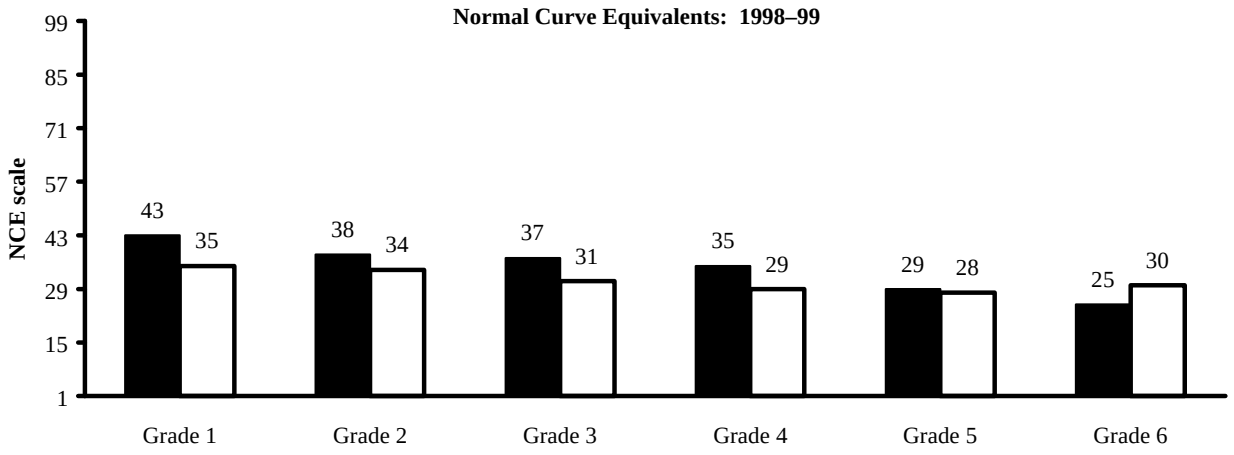
Figure E-3.
MFT pass rates for the state and BCPSS, by grade and subject: 1993, 1997, and 2000

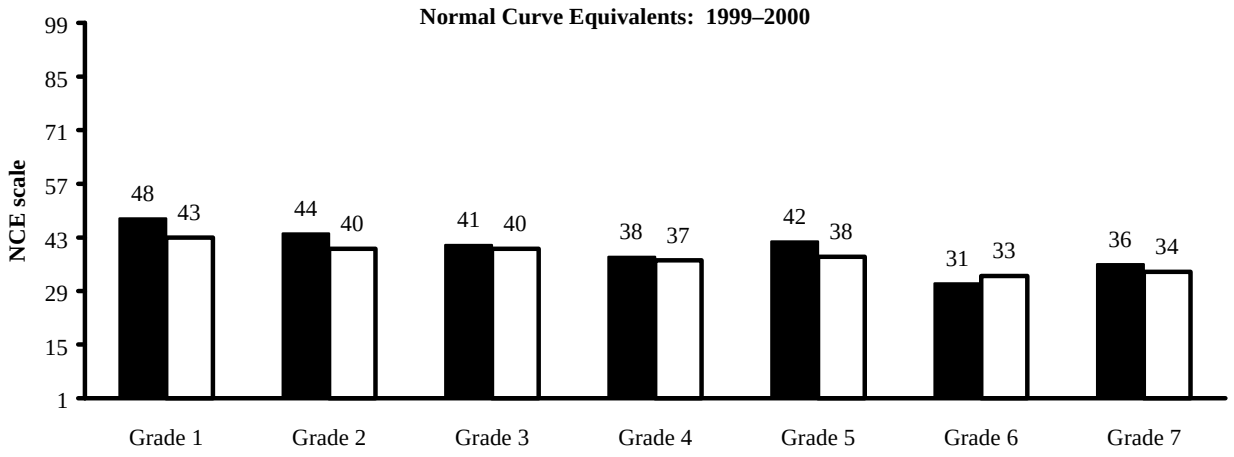


SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland School Performance Report 2000. Available: http://www.msp.msde.state.md.us

Figure E-4.
CTBS/5 tests results for Baltimore City public schools, by grade



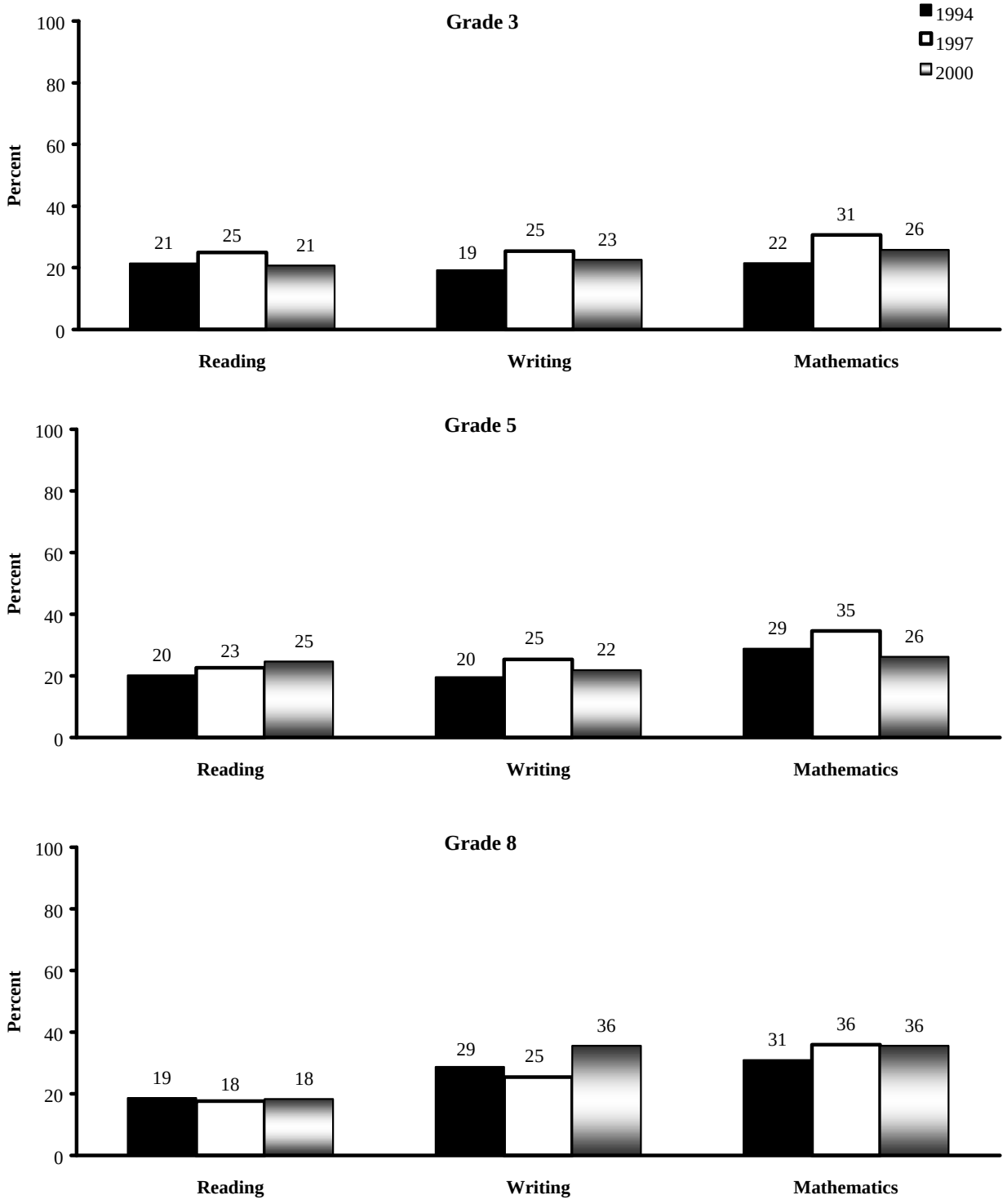




NOTE: These scores different from the ones in Figure E-2 because the state data for grades 2, 4, and 6 prior to 2001 were based on a sample of students. Normal curve equivalents computed by Westat.

SOURCE: Baltimore City Public Schools.

Figure E-5.
Differences in percentage of BCPSS students and students statewide attaining satisfactory performance on the MSPAP, by grade and subject: 1994, 1997, and 2000



NOTE: Differences computed by Westat.

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland School Performance Report 2000. Available: http://www.msp.msde.state.md.us

the emerging plans for evaluation by READ provide indications that this problem is beginning to be addressed.

Question 3. Whether and the extent to which any such improvement or lack thereof is the result of the new governance structures established by SB 795.

Governance. The establishment of the New Board of School Commissioners and the City-State Partnership were bold and innovative components of SB 795. Judging by what we have seen, they were well reasoned, and we find no basis on which to argue that BCPSS should return to its previous status of being controlled by the City of Baltimore. The Board has played a major role in the progress that has been seen to date. Indeed, given the turnover in staff in key leadership positions, the Board has filled a number of roles not typically adopted by a policy making body. While there have been missteps, the end result is that change has occurred, and it is the kind of change that was sorely needed.

The state has been supportive in many ways. Additional funding from Annapolis has been critical. In addition, it is hard to imagine that BCPSS would have gained the ground that it has without the working partnership between MSDE and the school system.

Question 4. Whether the levels and use of funds for the Baltimore City Public School System are sufficient.

Adequacy of Funds. The issue of funding adequacy is one that has been in the forefront of discussion about education and educational change in BCPSS. While the City-State Partnership has resulted in additional funds being allocated to BCPSS, the need for continued support remains. Based on analyses of what is needed at the school level for a quality education conducted by two groups of financial experts, it appears that a funding shortfall does exist. If one accepts the conclusions of these groups and examines the current status of staffing in BCPSS, more funding is definitely needed to bring school staffing up to quality standards.

* * *

Looking across the findings, one other general issue is important to raise in evaluating the success of the City-State Partnership: the participation of teachers in the reform process. We found the depth of teacher disenfranchisement to be very disturbing. Teachers do not feel that they are being consulted on issues near and dear to them, nor do they feel that some of their urgent needs for support are being met. We are not in a position to assess whether these feelings are based on fact or on some misperception. We do know, however, that the feelings of alienation are profound and cannot help but interfere with the reform process.

Additional Findings

In the remainder of this summary, we highlight findings from each of the areas examined and provide some overarching recommendations.

Achievement

Evaluation findings indicate that BCPSS has made progress toward achievement goals but still has considerable room for improvement. Specifically,

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- Achievement on the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) and the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills/5 (CTBS/5) in BCPSS has improved steadily in the years following implementation of The Master Plan. While performance on the Maryland Functional Tests (MFT) has also improved, initial BCPSS analyses suggest that there may be a decline in these scores in 2001. Achievement remains considerably lower than state averages on the CTBS/5 and the MSPAP. On the MSPAP, student achievement falls far short of state standards in all subjects and all grades examined in the evaluation.

- BCPSS has set some challenging, but appropriate targets for growth by 2004. Projections of future performance based on

current rates of growth indicate that the system must accelerate its rate of progress to meet the targets it has set for itself for achievement by 2004. If these targets are met and the increased rate of learning continues, BCPSS could meet state standards between 2012 and 2018.

- Special education students show evidence of better performance over years.
- The impact of whole-school reform models is varied. Students in Achievement First (AF) schools demonstrated significantly higher gains on the MSPAP than those in matched comparison schools. Students in Direct Instruction (DI) schools performed no differently than those in the comparison schools. While both sets of schools will have to struggle to meet BCPSS' targets for success set for 2004, the challenge will be greater for the DI than the AF schools.
- Reconstitution-eligible (RE)* schools have accelerated their rate of growth and are showing progress. Analyses at the school level indicate that these schools have grown in achievement at a faster rate than non-RE schools since the passage of SB 795.
- Attendance has increased modestly, but dropout rates are unchanged since introduction of The Master Plan. The number of students graduating with high school diplomas also has increased during this period. These findings are true for students in both regular and special education programs.

*The term "reconstitution-eligible" has been changed to "local reconstitution." We use RE throughout this report because that was the term used when our evaluation was initiated.

Instructional Programs

The evaluation examined:

- The citywide curriculum framework,
- The promotion and retention policy,
- Whole-school reform models,
- Other intervention programs,
- Supports for reconstitution-eligible schools,
- Special education services,
- Parental involvement, and
- The maintenance of a secure, civil, and orderly environment.

Citywide Curriculum Framework

We found that BCPSS has taken major steps in establishing citywide curricula aligned to the Maryland State Standards and Learning Outcomes. We found a strong relationship between the Maryland Content Standards and Learning Outcomes and the BCPSS Content Standards for English/language arts for grades K-12 and mathematics for K–8. The process used for selecting the textbooks was reasonable and included the involvement of critical stakeholder groups.

The system has worked to supply teachers with the supports, materials, and resources needed to implement the curricula. Although some teachers feel that they do not have a sufficient number of textbooks and some are concerned about the alignment of the textbooks with the milestone tests and curricula, even those who see gaps feel the situation is improved.

A program of professional development has been put in place to assist teachers in learning to use the new curricular tools. While the majority of teachers (71 percent) report having received training, those who may need it the most, i.e., new teachers and teachers who are provisionally certified, have had significantly less training.

The milestones tests developed to monitor progress over the years appear problematic at present. Both what they measure and how they are used needs closer examination.

Finally, although BCPSS has been moving toward greater inclusion of students with disabilities, it appears that more support is needed to assist classroom teachers in using the citywide curricula with students with special needs.

Student Promotion and Retention Policy

BCPSS has begun to take steps to identify students who are not achieving the district's academic standards and to respond to their needs. New testing protocols are in place to assess students' performance throughout the school year and at key transition points during their academic careers. The district has instituted special interventions to help at-risk students achieve the academic standards, including programs conducted during the regular school day, before and after school, on weekends, and during the summer.

Findings from the school visits and surveys indicate that principals, teachers, and parents supported the objectives of the initial policy of ending social promotion, but they did not feel that the policy—as it was understood and implemented—was achieving the goals to any great extent. There is no consensus regarding the effect that the policy has had on student performance or on the level of parental concern over students' performance. In addition, there is widespread confusion about the criteria for promotion and frustration with the lack of alignment between the BCPSS milestones and the statewide assessments.

Effectiveness of Whole-School Reform Models

SB 795 required BCPSS to develop model school reform initiatives. While a number of models are being used in BCPSS, Westat was asked to focus the evaluation on two of them, Direct Instruction and Achievement First. The New Schools Initiative (NSI) was evaluated to a much lesser extent.

Our analyses indicate that these whole-school reform models have been beneficial, but that it is time to take a hard look at the extent to which the current models are meeting BCPSS' needs and are reflective of what is known about best practices in instruction.

Site visit data show that staff were generally quite positive about AF. They thought that the program helped to give them a more focused and consistent approach to literacy. Staff spoke highly of the supports they were receiving. The fact that AF can be used with the new BCPSS curriculum was also seen as a plus. The one area of concern regarding AF was that with so much attention placed on reading/language arts, other subjects, especially mathematics, did not receive sufficient attention.

DI received a more mixed review during the site visits. Criticisms centered on the highly scripted curriculum rather than on the administration of the programs and its supports, which appear to be done well. Staff recognized the positive effect that DI has had on students' reading levels, particularly at the lower grades; some question its utility at the higher grade levels. Staff expressed concern for students who leave a DI school to attend middle school or transfer to another elementary school. They did not feel that these students were prepared for traditional instruction. Some parents felt they were unable to help their children with homework using the DI method, despite the fact that workshops were provided to help parents learn how to use the method. Teachers were also critical of Core Knowledge, used for social studies and science in DI schools, saying that it is too dense and does not allow the students to establish the proper foundations before exposing them to complex concepts. Another difficulty cited with Core Knowledge was the lack of instructional materials.

Other Intervention Programs

The evaluation looked at special programs to provide early learning, reduction in class-size initiatives, and reforms at the middle and high school levels. These were examined in considerably less depth than the instructional initiatives already discussed.

Ready-to-Learn Initiatives. During the past 4 years, BCPSS has made concerted efforts to help prepare children for 1st grade and beyond. Driven by The Master Plan, the district has instituted and expanded prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, assessed children's progress, and provided professional development and materials to classroom teachers. BCPSS has increased the number of full-day kindergarten programs from 38 (before The Master Plan was adopted) to over 70 in the 2000–2001 school year. During their 4-year relationship with BCPSS, the Children's Learning Initiative (CLI) has provided professional development, instructional materials, and other forms of support for preschool programs in 80 percent of the elementary schools and 65 percent of the elementary/middle schools in the district.

Classroom observations indicate widespread use of various elements of the CLI program. For example, "word walls," well-stocked classroom libraries, and literacy activities were all evident during site visits conducted by the Westat team. However, attempts to implement CLI practices to increase parental participation in child literacy efforts have not met with great success. Based on preliminary results, it appears that implementation of CLI programs has improved children's achievement. This indicates that further expansion of the districts' prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, and the continuation of its contract with CLI, are appropriate.

Class-Size Reduction. During the late 1990s, a growing number of national studies indicated the benefits of small class sizes (fewer than 20 students), particularly at the early elementary grades (K–3). In that context, The Master Plan called for reductions in class sizes. Currently, teacher positions are allocated to schools on a formula basis—1:22 for the lower elementary grades and 1:24 for the upper elementary grades—although there may be some exceptions.

The Westat team was provided only limited data from BCPSS regarding class size, and it was impossible to evaluate the extent to which class size has been reduced or to determine the current size of classes at the various grade levels. Our survey data suggest that the average class size across all elementary grades is approaching the level (below 20 students) that research suggests is needed for making a difference in student achievement. Further reductions in *some* classes have also been accomplished. For example, among schools participating in the Achievement First program, class size is often smaller during the literacy block, when teachers of music, art, physical education, and library work with reading groups.

It should be noted that recent guidance from the federal Class Size Reduction Program includes kindergarten; however, reduction in kindergarten class size is not defined as an objective in the 2001–20002 Master Plan Update.

Middle School and High School Efforts. During the past 3 years, BCPSS has focused most school reform efforts on the elementary level as they felt they would have the biggest impact there. However, some actions were taken to address middle and high school reform: curriculum development and textbook purchasing were done for both the middle and high schools; two new central office positions, director of middle school improvement and director of high school improvement, were created; and separate task forces were established for middle schools and high schools to recommend reforms.

Most of the reforms for the middle grades had not been implemented at the time of the evaluation. One exception was the placement of at least one reading teacher in each reconstitution-eligible middle school. High school reform efforts have focused especially on the zoned high schools. Initiatives implemented thus far consist of 9th grade interventions and strategies to aid the transition from middle school to high school. Initial steps have been taken toward establishing

academies, but a great deal has yet to be done to build smaller learning communities.

Because reform activities for middle and high school grades have received far less attention than have those for elementary schools, it is not surprising that principals at the secondary school levels expressed significantly fewer positive opinions than elementary principals about the reform activities and the availability of resources. BCPSS is taking steps to address the concerns; the BCPSS Remedy Plan for FY 2003 contains extensive proposals for middle and high school reforms. As this report was going to print, BCPSS released a Blueprint for Baltimore's Neighborhood High Schools.

Supports for Reconstitution-Eligible (RE) Schools

SB 795 required BCPSS to identify actions needed to improve the status of schools that are subject to a state reconstitution notice. As of January 2000, 80 BCPSS schools were reconstitution eligible (RE) and an additional 3 schools had been placed under state reconstitution. In January 2001, one of the RE schools was placed under state reconstitution and an additional seven schools were placed on RE status. At the same time, Pimlico Elementary School was officially removed from the state's list of local reconstitution schools. This removal was a major milestone as no school declared RE in BCPSS had previously been removed from the list.

The criteria for identifying schools as RE are scores on state tests, attendance rates, and, for high schools, dropout rates. BCPSS and MSDE have used a multifaceted approach for improving the performance of RE schools on these measures. The state provides additional funding for RE schools, and MSDE deploys technical assistance teams to work with each of them. Some of the changes have been at the central office level at BCPSS, resulting in changes to the entire system not just the RE schools. Other supports have come from the BCPSS area administration offices, particularly in the case of two areas that have a high concentration of RE schools. (The newly named RE schools are part of the new CEO's District.) The role of MSDE has focused on supporting strategic planning, using data to inform decisionmaking, building leadership capacity, and monitoring. Recently, technical assistance activities have been increased. Finally, needs are addressed at the individual school level, and each RE school is required to have a school improvement team (SIT), which is responsible for developing a school improvement plan (SIP).

Our analyses provide mixed results regarding the implementation of the various supports for RE schools. Most of the system's reform efforts in the early years have been directed at the elementary level. Generally, these seem to be having the desired payoff. However, the picture at the middle and high school levels is unclear. Not surprisingly, when asked to evaluate the reform efforts, principals of RE elementary schools were more positive about the reforms than principals of RE middle and high schools on every aspect queried.

Plans put forth by BCPSS for RE schools place priority on hiring teachers for RE schools and filling the positions with certified teachers. However, at present, RE schools are less likely than non-RE schools to have fully certified teachers. In addition, RE schools tend to have less experienced teachers and principals.

Special Education

Activities related to students with disabilities have resulted from a federal court case, *Vaughn G., et al.,* v *Mayor and City Council, et al*. When BCPSS developed the original Master Plan, the district was operating under the special education Long-Range Compliance Plan outlined by the court and referenced in SB 795. On May 4, 2000, this plan was replaced by disengagement standards that specified 15 outcomes and a requirement for reporting student achievement. This new document continues to address compliance issues, but also contains indicators that are more focused on the quality of services being provided. Activities and findings under the court order are summarized in this report. They

show that BCPSS has made considerable progress in meeting special education requirements and federal criteria. During summer 2001, Inclusion Services was moved to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in order to provide additional support to general education teachers. However, since the special education activities in BCPSS are under considerable scrutiny by the federal court, it was agreed that they would be addressed to only a modest degree in the Westat evaluation. Westat was asked to summarize the court's findings rather than doing its own independent review.

Senate Bill 795 required BCPSS to have a management information system with the capacity to track compliance with the provisions of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This system is known as SETS (Special Education Tracking System). We found that most principals perceived the SETS reports to be useful, and that the reports had improved in quality and accuracy over the last 4 years. (Accuracy of the system is audited annually by MSDE.)

During the late 1990s, many activities associated with the management of special education were driven necessarily by compliance matters associated with the Vaughn G. lawsuit. This resulted in a separation of special education planning activities from those done under The Master Plan and a separate data tracking system for special education.

Parental Involvement

Data collected from a variety of sources indicate a mixed picture of success in this area. It appears that the district has made diligent efforts to encourage and help parents to be involved in their children's education. Schools have expanded programs such as PTA/PTO meetings, workshops on parenting, workshops on how to help students with schoolwork, and health/mental health programs.

While some parents feel that the schools are not doing enough and do not provide a welcoming environment for parents, the large majority of those in our survey reported that the Baltimore City public schools were actively trying to involve them in their children's education.**

The extent of parental participation was also assessed differently by the different respondent groups. While data from our site visits indicated that lack of parental involvement was a significant concern among teachers and principals, responses from the parent survey indicated a reasonable level of parental involvement in school programs or activities. Surprisingly high numbers indicated that they participated in PTA/PTO meetings, volunteered at their children's schools, or had individual contact with their children's teachers and other school staff.

Overall, nearly three-quarters of the parents who chose to respond to the survey were pleased with their children's schools, and 80 percent were, to varying degrees, satisfied with the efforts made by BCPSS to improve their children's learning.

Safety and Discipline

BCPSS has initiated a number of reforms aimed at creating the kinds of conditions in schools that enable teachers to teach and students to learn. The district has instituted a new code of conduct that has been disseminated to principals, teachers, students, and parents. School records indicate that while arrests, expulsions, and other serious infractions of the code of conduct have declined since 1998, both short- and long-term suspensions have increased. Although principals and teachers indicated that enforcement of the new code of conduct has helped to reduce disruptive behavior and improve school climate, more of them attribute most positive changes to other actions taken at the schools.

The district opened its first Alternative Learning Center in 1999 to provide educational, social, and treatment services to middle school students in the Southeastern region. Since that time,

**It is important to note that the response rate on this survey was a modest 27 percent, and those who chose to respond may not be representative of BCPSS parents.

alternative classrooms have been set up in 14 high schools, 6 middle schools, and 8 elementary schools, and additional programs for disruptive elementary students are in the planning stage. Seven of the alternative programs for students in grades 9–12 were designed to address the district's very serious dropout problem. These twilight and flex programs offer late day and evening hours and a technology-based career component for high school students who have already dropped out of school and 8th grade students considered at risk of becoming dropouts. While these efforts have helped to alleviate some of the district's most pressing problems, the need for alternative placements and programs far exceeds the number of available slots. In particular, there is a need for more and better alternatives to suspension and more appropriate placements for students of elementary school age. The district and individual schools have taken other steps to create safer environments that are more conductive to learning. A 3-year plan was developed for reducing drugs and violence in schools and action steps are now being undertaken.

On balance, BCPSS has made considerable progress in safety and discipline in terms of both programs and initiatives implemented and targets met on key indicators of safety.

Human Resources

Since Maryland SB 795, BCPSS has implemented in good faith, and genuinely advanced on, a broad, multi-pronged front to enhance the quality, stability, and effectiveness of its workforce in the schools. Four prongs of this complex effort are addressed in this part of the evaluation.

Recruitment

Many positive steps have been taken in recruitment. Personnel recruiting efforts have been intensified and enhanced, led by the Director of Human Resources for BCPSS. Since 1997, BCPSS has developed and gained substantial funding for additional attractive avenues to teacher certification through partnerships with local universities and colleges (e.g., Project Site Support). BCPSS now has staff dedicated to recruiting and advertising only, has produced informative teacher candidate materials, and is in the process of developing and bringing online a database intended to rationalize and streamline the process of evaluating the credentials of applicants and existing teachers.

The district has advocated and won stronger incentive, salary, and overall compensation packages for new teachers and principals that likely will attract additional interest and applicants.

Retention

BCPSS has taken numerous steps to stem the high outflow of early-career teachers from the district in recent years. A number of new-teacher mentor programs with committed staffs have been implemented, as well as improved over time, as a result of ongoing third-party evaluations. In addition, through its professional development arm, BCPSS has developed and implemented a New Teachers Summer Institute that strongly facilitates the induction of new teachers in the district. Although too early to see much in the way of sustained improvement in teacher retention from these efforts, there are some indications that they are working in the intended direction. For example, the number of new teachers needed in recent years has declined and shows promise of continuing in that direction.

Despite enhanced recruitment, retention, and mentoring efforts, the turnover in BCPSS' workforce remains comparatively high, particularly for teachers, at somewhat over 15 percent. Perhaps most challenging is that despite reductions in the annual numbers of newly hired teachers, the proportion of the teaching workforce that holds provisional credentials has ballooned from about 14 percent 5 years ago to over 24 percent currently. This figure is the highest among Maryland counties (only Prince George's comes close), and well beyond state totals (about 8 percent). Thus, recruiting

and retaining quality teachers in the BCPSS workforce remains a significant challenge.

Professional Development

BCPSS has recognized the need to strengthen both the quantity (variety) and quality of the professional development opportunities it provides teachers and school administrators. BCPSS has made progress in this direction through the reorganization of its professional development operation and expansion of its programs and offerings. Districtwide participation in professional development is very high, and participants assign the offerings moderately high marks for organization, clarity, and relevance. Professional development offerings now cover a wide range of topics, including issues in special education, and BCPSS teachers have availed themselves of the range of topics—much of which seems to focus on classroom practice.

Challenges remain in BCPSS professional development. For example, close to half of the teachers surveyed for this evaluation reported that they participate only because it is a requirement of employment in the district—not a ringing endorsement by consumers of the perceived usefulness of what's being offered. Many suggest that the district's offerings could be made more relevant to their working situations, and that this could be achieved through consultation with teachers and/or principals.

Performance-Based Evaluation System

In the area of personnel evaluation for improvement and quality assurance, BCPSS has designed and implemented performance-based evaluation systems anchored to student learning for both its teachers and principals that is now in use for the majority of the schools' workforce. The training of qualified school personnel to use the new system is essentially complete, additional procedures are being developed for specialist groups in the schools, and the teacher evaluation system's main instrument has undergone two state-led audits and resulting improvements.

Although the new Performance-Based Evaluation System for teachers is now in place, with eligible evaluators trained, the system exists and operates absent widespread and needed support or ownership from either teachers or principals, and without much evidence at this time that it contributes to the improvement of the teaching or administrative workforces. In fact, the views of many teachers and administrators regarding the evaluation system's centerpiece portfolio seems to be that it is simply one more hurdle to jump over, and largely disconnected from what they actually do in their classrooms.

Management and Organization

The evaluation examined:

- Systemwide organization and management
- Facilities and maintenance
- Financial management
- Procurement
- Information technology
- Division of Research, Evaluation, and Accountability
- The Master Plan
- The New Board of School Commissioners

Systemwide Organization and Management

BCPSS must effectively manage people and property to fulfill its primary objective—educating students—efficiently. Over the last years, the district has hired a team of highly qualified individuals to lead various administrative groups and reorganized the central and area offices to better support schools' and students' needs. Finally, the district conducted a facilities needs assessment and identified 12 schools for closure.

While these steps are encouraging, interviews with staff throughout the district and analysis of enrollment data indicate that further progress is urgently needed. There is an imbalance in the number of highly paid administrators serving the district and the number of other staff—particularly at the school level—available to help perform routine and day-to-day activities. Finally, several challenges exist in determining facilities needs, balancing physical capacity, humane considerations, and programmatic needs.

Facilities Planning, Maintenance, and Operations

Objective 4 of The Master Plan defines facility maintenance and use as a focus area. Within this focus area, the plan specifies two strategies: establish an effective system for school construction, maintenance, and repair; and determine the most efficient use of available school buildings. Once again, SB 795 served as the impetus for these measures.

Since the adoption of The Master Plan, BCPSS has conducted an inventory of the facilities it operates and an evaluation of their condition. This investigation resulted in recommendations for specific school closures, and has prompted additional recommendations for capital improvement projects and other types of improvements.

The study findings indicate varying levels of satisfaction with the services among school administrators. While there was widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of the maintenance and repair services available to the schools, there was widespread satisfaction with grounds keeping and waste management services. Improvements have also been made in Food Services and Mail Distribution.

There remains a substantial need for finding ways to address deferred maintenance. Many school buildings have serious problems that interfere with the instructional mission.

Financial Management

SB 795 directed BCPSS to implement an effective financial management and budgeting system, and to use that system as a management tool rather than simply as a management process. One significant element of the new system is its independence from the City of Baltimore system.

While the implementation of the new system has taken longer than first expected, the process has been largely successful. Whereas in 1997, outside auditors declined to evaluate BCPSS accounts, in 2000 PriceWaterhouseCoopers wrote that "…the new financial system implementation was a reasonably smooth transition from the old processing environment to the new environment." Improved systems have been put in place that provide reports that are both more timely and more accurate. Additional steps are planned that will further improve the district's financial management and budgeting (e.g., the Enterprise Resource Planning system).

Findings from the surveys and interviews conducted by the Westat team indicate progress in several areas. Budget information provided to the schools by the central office is now viewed as more user-friendly; however, timeliness is still a problem. The district's Financial Office help desk also was viewed as a positive step toward improving relations with the school staff. Finally, there were positive reactions to the new grants accounting manager and her efforts to improve communication between the office and the schools.

Procurement

Since the passage of SB 795, responsibility for procurement has shifted from the City of Baltimore to the district and individual schools. The current policies specify threshold amounts that determine the level of authorization needed for the procurement: any purchase under $5,000 can be authorized at the school level, purchases between $5,000 and $15,000 must be authorized by the Procurement Department, and those greater than $15,000 must be authorized by the Board and put out for bid.

Interview and survey findings point to widespread appreciation of the new process. While school personnel recognize that the change has placed additional burden on the schools, they believe that the benefits are more significant. Vendors that serve the district also noted positive effects of the changed policies.

Information Technology

The Information Technology (IT) Department and IT functions are improving. Substantive changes have been made in the management, planning, staffing, and use of technology in the IT functions at BCPSS. These changes have facilitated system management and led to better utilization of resources. Based on the analyses performed, it can be concluded that:

- The users of IT feel that the delivery of IT services is improving.
- The IT Department at BCPSS has established good management practices.
- The new management team in IT has developed a thoughtful plan for correcting the current shortcomings in the department.

Recognizing these accomplishments, significant challenges that must be addressed still remain. While there is considerably more satisfaction with services and information provided to schools, access to email for staff other than principals and other administrators is limited. Professional development for teachers, especially with regard to instruction, warrants continuing attention and expansion.

Supports Provided by READ*

The evaluation finds that a strong accountability system has not been established. READ, the unit charged by SB 795 with monitoring progress and increasing understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the reform effort, has provided minimal data of educational or policy relevance since the passage of SB 795 until recently. In part, this failure is linked to the system's failure to establish consistent indicators of progress. However, beyond this failure of management, the unit itself has failed to provide timely, quality data that can be used for program improvement.

Recently, a new officer has been appointed to permanently direct this division, and there are indications that positive changes are underway. Attention is needed to continue to establish a system wherein progress can be monitored against established targets, and data to inform program improvement are systematically collected and disseminated.

Role of The Master Plan

The Master Plan is in many ways the centerpiece of the planning and management structure. The plan, which has evolved over time, is based on a set of goals and objectives clearly in line with the requirements of SB 795. Originally one of several plans governing school operations, The Master Plan has evolved into a single framework for integrating and guiding the school system's functions and activities. While previous years' iterations of the plan have not adequately explicated standards for success and indicators of progress, and accountability provisions have been incomplete, the 2002 Master Plan appears to be correcting this shortcoming and establishing a framework for monitoring and accountability. Additional work needs to be done to fully synchronize this plan with budget development, a step that has not yet been completed.

***The name of this office has recently been changed to Division of Research, Evaluation, and Accountability.

Within the school community, there is a broad-based awareness of the plan, although not all staff would be considered truly knowledgeable about its contents. School administrators are well aware of the stipulations of the plan and have used them as a guide for developing school improvement plans. Teachers and staff other than leadership team members are less knowledgeable about the details of The Master Plan, but do know of its existence and impact on plans for their school operations.

The vast majority feel the plan is having a beneficial impact on their own schools and BCPSS overall. Principals' support is especially strong, with 99 percent being aware of and agreeing with the plan and 92 percent feeling that it is having a beneficial impact. Not surprisingly, parents are less knowledgeable about the plan, with less than half being aware of its contents.

New Board of School Commissioners

We find that the unique governance structure established by the legislature under SB 795 has been effective and should be continued. Our examination of the accomplishments of the school system and the role played by the New Board of School Commissioners indicates that MSDE and the New Board have been fully responsive to the requirements of SB 795 and relentless in their support for reform. The requirements for Board memberships established through SB 795 have served reform well, providing a cadre of professionals with outstanding experience to guide reform. Indeed, the Board has played a unique role in the redirection of the BCPSS system and has, despite some missteps, provided the kind of leadership and "tough love" needed to begin a turnaround of a badly failing system. However, the task of reengineering the school system and establishing it as a system that effectively serves the children of Baltimore is far from complete.

Major Recommendations

This evaluation of BCPSS has identified many areas of progress, and many remaining challenges. Efforts have been made to change both the system and individual schools. Over the years, some strategies have failed and some have succeeded. This should be expected given the extensive nature of the changes that were needed within BCPSS. Perhaps it is more important that the efforts continue, regardless of the outcome of any one strategy.

Our evaluation leads to two overarching recommendations for continued progress:

- Involve stakeholders outside the central office more fully in decision making, and
- Improve and enhance the information available for guiding reform and assessing its results.

Involve Stakeholders

As BCPSS continues its efforts, perhaps our most important suggestion is that the district conduct a comprehensive review of the *processes* undertaken to identify and implement potential remedies. Our evaluation found widespread desire among state, district, and school staff and among family and community members to work side by side in these efforts. Improved coordination, articulation, and communication between these diverse groups about the overall goals of the reforms are needed to ensure that the district benefits from their expertise and to foster commitment to the changes. The arrangement between BCPSS and MSDE is one example of this coordination that we believe has benefited the district's staff and students, and we recommend that this relationship continue.

Enhance Monitoring and Evaluation

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of all the district's efforts at reform are imperative given the limited resources and great need for improvement. In many areas, BCPSS has lacked the information needed to make informed policy decisions and wisely target resources. Managers have been guided by reports of activities carried out rather than results obtained. To provide better information, we suggest that READ implement a rigorous system of program monitoring and evaluation, focused on outcomes and the linkages between interventions and outcomes that will support managers more adequately. Reports on the summer school program, on the MFT scores, and on the SAT test scores produced in summer of 2001 suggest that the timeliness and quality of reports are improving. Initial plans developed by READ for new evaluations are a welcome step in expanding BCPSS' capacity in this area.

We conclude this Executive Summary with specific recommendations for the continued progress of BCPSS.

1. Continue the City-State Partnership

As stated earlier, the evaluation indicates that the City-State Partnership has been a productive one and that both BCPSS and MSDE have worked hard to combine and synergize their resources to support the reform effort. There are many things about the current partnership that seem valuable: the background and experience requirements for Board membership; the roles of the city, MSDE, and the governor's office in the selection and appointment process; and the collaborative relationship that has characterized the interactions between BCPSS and MSDE.

The extra financial supports provided by Annapolis have also been extremely important and, we believe, have been invested appropriately on areas of identified need. Based on what we found, we strongly recommend that the current partnership and its supports be continued.

- Continue the New Board of School Commissioners with the same basic requirements for composition and length of service.
- Continue the collaborative relationship between BCPSS and MSDE.
- Continue providing additional financial aid to BCPSS to help the system expand and accelerate its improvement in serving the students of Baltimore City.

2. Monitor Impact of Restructuring

BCPSS has undergone much restructuring since first implementing The Master Plan. This has included creation of new area offices, reassignment of schools to these area offices, school closures, and alterations to the services provided by the central office and by the schools. Highly qualified staff have been hired to fill the most senior positions. Yet, the district does not have information on the impact that the restructuring has had on staffing levels, staffing assignments, or costs associated with salaries paid to staff who perform the various functions within the district.

In addition, administrative structures that were established in the wake of SB 795 and the Vaughn G. court case might no longer be appropriate. Duplicate structures may cause unnecessary expenditures and may result in differential quality of services.

- Examine the capabilities of staff in middle management positions. Make sure these individuals have the experience and expertise to provide guidance and leadership to the reform.
- Conduct a review of the staffing configuration throughout the district, including levels of administrative and support staff in both the central office and schools. Seek to identify barriers and incentives to the efficient and cost-effective implementation of the district's primary mission (i.e., education) and identify remedies if the configuration is found to be inappropriate or inefficient.

- As BCPSS moves toward disengagement from the court-ordered Long-Range Compliance Plan over the next few years, examine how services for all students can be integrated more closely at all levels, including the management level. In addition, continue the development of compatibility between SETS and SASI.

- Examine whether BCPSS has sufficient and appropriate staff in place to allow members of the New Board of Commissioners to step back from their current level of direct management. This includes developing a plan for assuring that highly qualified and experienced personnel will continue to fill top management roles.

3. Seek More Creative and Meaningful Ways to Reach Out to Teachers

Analysis of teachers' responses to the survey items, comments written in by teachers, and focus groups with teachers indicate that teachers do not feel they own the reform effort in the same way as staff at the central office and do not feel that their needs are being met. As the City-State Partnership moves forward into its next phase of operation, it is important both to listen to the concerns of teachers and to engage them more fully in the design and implementation of the change process.

- Look more closely at the content and design of professional development activities. Many teachers do not feel that current offerings fully meet their needs. Involve schools in a needs assessment and planning process for school-based professional development.

- As reviews are conducted and refinements are made in the curricula, actively seek input from teachers regarding their perceptions of the textbooks, milestone assessments, and other support materials. Actively solicit their assessment of whether these tools are working and how they could work better.

- Continue to involve teachers as teacher mentors. Use teachers to support both new teachers and those who may be having problems.

4. Improve Facilities Management

BCPSS must grapple with several challenges related to facilities management, the solutions to which often appear to conflict with one another. BCPSS operates more facilities than are currently necessary or will be necessary in the foreseeable future. At the same time, many existing facilities are in need of repair and retrofitting if they are expected to meet the changing needs of school staff and students. There also may be a legitimate need for new construction as the student population shifts between different regions of the district. Finally, there are other community and neighborhood concerns that will influence the level of local support for any actions taken in response to these needs. The concerns of the public need to be heard and addressed.

- Continue to undertake activities to improve facilities management, considering fiscal and human needs. Enhance BCPSS' capacity for planning by hiring permanent staff with advanced analytic knowledge and skills in planning, including demography and geographic mobility.

- Consider using public-private partnerships to reduce the future management burden placed on BCPSS and using innovative approaches to reduce the costs associated with existing facilities (e.g., closing selected facilities at a school site or sharing space and responsibilities with community groups). In addition, involve families and local community leaders in the entire planning process—from conception of the plans through implementation.

- Work to improve the quality of repair and maintenance services. Consider the development of a means to track the satisfactory completion of maintenance and repair requests, possibly developing an electronic system that district and school staff can use to request work, monitor progress on the task, and evaluate the outcome (i.e.,

"customer" satisfaction) of the completed work.

5. Increase Access to High Quality IT

BCPSS has allocated significant resources to upgrade information technology throughout the district. This effort has resulted in improved communication capabilities and potentially enhanced instructional programs. However, BCPSS lacks information on the best ways to target these efforts. Specifically, information is needed on what school staff identify as their most pressing IT needs, such as computer applications, hardware, and training.

- Work in greater partnership with school staff to integrate IT plans districtwide. As part of this effort, consider completing the vision document, initiating user groups and chat rooms, and employing a full-time IT coordinator to assist with writing grants related to school IT.
- Implement current IT plans and discuss with school staff potential enhancements that will aid instructional activities or facilitate school operations. Continue expanding and enhancing:
  a. Access to email for teaching staff, wiring of schools, and provision of adequate computer hardware;
  b. Software such as classroom instruction or management tools; and
  c. Professional development services for teachers at all schools to better prepare them to integrate technology in support of learning.

6. Upgrade Communications Between the Administrative Levels and the Schools

Schools and the central office must rely upon each other for a vast amount of information to effectively and efficiently achieve the mission of BCPSS. The quality and timeliness of this information is critical to the success of their efforts from the administrative offices to the schools themselves. In addition, collaboration and accommodation to each other's needs is necessary to foster a collegial environment and further increase the success of their mission. Anecdotal and survey findings reflect that information is not always shared effectively or efficiently. Unfortunately, BCPSS does not have information on the specific points in the process where problems occur and, therefore, is unlikely to identify solutions to the problems.

- Continue to improve the process by which financial data are provided by BCPSS so that it becomes faster and more convenient for school staff and the general public.
- Investigate ways to improve the timeliness of the data delivery.

7. Continue Emphasis on Building Staff Capacity

Efforts to recruit, support, and evaluate school staff are underway. Yet during this evaluation, many questions were raised about staffing issues: the adequacy of support staff working in the schools; the incentives offered to new staff; the training and credentials of newly hired teachers; the leadership capacity of new principals; and methods used to evaluate staff. No forum exists in which school staff can participate in the development and review of plans to address these issues.

- Increase collaboration between the central office and school-level staff to identify and recruit new staff and to retain all staff. Include discussions about differential teacher compensation, professional development opportunities, and the Performance-Based Evaluation System.
- Continue to provide leadership training for principals, especially those new to BCPSS and the role.
- Examine methods that over time might reduce the number of provisionally certified teachers. Efforts to increase the proportion of certified and tenured teachers serving middle

schools and high schools are especially needed.

- Conduct an evaluation of the use of teacher portfolios. Focus the evaluation on the desired results of the teacher's work (e.g., student learning) rather than on a particular method or instrument (e.g., portfolios). Involve teachers in this review process.

8. Determine the Effects of Whole-School Reform Models

Various reform models have been implemented in schools throughout the district. Anecdotal evidence suggests that elements of each of the models can help improve student achievement. Findings from this evaluation indicate that improved achievement in some areas (e.g., language arts) is associated with selected models. However, BCPSS does not have data that could help identify the best model for its students or identify which elements of the various models have the greatest positive effects on students.

- Evaluate the effects of the multiple school reform models currently implemented in the district (e.g., Achievement First, Direct Instruction) and consider whether additional models should be adopted. Include the examination of three core issues.

  a. What effect does each model have on student achievement? This question is especially important in light of high student mobility and high teacher turnover rates.

  b. To what extent is each model aligned with BCPSS and Maryland standards, and with the current research regarding learning and cognition?

  c. To what extent is each model truly a "whole-school" reform rather than a reading program? Does the model address all content areas? Does it address pedagogy, relationships among staff, and integration across content areas?

- Expand reform efforts at middle and high schools. Specifically:

  a. Increase access to instructional materials and offer additional staff development on reform goals and methods.

  b. Create smaller learning environments (e.g., themed schools) at these levels.

  c. Initiate and more fully implement special programs such as intervention and accelerated programs, as well as alternative programs for disruptive students or other students in need.

9. Reassess and, as Necessary, Modify Curricula

BCPSS has reviewed curricula for reading/language arts, science, mathematics, and other content areas. From this process, the district has selected specific curricula for general use throughout BCPSS. Findings from this evaluation indicated widespread acceptance of the curricula and general appreciation of the related staff development that has been provided. However, we also found dissatisfaction with some elements of the curricula and need for additional support if the curricula are to meet all students' need.

- Conduct an audit and comprehensive review of the curricula that have been selected. Address the alignment of the curricula with state outcomes, student assessments, and access to textbooks and other instructional materials.

- Determine ways in which the citywide curricula can be adopted to support full inclusion of special education students, while at the same time providing the differentiation that may be needed to help them achieve their potential. Provide additional training for teachers in using the curricula with special education students.

10. Evaluate the Policies and Programs Designed to Provide Extra Supports for Young Learners and Learners at Risk

The district has implemented several new activities and programs designed to help prepare children to enter school, help prepare them to advance to the next grade level, and assist those students who are at risk of academic failure. These programs have won widespread approval of families and school staff. However, the programs come at a significant financial cost, and they absorb the attention of many staff. There are no data that provide a comprehensive assessment of the costs and benefits of these programs or services.

- Develop a class-size reduction plan that addresses *all* elementary grade levels, including prekindergarten and kindergarten, and monitor the implementation of the plan.
- Evaluate the specific ready-to-learn initiatives that are in place in the district and provide additional funds to those that are most successful at improving student readiness.
- Expand the efforts to support schools at middle and high schools with a history of low academic performance, and evaluate their effects at the earliest possible time.
- Evaluate the effects of the interventions associated with the new promotion and retention policy on student achievement. Also examine the barriers and incentives to student participation in the interventions, including factors that affect staff, parent, and student involvement.

11. Continue to Use and Develop The Master Plan as a Comprehensive Blueprint for System Functioning

BCPSS struggles to address the challenges it faces given limited financial resources. Our evaluation indicated that district and school staff, family members, and local community members all have ideas about how best to allocate resources—thereby creating competition among various initiatives that might be implemented. Strategic planning and identification of priority initiatives would help guide budget decisions; however, the budgeting process often has been completed *before* the strategic planning process.

- Improve the level of coordination and alignment of the budgeting process and The Master Plan. This includes both continuing to align programs and resources and coordinating their schedules for development and public presentation.

12. Continue Efforts to Involve Parents and Support the Work of the Parent and Community Advisory Committee

It is widely recognized that BCPSS cannot succeed in its primary mission without the support and involvement of parents. However, parental involvement has been a challenge for BCPSS during the past few years. This evaluation identified many challenges faced by families of BCPSS students that discourage the necessary support and involvement. The district has implemented some programs to foster involvement, and schools throughout the district have attempted additional efforts that were tailored to their individual school communities. Given the recognition of the role played by the parents and families, BCPSS needs more information about the barriers and more support to overcome this challenge.

- We recommend that schools improve and increase their outreach activities to intensify parent involvement in the schools. A key strategy is to increase the number and capacity of parent liaisons in the schools. Teachers, parents, and liaison staff should work together to build a parent involvement strategy tailored to each school's needs. Additional attention should also be given to the role and work of the Office of Parental Involvement. In addition, schools need to make parents members of teams working diligently to improve the achievement of students.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
	Authors and Acknowledgments	i
	Executive Summary	iii
1	Purpose of the Report	1
2	Background of the City-State Partnership	3
	Senate Bill 795	3
	Findings from the Interim Evaluation	4
	The City-State Partnership Today and the Present Evaluation	5
	References	5
3	Evaluation Approach	7
	The Design	7
	The Data Collection Methodologies	9
	Surveys	10
	Student Test Scores	11
	Site Visits	12
	Interviews	13
	Vendor Interviews	13
	Executive Interviews	13
	Focus Groups	13
	Document Reviews	14
	Stakeholder Briefings	14
	Strategies for Data Analysis	15
	Attachment: Additional Information on the Samples	17
4	Findings on Student Achievement	19
	Introduction	19
	Key Questions and Sources of Data	19
	Findings	20
	Achievement in BCPSS at the System Level	21
	System-Level Achievement in BCPSS	21
	Performance of Special Education Students	29

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

Chapter		Page
	Achievement in Selected Groups of Schools	20
	Achievement of Whole-School Reform Models	31
	Achievement of Reconstitution-Eligible Schools	37
	Other Indicators	37
	Attendance and Dropout Rates	39
	High School Completion Rates	40
	References	40
	Attachment A: Detailed Data on Assessments	41
	Attachment B: Data for AF and DI and Comparison Schools and RE and non-RE Schools	44
	Attachment C: Procedure for Conducting Sign Tests	51
5	Findings on Instructional Programs	53
	Introduction	53
	Citywide Curriculum Framework	53
	Introduction	54
	Evaluation	55
	Approach for Selecting Curricula	56
	Appropriateness of Approach for Selecting Curricula	58
	Reasonableness of Implementation Plan	58
	Teachers' Evaluations of the Curriculum Training	59
	Availability of Textbooks, Supplies, and Materials	61
	Alignment Among Curriculum, Textbooks, and Assessments	63
	Usefulness of Milestone Assessments	64
	Effectiveness for Regular and Special Education Students	65
	Quality of Instruction	69
	Recommendations	74
	Student Promotion and Retention Policy	75
	Introduction	75
	The Guiding Principles	77
	Interventions	77
	SuperKids Camp 2001	82
	Math Works	82
	Summer School Program for Grades 1, 2, and 4	82

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

Chapter	Page
Experiences Under and Reactions to the Initial Promotion and Retention Policy	83
Clarity	84
Supports and Interventions	84
Parental Notification and Involvement	86
Recommendations	88
Effectiveness of Whole-School Reform Models (Direct Instruction, Achievement First, and New Schools Initiative Reforms)	90
Introduction	90
Description of Models and How They Were Selected	91
Direct Instruction	91
Achievement First	92
New Schools Initiative	93
Monitoring	95
Comparison of Models	96
Further Issues and Recommendations	100
References	101
Other Initiatives	101
Ready-to-Learn Initiatives	102
Introduction	102
Instituting and Expanding Programs and Assessing Students	104
Staff Development and Onsite Coaching for Teachers	107
Books and Other Materials to Promote Literacy Skills and Reading Ability	107
Schools with Upgraded Technology Support	107
Efforts to Foster Parental Involvement	108
Recommendations	108

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

Chapter	Page
Class-Size Reduction	109
Introduction	109
Context	109
BCPSS Plans and Activities	111
Data Limitations Regarding Class Size	112
Evaluation Approach	112
Evaluation Results	113
Recommendations	114
References	114
Middle School and High School Efforts	115
Introduction	115
Approach Taken by BCPSS for the Middle Grades	116
Approach Taken by BCPSS for High Schools	117
Evaluation Approach	119
Findings	119
Recommendation	122
Supports for Reconstitution-Eligible (RE) Schools	123
Introduction	123
BCPSS Plans for Reconstitution-Eligible Schools	124
Future Plans for Reconstitution-Eligible Schools	126
Relationships Between the BCPSS Approach for Addressing the Needs of RE Schools and the Evaluation Approach	127
Evaluation Results	127
Monitoring	132
Recommendations	132
References	132
Special Education	133
Introduction	133
Monitoring Progress Toward Court-Approved Measurable Outcomes	136
Integration of Regular and Special Education at the Management Level	137
Recommendation	138

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

Chapter	Page
Parental Involvement	138
SB 795 and Parental Involvement	138
Research Questions and Methodology	139
Evaluation Findings	139
BCPSS-Developed Programs for Increasing Parental Involvement	140
Parental Involvement in Children's Education	140
Awareness of Master Plan and School Standards	143
Parental Satisfaction With the Schools' Outreach Efforts	143
Parental Satisfaction With Schools	144
Barriers to Parental Involvement	145
Involvement of Businesses, Community Organizations, and Service Agencies with Parents and Schools	146
Services to Homeless Students and Their Families	147
Relationship Between Parental Involvement and School Performance	148
Issues Requiring Further Consideration and Recommendations	148
Safety and Discipline	150
Introduction	150
Key Questions and Sources of Data	151
Systemwide Initiatives	151
Code of Conduct and Student Discipline Code	151
Drug and Violence Prevention and Intervention Programs	154
School-Based Initiatives	154
Alternative Learning Center (School #488)	154
Flex and Twilight Programs	157
Other Alternative Programs	157
School Safety Committees	158
Objective 6 Outcomes	159
School Climate	159
Infraction of the Discipline Code	159
Suspensions and Expulsions	162
Summary and Recommendations	162
Attachment A: New BCPSS Alternative Schools and Programs	163

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

Chapter		Page
6	Findings on Human Resources	167
	Questions and Methods	168
	Key Questions	168
	Methods	169
	Findings on the Recruitment of Teachers and Principals	169
	Introduction and Background	170
	Points of Inquiry and Sources of Evidence	171
	Incentives	172
	Quality of New Staff	172
	Steps Taken to Reduce the Number of Provisional Teachers	173
	Numbers of Teachers Currently Teaching in Areas for Which They Lack Credentials or Feel Inadequately Prepared	174
	Teacher and Principal Perceptions on the Quality of New Staff	175
	Input of School Personnel in Recruitment	176
	Conclusions and Recommendations on Recruitment	177
	Findings on the Retention of Teachers and Principals, and New-Teacher Mentoring	179
	Summary	179
	Introduction	179
	Changes in Retention Practices Since SB 795	180
	Teacher Compensation and Other Incentives	180
	Mentoring and Support of New Teachers	180
	Mentoring Program Characteristics	181
	What Conditions Contribute to the High Turnover Rate	182
	Teacher Certification	182
	Teachers' Self-Perceived Preparedness to Teach	183
	Reported Reasons for Staying or Leaving	183
	Teacher Focus Group Comments on Reasons to Stay or Leave	184
	Principals' Reasons to Leave BCPSS	185

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

Chapter	Page
Roles of Teachers and Principals in Establishing Retention Practices	185
Perceived Effectiveness of Retention Practices	186
Perceived Effectiveness of Compensation Changes	188
Perceived Effectiveness of Mentoring	189
Summary of Perceived Effectiveness of Retention and Mentoring Efforts	191
Issues for Further Consideration and Recommendations for BCPSS	191
Findings in Professional Development for Teachers and Principals	192
Summary	192
Professional Development Supports: Evaluation Questions	193
Changes Since Enactment of Senate Bill 795	193
Extent to Which Professional Development Activities are School Based	195
Range of Areas Addressed in Professional Development	196
Extent to Which All Teachers Receive Supports in Working with Special Needs Students	197
Access to Professional Development for Special Education Teachers	198
Input of Teachers into Services Offered	198
Discussion	200
Participation in Professional Development	200
Reactions to Professional Development	200
Impact of Professional Development	203
Discussion	204
Issues Requiring Further Consideration	204
Recommendations	206
Findings in Performance-Based Evaluation for Teachers and Principals	206
Summary	206
Changes Since the Enactment of SB 795	208
Role of The Master Plan	208
BCPSS Accomplishments 1998–2001	209
Summary of Changes for Teachers	211
Summary of Changes for Principals	211

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

Chapter		Page
	Views of the New Performance-Based Evaluation Systems	211
	Principals' Performance-Based Evaluation System	211
	Teachers' Performance-Based Evaluation System	214
	Summary Remarks on Performance-Based Evaluation in BCPSS	222
	Conclusions	222
	Recommendations	222
	References	225
7	Findings on Organization and Management	227
	Overview of this Chapter	227
	Section 1. Systemwide Organization and Management	228
	People	228
	Property	234
	Section 2. Departmentwide Organization and Management	241
	Facilities Planning, Maintenance, and Operations	241
	BCPSS Actions Related to Facilities in the Past Several Years	243
	School Administrators' Opinions of Facilities Department Work	245
	Maintenance and Repair	246
	Investment in Facilities	247
	Grounds Keeping	249
	Waste Management	249
	Mail Distribution	250
	Custodial Services	250
	Organization and Staffing—Facilities Department	252
	Near-Term Plans—Facilities Department	252
	Conclusion—Facilities Department	253
	Recommendations—Facilities Department	254

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

Chapter	Page
Food Services	254
Financial Management	257
Recent History	259
BCPSS Finance Office Activities and Accomplishments to Date	260
Budget	262
Grants	264
Billing and Payments	264
Benchmarking to Best Practice Processes and Procedures	264
Near-Term Plans—Finance Office	267
Conclusion and Recommendations	267
Procurement	268
Procurement—Recent History	270
Site Visit Results	271
Formal Survey Results	271
BCPSS Vendor Survey	272
Conclusions—Vendor Survey	274
Benchmarking to Best Practice Procurement Procedures	275
Conclusions—Procurement Department	277
Information Technology	278
Introduction	278
Approach	280
Findings	281
Issues	287
Summary and Conclusions	288
Recommendations	289
Supports Provided by READ	290
Background	290
Findings	290
Indications for the Future	292

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

Chapter		Page
	Section 3. Role of The Master Plan	292
	Background	292
	Approach	293
	Findings	294
	Responsiveness to SB 795	294
	The Master Plan as a Comprehensive Framework	294
	Impact of The Master Plan on the Schools and the System	295
	Section 4. The New Board of School Commissioners	298
	Background	298
	Role Played Since the Enactment of SB 795	299
	Steps Toward the Future	300
	References	300
8	Findings on Sufficiency of Funding	305
	Adequacy of Funding for BCPSS	305
	Study Questions and Evaluation Design	306
	Instruments/Analyses	306
	Legislative and Judicial History	307
	1989—The Sondheim Commission	307
	1994—The Hutchinson Commission	308
	1995—*Bradford et al.,* v *Maryland Board of Education et al.*	310
	1997—The Consent Decrees in the *Vaughn G.* and *Bradford* Cases	311
	2000—*Bradford et al.,* v *Maryland Board of Education et al.*	313
	Recent Studies with Funding Implications	315
	Current and Recent Funding Levels	315
	Comparing Baltimore's Expenditures to Other Districts'	315

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

Chapter	Page
How BCPSS Has Spent Additional Monies Provided Through the Partnership and Remedy Plan	317
City-State Partnership Funds	317
Remedy Plan Funds	319
Is BCPSS' Funding Adequate and What Difference has the City-State Partnership Made?	320
Adequacy (or Sufficiency) of Public School Funding	321
Adequacy Versus Equity	322
The Two Approaches: Successful Schools and Professional Judgment	322
Summaries of the Maryland Adequacy Studies	323
Benchmarking the Maryland Funding Adequacy Studies: Comparing Maryland's Professional Judgment Personnel Resources to Other States	325
Comparing Maryland's Professional Judgment Personnel Resources to Baltimore City Public Schools	332
Putting Adequacy Studies in Their Larger Context: Evaluating Their Assumptions	334
Evaluating the Successful Schools Approach Assumptions	335
Evaluating the Professional Judgment Approach Assumptions	337
What These Adequacy Studies Left Out	337
Overall Conclusions: Evaluating the Study Recommendations	338
References	338
Attachment A: Actual Staffing Numbers in Sample of Baltimore City Public Elementary Schools	343

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

Chapter		Page
9	Implications and Recommendations	345
	Implications	345
	Student Achievement	345
	Management	346
	Governance	347
	Adequacy of Funds	347
	Major Recommendations	348
	Involve Stakeholders	348
	Enhance Monitoring and Evaluation	348

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix		Page
A	Study Questions by Focus Area	A-1
B	Final Sampling Plans for the Teacher and Parent Surveys	B-1
C	Procedures for Weighting the Teacher and Parent Surveys	C-1
D	Survey Instruments	D-1
E	Sampling Design for the Site Visits	E-1
F	List of Individuals Interviewed	F-1
G	List of Documents Reviewed	G-1
H	Tables of Survey Findings for the Teacher, Principal and Parent Surveys	H-1
I	Special Master's Report on Special Education Policy & Procedure Provisions of 1999/2000 Implementation Plan	I-1
J	PowerPoint Presentation by Gayle Amos Before the BCPSS New Board of School Commissioners on September 25, 2001	J-1

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

List of Tables

Table		Page
Chapter 3		
3-1	Samples and response rates for the staff and parent surveys	11
3-2	Vendor survey contacts	13
Chapter 4		
4-1	Goals for BCPSS student achievement on the MSPAP, CTBS/5, and MFT	21
4-2	Normal curve equivalents on the CTBS/5, by grade and subject: Projected performance versus Master Plan targets, 2002–04	24
4-3	Percentage of students attaining satisfactory performance on MSPAP, by grade and subject: Projected performance versus Master Plan targets: 2001–04	28
4-4	MFT cumulative pass rates, by grade and subject: Projected performance versus Master Plan targets, 2001–04	28
4-5	Change in number of BCPSS students attaining satisfactory performance in MSPAP: 2000 and projected for 2004	29
4-6	Number of schools in each whole-school reform cohort, by initiative and program year	31
4-7	Percentage of students in DI schools attaining satisfactory performance on the MSPAP, by grade, subject, and cohort: 1993–2000	32
4-8	Normal curve equivalents on CTBS/5 for DI schools, by grade, subject, and cohort: BCPSS 1998–2001	33
4-9	Sign test results: DI versus comparison schools	33
4-10	Percentage of students in AF schools attaining satisfactory performance on MSPAP, by grade, subject, and cohort: 1993–2000	34
4-11	Normal curve equivalents on the CTBS/5 for AF schools, by grade, subject, and cohort	34
4-12	Sign test results: AF versus comparison schools	34
4-13	Normal curve equivalents on the CTBS/5 for DI schools by grade, subject, and cohort: Projected performance versus Master Plan targets, 2002–04	35

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

List of Tables
(continued)

Table		Page
4-14	Percentage of students in DI schools attaining satisfactory performance on the MSPAP, by grade, subject, and cohort: Projected performance versus Master Plan targets, 2001–04	35
4-15	Normal curve equivalents on the CTBS/5 for AF schools, by grade, subject, and cohort: BCPSS projected performance versus Master Plan targets, 2002–04	36
4-16	Percentage of students in AF schools attaining satisfactory performance on MSPAP, by grade, subject, and cohort: Projected performance versus Master Plan targets, 2001–04	36
4-17	Normal curve of equivalents on CTBS/5 for RE schools, by grade, subject, and cohort: 1998–2001	37
4-18	MSPAP pass rates in RE schools, by grade, subject, and cohort: 1993–2000	38
4-19	Sign test results: RE versus non-RE schools	39
4-20	Attendance rates for students in special and regular education programs, by grade: 1993–2000	39
4-21	Dropout rates for students in special and regular educational programs: 1998–2000	39
4-22	Number and percent of students awarded high school graduation certificates versus diplomas: 1998–2000	40
Chapter 5		
5-1	Percentage of teachers indicating they received training from BCPSS in implementing new curriculum	59
5-2	Percentage of teachers indicating that they received training from BCPSS on the use of new materials	60
5-3	Percentage of teachers saying that the training provided useful information to a good or great extent	60
5-4	Percentage of teachers agreeing that various factors applied to the training	60

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

List of Tables
(continued)

Table		Page
5-5	Percentage of principals agreeing that their school has sufficient material resources	61
5-6	Percentage of teachers agreeing that they have sufficient textbooks for all of their students	61
5-7	Percentage of teachers agreeing that they have sufficient supplies and materials for all of their students	62
5-8	Percentage of principals evaluating the effect of quarterly milestone assessments with regard to reform efforts as good/great	64
5-9	Teachers' estimates of the average number of students they teach who receive special education services	65
5-10	Percentage of principals evaluating the supports to assist classroom teachers in including students with special needs in their classes as adequate to a good/great extent	66
5-11	Comparison of the percentage of principals and teachers reporting that various types of support are available	66
5-12	Percentage of principals indicating that various supports are available to assist classroom teachers regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in their classes	67
5-13	Percentage of teachers agreeing that the school system gave them the support they needed to include students with special needs in their classes	67
5-14	Percentage of teachers agreeing that the special education students benefited from being included in their classes	67
5-15	Percentage of teachers agreeing that the general education students benefited from the special education students being present in their classes	68
5-16	Percentage of teachers indicating they received training from BCPSS in teaching special populations	68
5-17	Average number of hours of professional development that teachers had regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in their classes in the last 3 years	69

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

List of Tables
(continued)

Table		Page
5-18	Percentage of principals evaluating the preparation of teachers to use new textbooks and curriculum and their value in meeting students' needs as good/great	70
5-19	Percentage of teachers indicating that their professional development activities through BCPSS have much or very much enhanced their students' learning in reading, reading, and mathematics	71
5-20	Average number of hours principals spent in the classroom in an average week	72
5-21	Percentage of principals and teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing that teachers used various approaches to convey expectations	73
5-22	Percentage of principals agreeing or strongly agreeing that teachers use various approaches to convey expectations	73
5-23	Percentage of teachers agreeing that they have a clear understanding of what they are expected to achieve	74
5-24	Percentage of principals indicating that the new promotion and retention policy is helpful to a good/great extent	83
5-25	Percentage of teachers indicating that the new promotion and retention policy is effective to a good/great extent	84
5-26	Percentage of principals indicating the efficacy of summer school and extended day programs was good/great	85
5-27	Percentage of principals indicating that summer school and extended day programs helped students to a good/great extent	85
5-28	Percentage of teachers indicating that the summer school and extended day programs enhance student learning to a good/great extent	86
5-29	Percentage of parents indicating the efficacy of summer school and extended day programs	86
5-30	Percentage of schools offering parent workshops on helping students with homework or test-taking	87
5-31	Percentage of parents participating in parent workshops on helping students with homework or test-taking	87

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

List of Tables
(continued)

Table		Page
5-32	Percentage of principals reporting a lag between notification of parents and the start of summer school	88
5-33	Characteristics of schools in the New Schools Initiative	94
5-34	Percentage of principals evaluating various characteristics of reform efforts as good/great extent	98
5-35	Percentage of principals agreeing with various teacher and school characteristics	98
5-36	Percentage of principals agreeing with various statements indicating a positive impact of the reform effort on their school	99
5-37	Percentage of principals agreeing they were satisfied with various elements of the training their staff received for the reform program	99
5-38	Percentage of principals indicating that the reform efforts met the needs of different segments of their student population to a good/great extent	100
5-39	Number of schools operating prekindergarten and kindergarten programs during the 2000–2001 school year, by type of program	104
5-40	Wiring status of schools operating prekindergarten and kindergarten programs during the 2000–2001 school year, by type of program	108
5-41	Average number of students in teachers' classes this year	113
5-42	Percentage of principals agreeing that their schools have sufficient material resources	119
5-43	Percentage of teachers agreeing that their schools have sufficient textbooks and supplies for students	119
5-44	Percentage of principals evaluating various curriculum reform efforts as succeeding to a good/great extent	120
5-45	Percentage of principals agreeing with various statements about teacher competency	120
5-46	Percentage of teachers agreeing with various statements about teachers' expectations	121

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

List of Tables
(continued)

Table		Page
5-47	Percentage of principals evaluating various promotion and retention reform efforts as successful to good/great extent	121
5-48	Tenure of BCPSS teachers and principals at RE and non-RE schools	128
5-49	Percentage of principals agreeing that their schools have staff that are competent and able to meet the needs of the students	128
5-50	Percentage of principals agreeing that mentoring for new teachers has improved to a good/great extent over the last 2 years at BCPSS	128
5-51	Percentage of principals agreeing that mentoring practices have been effective for attracting new school administrators or teachers into the BCPSS over the past 2 years	128
5-52	Percentage of principals evaluating the impact of various reform efforts as good/great extent	129
5-53	Percentage of principals agreeing that that their schools have the following support	129
5-54	Percentage of principals agreeing that their schools' involvement in the reform effort has had positive impacts	129
5-55	Percentage of principals indicating that the reform program meets the needs of different segments of the student population to a good/great extent	129
5-56	Percentage of principals agreeing that the training materials their staff received for the reform program were valuable	129
5-57	Percentage of principals at reconstitution-eligible schools evaluating the impact of various reform efforts as good/great extent	130
5-58	Percentage of teachers at reconstitution-eligible schools indicating that their professional development activities through BCPSS have enhanced their students' learning much/very much	131
5-59	Percentage of teachers at reconstitution-eligible schools indicating that they agree with the following statements	131
5-60	Percentage of teachers at reconstitution-eligible schools indicating that they received training from BCPSS in the use of new textbooks	131

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

List of Tables
(continued)

Table		Page
5-61	Percentage of principals indicating that SETS reports are useful to a good/great degree	136
5-62	Percentage of principals indicating the extent to which they perceive an improvement in quality and accuracy of SETS reports over the last 4 years	137
5-63	Percentage of parents involved in various activities	142
5-64	Percentage of parents who volunteered for various activities during this school year	142
5-65	Percentage of parents aware of the standards for their children to move to the next grade	143
5-66	Percentage of parents satisfied with various outreach efforts	144
5-67	Percentage of parents satisfied with various aspects of their children's schools	145
5-68	Percentage of parents prevented from being involved in their children's education, by various factors	146
5-69	Percentage of principals and teachers reporting they received training on the new Code of Conduct	158
5-70	Percentage of principals and teachers reporting that students are familiar with the new Code of Conduct	159
5-71	Percentage of principals and teachers agreeing that their schools are safe, drug-free environments	159
5-72	Percentage of principals and teachers agreeing that students show respect to others in the school environment	160
5-73	Summary of serious incidents in BCPSS, by type of offense and years	160
5-74	Percentage of principals and teachers reporting large or very large reduction in selected infractions resulting from new code of conduct	161
5-75	Percent of principals and teachers reporting large or very large reductions in suspensions/expulsions and other disciplinary actions	161
5-76	Number of BCPSS students suspended and expelled: 1998–2001	162

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

List of Tables
(continued)

Table **Page**

Chapter 6

6-1 Numbers of provisionally certified teachers in BCPSS compared to other selected Maryland school systems 173

6-2 Percentage of principals who feel BCPSS has arranged for them to be adequately trained for their duties 174

6-3 Percentage of teachers teaching in area(s) for which they are professionally certified 175

6-4 Percentage of teachers who feel prepared in the area they are teaching, by school type and length of tenure 175

6-5 Percentage of BCPSS certified teachers, by certificate type 182

6-6 Percent of teachers reporting they area not certified in an area they teach 183

6-7 Teachers' top reasons to stay or leave BCPSS 183

6-8 Principals' top reasons to stay or leave BCPSS 186

6-9 Percentage of principals and teachers indicating BCPSS professional development activities are tailored to their needs as school leaders or teaching professionals 195

6-10 Percentage of BCPSS teachers participating in professional development activities 197

6-11 Percentage of principals and teachers indicating availability of specific supports for inclusion of students with special needs in the classroom 198

6-12 Percentage of special education teachers participating in professional development offerings through BCPSS 198

6-13 Percentage of principals and teachers rating various dimensions of professional development as good or excellent 201

6-14 Percentage of teachers rating aspects of professional development as very poor or poor, by instructional level 202

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

List of Tables
(continued)

Table		Page
6-15	Percentage of teachers and principals rating selected aspects of professional development as very poor or poor	203
6-16	Percentage of principals rating various aspects of Master Plan elements as having a moderate/strong effect students' learning	203
6-17	Percentage of teachers rating professional development activities as producing much/very much enhancement of their students' learning	204
6-18	Percentage of elementary and high school teachers rating professional development activities as producing much/very much enhancement of students' learning	204
6-19	BCPSS principals' overall survey responses regarding the district's Performance-Based Evaluation System for principals	212
6-20	Percentage of BCPSS principals reporting that the performance evaluation system for principals has had a moderate or strong effect on students' learning	214
6-21	BCPSS teachers' overall survey responses regarding the district's Performance-Based Evaluation System for teachers	215
6-22	BCPSS principals' overall survey responses regarding the district's Performance-Based Evaluation System for teachers	217
Chapter 7		
7-1	BCPSS administrative positions and salaries	231
7-2	Percentage of principals agreeing and disagreeing that their school has adequate support with regard to facilities and maintenance	246
7-3	Food Services Division organization	255
7-4	Percentage of principals agreeing with various statements about the BCPSS procurement process	271
7-5	Vendor survey contacts	273
7-6	Principals' responses regarding email	282

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

List of Tables
(continued)

Table		Page
7-7	Principals' responses regarding their teachers' training in use of computers for instructional purposes	282
7-8	Teachers' responses regarding their training in use of computers for instructional purposes	282
7-9	Principals' responses regarding student access to computers	283
7-10	Teachers' responses regarding student access to computers	283
7-11	Principals' responses regarding usefulness of reports	283
7-12	Principals' responses regarding quality of reports	284
7-13	Principals' responses regarding IT Department responsiveness	284
7-14	Teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of The Master Plan	296
7-15	Percentage of parents indicating awareness of efforts to improve schools in The Master Plan	297
Chapter 8		
8-1	BCPSS revenues from various sources (in $ millions)	315
8-2	BCPSS' proposed uses of City-State Remedy Plan funds (in $ thousands)	318
8-3	Comparison of number of personnel assigned to prototype elementary schools (at 500 pupils) in Maryland, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Oregon	326
8-4	Comparison of number of personnel assigned to prototype middle schools (at 800 pupils) in Maryland, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Oregon	326
8-5	Comparison of number of personnel assigned to prototype high schools (at 1,000 pupils) in Maryland, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Oregon	326
8-6	Comparison budgets for elementary schools	328
8-7	Comparison budgets for middle schools	329
8-8	Comparison budgets for high schools	330

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

List of Tables
(continued)

Table		Page
8-9	Staffing patterns in sample of Baltimore City public elementary schools compared to MAP and A&M professional judgment models standardized to school of 500 students	333

List of Exhibits

Chapter 3

3-1	Overview of the conceptual framework for the final evaluation of the BCPSS City-State Partnership	8

Chapter 5

5-1	Implementation schedule for the core curriculum	55
5-2	Research questions	55
5-3	Chronology of BCPSS accomplishments regarding curriculum under The Master Plan	57
5-4	BCPSS priority initiatives for 2001–02	58
5-5	Summer school 2000: Promotion and retention policy	78
5-6	Baltimore City Public School System Student Promotion and Retention Policy	79
5-7	Components of CLI	106
5-8	Recommendations of the Middle Level Task Force	116
5-9	The Blueprint for Baltimore's Neighborhood High Schools	118
5-10	Disengagement outcomes and the student achievement reporting requirement approved as part of the Vaughn G. case	134
5-11	BCPSS parent survey: Sample report by last disposition	139
5-12	Infractions by level of violation: BCPSS Student Discipline Code	152
5-13	BCPSS Code of Conduct for middle and senior high school students	152

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

List of Exhibits
(continued)

Exhibit **Page**

5-14 BCPSS Code of Conduct for elementary school students 152

5-15 Behavioral point system used at the Alternative Learning Center, School #488 156

Chapter 6

6-1 Areas of focus 169

6-2 BCPSS new hire incentives 172

6-3 Mentoring program characteristics summary chart 181

Chapter 7

7-1 The closing process 238

7-2 Summary of four areas of common findings from two financial management reviewers of BCPSS 262

7-3 Comparison of BCPSS IT practices with accepted best practices for school system IT departments 285

7-4 The IT Department's six functional units 286

7-5 Summary of IT Department Accomplishments 288

List of Figures

Chapter 4

4-1 Percentage of BCPSS students and students statewide attaining satisfactory performance on the MSPAP, by grade and subject: 1994, 1997, and 2000 22

4-2 Differences in percentage of BCPSS students and students statewide attaining satisfactory performance on the MSPAP, by grade and subject: 1994, 1997, and 2000 23

4-3 CTBS/5 tests results for Baltimore City public schools, by grade 25

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

List of Figures
(continued)

Figures **Page**

4-4 Normal curve equivalents on the CTBS/5 statewide and in BCPSS: Selected years, 1997–2001 26

4-5 MFT pass rates for the state and BCPSS, by grade and subject: 1993, 1997, and 2000 27

4-6 Pass rates on MSPAP for special education students, by grade and subject: 1998–2000 30

4-7 Pass rates on MFT for special education students, by grade and subject: 1998–2000 30

Chapter 7

7-1 Trends in enrollment and total instructional salaries (in 1983 dollars): 1995 to 2002 230

7-2 Trends in enrollment and administration salaries (in 1983 dollars): 1995 to 2002 230

7-3 Percentage of personnel who serve mostly administrative functions in BCPSS and other Maryland schools districts, by category: 2000–2001 231

7-4 Percentage of central office administrative personnel in BCPSS and other Maryland school districts, by level: 2000–2001 232

7-5 Trends in enrollment and number of personnel 233

7-6 Trends in enrollment and total salaries (in 1983 dollars): 1995–2002 233

7-7 Percentage of teachers in BCPSS and the other Maryland school districts, by years of experience: 2000 233

7-8 Total enrollment in BCPSS schools, pre-K–12: September 1990–September 2000 236

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(continued)

List of Figures
(continued)

Figures **Page**

7-9 First grade enrollment in Baltimore schools and births 7 years earlier, for actual and projected years: 1991 to 2007 236

7-10 Actual versus projected enrollment data for grades K–12: 1998–2000 237

7-11 BCPSS actual and projected enrollments in grades K–5: 1990–2010 238

7-12 Trends in enrollment and state-rated capacity: 1995–2004 239

7-13 Annual average capital outlay as a percentage of current and total expenditures for the nation and particular groups of urban school districts: 1992–98 248

7-14 Annual average capital outlay as a percentage of current and total expenditures for the nation and particular groups of urban school districts: 1992–98 248

7-15 Annual average operation and maintenance of plant as a percentage of current expenditures for five large Maryland school districts: 1992–98 249

Chapter 8

8-1 Local share of current revenues provided by BCPSS and the rest of state: Various years 315

8-2 Per-pupil current expenditure in 19 large urban school districts: 2000–2001 316

8-3 Per-pupil current expenditure in 6 large urban Northeast-Midwest school districts: 2000–2001 316

8-4 Per-pupil total current expenditures for BCPSS and two groups of large urban school districts: Various years 317

1. Purpose of the Report

The Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) is an urban school system that serves over 98,000 students. Like many urban schools systems across the country, this system, once recognized for educational excellence, has been struggling. For over 20 years, BCPSS has been a system in decline, a system without a sufficient supply of high-quality teachers, without adequately supplied and maintained school buildings, and without the resources to make a change. Recognizing the failure of the system to adequately meet the needs of Baltimore's public school students, an aggressive effort at reform was initiated in 1997. This effort was designed to change the system dramatically, reforming and revitalizing everything from its curriculum, to its management, to its maintenance and business functions.

Maryland State Senate Bill (SB) 795—The City-State Partnership legislation—established and provided detailed guidance for this reform. In addition to laying out an explicit set of changes that needed to be addressed, SB 795 dissolved the existing management structure and put in place a very different one, one drawing upon the unique set of resources available to the city. BCPSS, like a number of other urban systems today, was under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Mayor. The school system shared many of the support services of the city as a whole and, although in many ways an independently functioning unit, was managed at least nominally by the city's governing structure. SB 795 changed this; it uncoupled the Baltimore City Public School System from the City of Baltimore and established control of the schools under a newly created board—the New Board of School Commissioners—jointly appointed by the mayor and the governor. New relationships between the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the school system were established. In addition, the legislation specified steps that the New Board was expected to take and provided a detailed listing of the changes that were to result from them.

Recognizing that change does not happen over night, the legislation called for a multiyear effort. Included was a set of reporting requirements for the Board, for the school system's Chief Executive Officer, and for MSDE. In addition SB 795 also required two external assessments of progress, an interim assessment and a final evaluation.

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the second of these external assessments, the "final" evaluation. In January 2001, MSDE and BCPSS contracted with Westat, a survey research organization in Rockville, Maryland, to provide an external evaluation of progress at the end of the first 4 years of the implementation of the City-State Partnership. The evaluation provides a broad-based analysis of BCPSS' achievements and examines the degree to which, under the City-State Partnership, BCPSS is moving toward the goals and objectives established by the legislation and is providing a more effective and efficient educational system. It examines issues concerning system management, system structure, and student outcomes to determine whether or not underlying problems are being addressed and the extent to which current strategies are moving BCPSS toward success.

As specified in the Request for Proposal, the evaluation addresses the following critical research questions:

- Whether or not BCPSS has improved student achievement during the four years since SB 795 was enacted.
- Whether or not BCPSS has improved system management since SB 795 was enacted, as evidenced by performance in previously identified areas of deficiency. And, whether or not BCPSS' current

management tools are being used effectively as evidenced by the implementation of key Master Plan initiatives.

- Whether and the extent to which any such improvement or lack thereof is the result of the new governance structures established by SB 795.
- Whether the levels and use of funds for the Baltimore City Public School System are sufficient.

We have organized this report into several chapters.

- Chapter 2 looks more closely at SB 795 and its mandates.
- Chapter 3 provides a summary of our design and evaluation approach.
- Next are several chapters that present the study findings. Chapter 4 discusses achievement; Chapter 5 discusses instructional practices and related supports such as parental involvement and a safe and secure learning environment; Chapter 6 discusses human resources; and Chapter 7 discusses management and organization.
- In Chapter 8, we discuss funding adequacy and how BCPSS has used the additional funds received through the City-State Partnership and the Remedy Plan funds. This chapter is somewhat different from the other "findings" chapters, as our charge was to review and comment on reports from two commissions studying the issue, rather than directly analyzing the issues as part of our own data collection.
- Chapter 9 pulls together themes from across the previous chapters addressing the four major research questions underlying this evaluation and provides recommendations for additional activities that we believe would strengthen the City-State Partnership.

It is important to note how this evaluation has been conceptualized and is being approached. We see this effort as an assessment of reform in progress and not a final product. That is, although this assessment is called a "final evaluation," it is not intended to examine whether all goals have been fully met and the reform is complete. While SB 795 requires that "the comprehensive review and evaluation shall determine whether there has been improvement in the management of and student achievement in the public schools in Baltimore City," we see our charge to be determining whether the effort seems to be on the right track, whether student learning is improving, and whether a re-engineered management and support structure has been put in place. Looking at the evidence before us, our goal is to evaluate whether a dysfunctional structure has been changed to one that can function to provide our assessment of whether or not the extent of change that has occurred provides confirmation of the merits of the newly established system, and to offer recommendations to support continued improvement.

2. Background of the City-State Partnership

In 1997, events converged to create a crisis of confidence in the Baltimore City Public School System that brought into conflict the Office of the Mayor, the Maryland State Department of Education, the leadership of BCPSS, concerned citizens of Baltimore, and the U.S. federal government. Two legal suits, one on behalf of special education students (the Vaughn G. case) and one on behalf of regular education students (the Bradford case), pointed to wide ranging inadequacies in provision of educational services and supports for learning and the need for more funding to support the BCPSS educational system.

In a joint pretrial statement in the case of *Bradford* v *the Maryland State Board of Education and the Board of School Commissioners of Baltimore City* and *Vaughn G.* v *Amprey, et al.*, the plaintiffs stated:

> The Maryland Constitution requires the State to provide for a "thorough and efficient" public education system that offers each child an adequate education as measured by contemporary educational standards. By every contemporary educational standard, the State has failed to provide the schoolchildren residing in Baltimore City with an adequate education.

In addition, stress and distrust between the school system and its stakeholders had been exacerbated by the system's near total failure to implement recommendations for broad-based changes in management and culture made in the study report known as "The Cresap Report" (Towers Perrin/Cresap,1992).

Senate Bill 795

Responding to what was soundly denounced as a chaotic and dysfunctional situation that was only worsening, in 1997, the Maryland General Assembly called for broad-based reforms in the delivery of education and the management of the educational system. The legislation specifying the components of these reforms, Senate Bill 795, was both innovative and far-reaching. Taking the control of the school system away from the Office of the Mayor where it had long resided, SB 795 called for a partnership between Baltimore City and the State of Maryland. This has evolved into a strong working relationship between the New Board of School Commissioners and the Maryland State Department of Education. The City-State Partnership was to be in effect until at least 2002.

Some highlights of the legislation are as follows:

- The establishment of a nine-member New Board of School Commissioners, jointly appointed by the mayor and the governor, with assistance from MSDE. This board was to include a specified number of experts in business, education, and working with disabled children. A student member (nonvoting) was also included.
- The development of a transition plan and a Master Plan to provide direction and oversight for the educational system.
- The establishment of a Chief Executive Officer, a Chief Academic Officer, a Chief Financial Officer, a Research and Evaluation unit, and a Parent and Community Advisory Board.
- Starting with the transition year following the passage of SB 795, the state has provided BCPSS with $254 million in additional funding to support reform.

In addition, the focus and contents of a guiding tool for management, a Master Plan, was addressed in detail (SB 795, Section 4-309). This plan was to provide for the improvement of student achievement and the management and accountability of BCPSS.

Actions were to be developed to address the following issues:

- The key recommendation of the 1991 Cresap Report and 1994 and 1995 MGT of America, Inc., Reports;
- The requirements of the Vaughn G. case;
- A reorganization of the BCPSS central office;
- Needs in curriculum and instruction, including the development and dissemination of a citywide curriculum framework reflecting the state learning outcomes, an effective program of professional development for staff and implementation of a performance-based personnel evaluation system for teachers, principals, and administrators, and an effective educational system for meeting the needs of students at risk of educational failure;
- The provision of effective management information systems, including the capacity to track student enrollment, attendance, academic records, discipline records, and compliance with the provisions of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
- The provision of an effective financial management and budgeting system;
- The provision of effective staff hiring and assignment procedures;
- The development of an effective system to provide instructional materials and support services;
- The development of model school reform initiatives;
- The provision of appropriate methods for student assessment and remediation;
- The development of an effective system for planning and providing for construction, repair, and maintenance services;
- An increase in parental participation;
- The development of measurable outcomes and timelines for the implementation and evaluation of the reforms;
- The improvement of the status of schools that are subject to state reconstitution; and
- The development of an effective system of teacher input regarding these reform activities.

Findings from the Interim Evaluation

In accordance with the requirements of SB 795, an interim evaluation of the progress of the City-State Partnership was conducted and submitted to the legislature by February 1, 2000. This evaluation, conducted by Metis Associates of New York, assessed progress as of the 1998–99 school year, including the updating process for the 1999–2000 Master Plan. The report reached the following conclusions:

- The City-State Partnership created by the General Assembly in 1997 has played a key role in the school system's reform effort. The impact of the Partnership is seen not only in the availability and utilization of funds, but also in contributions to policy issues.
- During its brief history, the New Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners has taken meaningful and essential steps to improve BCPSS.
- BCPSS has made meaningful progress in improving management, including reorganizing the human resources function and overhauling the management information systems.

- BCPSS has made meaningful progress in implementing instructional initiatives at the elementary grade levels, recruitment and retention initiatives, and professional development initiatives.

- BCPSS has demonstrated mixed results in improving student achievement, but that is a reasonable expectation at such an early stage in a multiyear reform effort.

- Although in need of some design changes, overall The Master Plan provides a strong focus and structure for reform. It includes most of the kinds of strategies that are believed to promote successful student outcomes, and is tailored to specific problems that have been identified, such as high rates of teacher turnover and large class sizes.

- Overall, financial resources available to BCPSS are inadequate. On the basis of the analysis conducted by the Council of the Great City Schools, an additional $2,698 per pupil, resulting in a total per-pupil expenditure of $10,274, is necessary for adequacy.

The City-State Partnership Today and the Present Evaluation

In 2001, the City-State Partnership is still in place and being guided by the spirit and the specifications of SB 795. Many new initiatives have been put in place, although few could be considered fully tested or established. The Master Plan continues to be revised on an annual basis, and a compliance monitoring system has been installed to examine the extent to which the needs of students with disabilities are being met.

While there has been considerable turnover at the management level of BCPSS, many of the leaders from the state and school community are still active players in the reform and maintain a strong commitment to its goals. It is important to point out that belief in the ability of the system to change, at least among the players in the Partnership, not only persists, but has grown.

The analyses presented in this report are intended to examine the outcomes of the City-State Partnership on student learning and management and administration of the school system. While recognizing the importance of the sustained commitment of the state and district staff, the major focus of the evaluation is to go beyond measures of intent to look for evidence that accomplishments have been attained and plans/infrastructure are being put in place to sustain and enhance progress toward the fundamental goals of the reform effort.

References

MGT of America, Inc. (1995). *Monitoring and Evaluating Implementation of Management Study Recommendations in Baltimore City Public Schools*. Tallahassee, FL: MGT of America.

MGT of America, Inc. (1996). *A Report on Monitoring Implementation of Management Study Recommendations in Baltimore City Public Schools. Phase II.* Tallahassee, FL: MGT of America.

Towers Perrin/Cresap. (1992). *A Report of a Management Study of the Baltimore City Public Schools*. Unpublished report. Study funded by the Associated Black Charities.

3. Evaluation Approach

The evaluation of the City-State Partnership calls for examination of both detailed operational questions concerning changes in instructional and support services and broad-based research questions about the efficacy of the overall reform. To address these areas, a multilevel, mixed-method evaluation design was developed. This chapter describes the conceptual model underlying our evaluation design, the data collection methodologies, and our strategies for analyzing the various sources of data.

The Design

Exhibit 3-1 lays out the conceptual framework underlying this design. It consists of three components: resources and inputs, areas of investigation, and research questions.

Resources and inputs are the support and guidance given to BCPSS to carry out the reform effort. Included are both sources of funding and the legal and legislative directives that have led to and shaped the reform process.

Areas of investigation are the components of the school system targeted for change through the reform effort. We have divided these components in to what we have called 10 "focal areas" of investigation.[1]

- Student achievement,
- Instructional program and supports,
- Special education,
- Parent and community involvement,
- School safety (civil, secure, and orderly learning environment),
- Human resources,
- Organization and management,
- Finance, budgeting, and funding,
- Construction, repairs, and maintenance, and
- Management information systems.

Focal Areas of Investigation

Student achievement examines the current level of performance of BCPSS students, as well as the change in performance following implementation of The Master Plan. The evaluation looks at performance for the system as a whole and for critical subgroups such as students from different racial/ethnic groups and students in schools receiving special services or participating in special programs such as whole-school reform programs.

Instructional program and supports looks at broad-based changes that have taken place in the instructional program. It focuses on the establishment of a citywide curriculum framework, quarterly milestone assessments of student achievement, piloting of whole-school reform models, the new student promotion and retention policy, ready-to-learn initiatives, class-size reduction, and enhanced support for reconstitution-eligible schools

The area of **special education** focuses on special education inclusion initiatives, resources available to support progress toward court-approved measurable outcome targets, and organized integration of special education with general education. Data used for monitoring compliance are reviewed and summarized.

To address the support of **parents, family, the community, and business**, the evaluation focuses on areas of involvement, family support of student achievement, and collaboration with other providers.

[1] These 10 focal areas incorporate the objectives of The BCPSS Master Plan, but have been organized to reflect the logic of the evaluation design.

Exhibit 3-1.
Overview of the conceptual framework for the final evaluation of the BCPSS City-State Partnership

Resources and Inputs	Areas of Investigation*	Research Questions
• Funds — City — State — Federal — Foundation • Legal and Legislative Actions — Vaughan G. — Bradford — Senate Bill 795	• Student Achievement • Special Education Services • Instructional Program and Supports • Parent/Family/Community Support • School Environment and Safety • Human Resources • Management/Organization • Finance/Budgeting • Construction/Repairs/Maintenance • Management Information Systems/ Technology	• Improved Achievement? • Improved Management and Use of Management Tools? • Effective Governance? • Sufficient Funding?

*These areas reflect the objectives of The Master Plan.

Evaluating the establishment of **secure, civil, and orderly learning environments** focuses on initiatives that have been put in place to provide a learning environment that is safe for both students and teachers and creates a climate that supports and encourages the learning process.

The evaluation of **human resources** examines efforts to provide a more qualified, stable teaching and administrative staff. It assesses recruitment practices, mentoring and retention strategies for new teachers, professional development activities, and the Performance-Based Evaluation System.

Under **organization and management of BCPSS**, the evaluation examines issues including system organization, allocation of resources, the role of The Master Plan accountability, and effectiveness of the New Board of School Commissioners.

Examination of the effectiveness of the **financial management and budgeting of BCPSS** looks at systems for managing funds, reporting mechanism, and systemwide procurement procedures. In addition, the findings of two new studies on funding adequacy are examined.

The evaluation of **construction, repairs, and maintenance** addresses the effectiveness of the system for planning and providing such services for school buildings. Decisions regarding closing versus repairing schools are also examined.

The **information technology** evaluation examines whether substantive changes been made in the MIS function at BCPSS that are consistent with original recommendations. Second, the analysis examines whether these changes facilitated school-level management, fostered an increase in accountability, and ultimately led to direct improvements in education or better utilized resources.

Research questions are the broad-based issues of the overall reform process that must be addressed in determining the success to date of the partnership. The questions are:

- Whether or not BCPSS has improved student achievement during the four years since SB 795 was enacted.
- Whether or not BCPSS has improved system management since SB 795 was enacted, as evidenced by performance in previously identified areas of deficiency. And whether or not BCPSS' current management tools are being used effectively as evidenced by the implementation of Master Plan initiatives.
- Whether, and the extent to which, any such improvement or lack thereof is the result of the new governance structures established by SB 795.
- Whether the levels and use of funds for the Baltimore City Public Schools are sufficient.

Appendix A provides greater detail on the questions addressed, by focus area.

The Data Collection Methodologies

Mixed-method methodology was adopted to address these questions. Mixed-method approaches combine quantitative data collection approaches, such as surveys and analyses of test performance, with qualitative data collection approaches, such as interviews, site visits, focus groups, and document reviews. The former provide numerical estimates of outcomes that can be used to assess progress against standards or targets; the latter provide rich, narrative information that can be used to examine phenomena not readily amenable to quantitative exploration or provide a context and fuller explanation for quantitative data. Multiple sources of data were used to address each of the focal areas and the study questions under them. In this section, we present a brief description of the data collection methodologies and how they were used in the evaluation.

Surveys

Surveys were used to gather broad-based data on each of the 10 focal areas. A major core of the study was a set of surveys, in English only, sent to staff and parents.[2] Staff surveys were conducted using a paper-and-pencil format to gather information on the implementation and efficacy of the reform. These principal and teacher surveys covered similar areas:

- Professional development;
- Recruitment, mentoring, and retention;
- The Performance-Based Evaluation Systems for teachers and principals;
- Supports for instruction and program management;
- Inclusion of special education students;
- Information technology;
- Safety and conduct; and
- Parental involvement.

Parents (or guardians) were contacted via telephone, using a computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI). The parent survey, more limited than the principal or teacher surveys, focused on:

- Parents' involvement with their child's school,
- Parents' understanding of selected school policies and procedures, and
- Parents' perceptions of the extent to which the school was meeting their child's needs.

Sampling approaches differed somewhat by respondent type. Because of their relatively limited number, all principals were included. The teacher survey was sent to a stratified random sample of approximately 1,500 teachers (approximately 25 percent of the BCPSS teacher population). For the parent survey, a sample of approximately 3,000 students was drawn from the student database and calls were made to designated contact numbers until at least 775 interviews were completed.[3]

For each of these surveys, the following stratifiers were used:

- Regular elementary schools
- Regular elementary/middle schools
- Regular middle schools
- Regular high schools
- Achievement First schools
- Direct Instruction schools
- Citywide schools
- Special education schools
- Alternative schools

For the teacher survey the following sort variables were also used:

For schools

- Reconstitution eligibility
- Administrative area

[2] The scope of work for the study did not call for multiple language versions of the surveys, and we were told that this was not a significant problem.

[3] The parent sample and sampling approach was somewhat different than that used with teachers. We recognized early on that the information on which we were basing our sampling and calling was of lesser quality and currency than that for principals and teachers, and there was little that could be done to improve it. Because of student mobility and other factors, many of the numbers provided were no longer in service when we called or reached a home. One of the challenges of this study has been determining what the response rate is for parents because it has been difficult to determine how many of the numbers we sampled actually could be considered eligible at the time the calls were made.

- School performance index[4]
- Percent free/reduced-price lunch

For teachers

- Subject
- Certification type
- Years of experience

Table 3-1 provides a summary response rates for the staff and parent surveys. The attachment to this chapter presents additional information on the samples.

Table 3-1.
Samples and response rates for the staff and parent surveys

	Principal survey	Teacher survey	Parent survey
Initial sample	179	1,525[1]	3,000[2]
Completed responses.....	168	1,019	775
Response rate.....	93.9%	69.1%	27.3%

[1]Thirty-five teachers selected in the sample had left BCPSS by the time they received the survey.

[2]Because of nonworking numbers and student mobility, only 2,838 phone numbers in the sample were considered eligible.

It should be noted that while the response rate for teachers is somewhat less than our goal, even this relatively modest response was achieved only after repeated calls, mailings, and related followup efforts. Although a number of respondents had a great deal to say, many teachers refused to participate despite letters from the superintendent, principals' announcements, and our phone calls.

A fuller technical discussion of our approach to these surveys is presented in the appendices. Technical details on the sampling approaches are presented in Appendix B. Details on the weighting of responses are presented in Appendix C. Copies of the survey instruments are presented in Appendix D.

Student Test Scores

The evaluation looked at the results from several standardized tests given to BCPSS students.[5] First is the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP), administered every May to students in grades 3, 5, and 8. This performance test, especially developed for Maryland students, assesses achievement in reading, writing, language usage, science, mathematics, and social studies. Performance on this test is a critical determiner of whether or not the state will view a school as succeeding or in danger of being "reconstituted." [6]

Second are the Maryland Functional Tests (MFT), which measure basic competencies in mathematics, reading, writing, and citizenship. Passing these tests is a requirement for receiving

[4] The school performance index provides a measure of a school's relative distance from state established standards for satisfactory performance. This index is used to describe performance on an annual basis. Different elements are considered at different school levels. At the elementary level, the critical elements are MSPAP results by content area of grades 3 and 5 and attendance. At the middle school level, the elements are MSPAP results by content areas for grade 8, MFT results, and attendance. At the high school level, the elements are MFT results at the end of grades 9 and 11, attendance, and dropout rate.

The following SPI categories were used to classify schools in this evaluation.

Classification of SPI categories

School level	SPI		
	Low	Medium	High
Elementary.....	<26	26 39	39+
Elementary/middle.....	<31	31 45	45+
Middle	< 31	31 39	39+
High.....	< 81	81 94	94+

[5] In addition to these tests, BCPSS has also begun to introduce quarterly milestone assessments. These assessments, currently being phased in, provide a measure of student performance at selected time points during the year. Originally we had hoped to track changes in performance over time on these curriculum specific measures. However, because they have only begun to be phased in over the last 2 years, with the first year being a pilot test, sufficient data are not yet available for analysis.

[6] Reconstitution is that part of the accountability process under the Maryland School Performance Program dealing with the lowest performing schools that are not meeting state standards and declining or failing to show substantial and sustained improvement. (Memo to the members of the Board of Education from Nancy Grasmick, February 2001).

a high school diploma. Students are initially assessed in grade 6 in all but writing, and those who do not pass are reassessed in grades 7–12, providing maximal opportunity for fulfilling the graduation requirement.

The final set of test data come from the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS/5), a commercially available, standardized multiple-choice test battery providing data that can be compared to national norms. BCPSS uses the tests to measure student performance over time, assist in determining promotion or retention, and provide one kind of information about eligibility for placement in special education.

Using school-level data provided by the BCPSS' Division of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (READ), our analyses examined student scores on these assessments over time, assessing whether differences in performance are found when scores are compared for several years before and after the initiation of the reform. As will be discussed in more detail later on, analyses looked at overall system performance as well as performance for selected groups of schools. In addition, where special studies of students' performance on one or more of these measures had been conducted by BCPSS or other groups, reports were reviewed and findings incorporated, as relevant.

Site Visits

Site visits were made to 35 BCPSS schools. These visits were made to get a more indepth, and contextually coherent look at school operations, to supplement the broad-based data obtained through the surveys.

These site visits had two foci. First, a limited set of visits was made to look at what might be called the "support" functions of the schools. These 10 half-day school visits were structured to look at issues related to maintenance and repairs, business functions and reporting, and access to information technology (IT). They were used to garner anecdotal evidence and impressions, and to evaluate the performance of IT from a user's perspective. Elementary, middle, and senior high schools were visited.

The principal, vice principal(s), administrative staff, technical coordinator, media specialist (librarian), and at least one classroom teacher were interviewed at each school visited. BCPSS selected the schools, all of which had been wired for at least 1 year. BCPSS felt that the personnel at these schools would be more familiar with the functions, capabilities, and potential of the IT services.

Second, site visits were used to look more deeply at the educational climate and educational services currently being offered across the system. Using a sample of 25 purposefully selected schools, two members of the evaluation team spent a full day in each school, interviewing teachers, both new and veteran, talking to administrators, meeting with leadership teams, talking to parents (if present or invited), and observing classrooms. Topics covered included changes in what students know and can do; use of new curricula, textbooks, and assessments; the promotion and retention policy; staff development, recruitment and evaluation; The Master Plan and school improvement plans; parental involvement; and special programs. Building walk-throughs were also conducted to get a general sense of school maintenance and cleanliness, as well the kinds of displays/ messages presented to students and visitors. These visits were guided by an protocol and observational checklist. (The checklist was one used by MSDE in their monitoring visits.) School improvement plans, budgets, and staff allocations were also collected. The following variables were considered in selecting schools for these visits:

- School level (elementary, middle, elementary/middle, high school, special education, and alternative);
- Area (NO, NE, NW, SO, SE, SW, DI, MC, CA);
- Schoolwide reform models (Direct Instruction, Achievement First, New Schools Initiative);

- Other reform initiatives (summer school, after-school programs, full-day kindergarten, and full-day and half-day pre-kindergarten);
- Mentoring programs (BLUM Mentoring, REACT, Teach for America, and Resident Teacher Program);
- Reconstitution eligibility;
- School performance index (SPI); and
- Composite index (CI).[7]

Appendix E presents the sampling plan for the 25 site visits and the instruments used.

Interviews

Vendor Interviews

Interviews were conducted with a variety of vendors who provide supplies, materials, and other services to BCPSS. The initial list (obtained February 27, 2001) was augmented by a second list obtained from the Procurement Department and a shorter list of architectural and construction firms provided by Donald Manekin, who at the time was the Chief Operating Officer of BCPSS. Initially, 20 vendors (and a number of alternate vendors) were randomly selected from the list, and their phone numbers were obtained from directory assistance and Internet sources. Additional replacement vendors were selected until 20 calls had been completed. (See Table 3-2 for a description of the disposition of the 40 calls that were ultimately made.) Vendors were queried regarding how long their firms had been a supplier to BCPSS, compared to their other clients, how easy it was to respond to Requests for Bids and to process purchase orders, the average length of time for payments to be received, and (if the respondent's firm had been a supplier for more than 4 years) if there had been any observed change in the bidding process, the quality of purchase orders, and the length of time for payments to be received.

Table 3-2.
Vendor survey contacts

Result	Number
Completed	20
Not completed	20
Bad telephone number	3
Not a current vendor	5
Not interested/refused	6
Did not answer/did not return message	6

Of the 20 vendors surveyed, 5 had serviced the school district for 3 or fewer years, and 7 had business contacts with the school district for 7 or more years—"forever" is how one vendor described it.

Executive Interviews

Executive interviews were conducted for two purposes: to gain background information on the City-State Partnership, particularly how it came to be and how it has been implemented; and to gather opinions on the efficacy of strategies from stakeholders at all levels within and outside of the school system itself. As needed, repeat interviews were held with some respondents to clarify information or gather additional data as new findings emerged. Interviews included the BCPSS CEO, the State Superintendent of Education, other senior BCPSS managers, members of the New Board of School Commissioners, and other community members. Appendix F presents a listing of these individuals interviewed.

Focus Groups

Focus group interviews serve to provide indepth, narrative data—beyond that captured by survey—on the experiences of BCPSS teachers, mentors, and school administrators. The method aids in better understanding the area of human resources and staff participation in and perceptions of new practices, initiatives, and systems that have been

[7] The composite index represents the percentage of total available test content for which a group is accountable in which students score at satisfactory or better.

developed to recruit, retain, support, and evaluate BCPSS staff. Further, focus groups provide unique opportunities to hear directly from stakeholders, as well as providing the opportunity for participants to interact during the session so that views and answers that may not be forthcoming in individual modes can emerge.

The data collected from the focus groups served a number of purposes, including:

- Supporting, explaining, and/or elaborating results obtained from the teacher and principal surveys;
- Supporting, explaining, and/or elaborating understandings garnered from document review and key informant interviews;
- Providing insight that may help explain divergent views among stakeholder groups, for example, district staff, classroom teachers, and school principals; and
- Providing insight that may help explain differences in survey responses among different teacher groups (e.g., new teachers vs. veterans), or between teachers and principals.

The evaluation team conducted four focus group meetings (two for teachers, one for new teacher mentors, and one for principals). Focus group members were chosen purposively rather than randomly on the basis of their survey responses and salient characteristics of their schools. We used a modified "extreme case" approach in that participants were recruited based on the extremes of either high or low satisfaction with BCPSS, based on responses to the survey item "Would you recommend working in BCPSS to a colleague or friend?"

Nine principals, 7 mentors, and 20 (8 "would recommend" and 12 "would not recommend") teachers participated in the focus group interviews. Each participant was paid a stipend of $100 as a small acknowledgment of their time and contribution, and each group was assured verbally and in writing of the confidentiality of individual comments.

For each focus group session, the evaluation team posed questions pertaining to:

- Teacher recruitment in BCPSS, including changes since SB 795,
- Teacher retention and mentoring in BCPSS, including changes since SB 795,
- Professional development in BCPSS, including changes since SB 795, and
- Performance evaluation in BCPSS, including changes since SB 795.

Document Reviews

Throughout the evaluation process, we collected and reviewed a variety of documents. These included test score reports, reports of program evaluations, the annual Master Plan and Master Plan updates, budgets, handbooks and training materials, notes of Board meetings, policies and memos. Special attention was paid to the review and analysis of reports from two ongoing studies of funding sufficiency, sponsored by the ad hoc executive Maryland Commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence (The "Thornton Commission") and the New Maryland Education Coalition. Appendix G presents a list of the documents requested and received from BCPSS, as well as additional documents examined.

Stakeholder Briefings

Several stakeholder meetings were held both at the initiation of the evaluation and as findings were being codified. The included both meetings designed to inform the stakeholders about the evaluation and a meeting that used a focus group approach to gather input from the stakeholders on selected issues. These meetings provided both inputs for the evaluation design and additional insights into study issues through discussion with those who attended.

Strategies for Data Analysis

In line with the data collection techniques used, we have employed a variety of data analysis techniques for summarizing the data collected. For data collected through qualitative means, we have developed summaries of findings and conducted cross-case analyses to uncover emergent themes, including consistencies and inconsistencies among cases and respondents.

For quantitative data such as those collected through surveys, our approach has been to examine frequencies and crosstabulations, looking for differences that reach statistical significance. Unless otherwise noted, all differences reported are ones that met the criteria of P less than 0.05.[8,9]

Where possible we have also conducted what has been called "benchmarking." Benchmarking provides a way of comparing data from a particular site to others like it in critical dimensions or to what is known about best practices in an area. Benchmarking was used in our examination of achievement, of funding sufficiency, and IT practices.

[8] The Bonferroni adjustment procedure was used.

[9] The full tables from the teacher, principal, and parent surveys are provided in Appendix H.

Attachment
Additional Information on the Samples

A1. Principal counts by analytic category

Principal characteristic	Number
Total	168
Instructional level	
Elementary	98
Elementary/middle	22
Middle	21
High	19
Other	8
School status	
Regular schools	104
AF/DI schools	42
Alternative schools	7
Special education schools	7
Citywide schools	8
AF/DI status	
AF	25
DI	17
Other	126
School size	
Less than 400	67
400-599	46
600 or more	55
Free/reduced lunch	
Less than 75 percent	84
75 percent or more	84
Reconstitution eligibility status	
Eligible	74
Ineligible	94
SPI performance	
Missing data	15
Low scores	47
Medium scores	52
High scores	54
Change in SPI over 3 years	
Not available	21
No change or decline in scores	25
Increase of 1 to 5 points	32
Increase of 6 to 10 points	47
Increase over 10 points	43
Length of tenure	
-1	1
2 years or less	72
3-5 years	50
More than 10 years	45

A2. Teacher counts by analytic category

Teacher characteristic	Number
Total	1,019
Instructional level	
Elementary	287
Elementary/middle	191
Middle	160
High	287
Other	94
School status	
Regular schools	601
AF/DI schools	160
Alternative schools	81
Special education schools	74
Citywide schools	103
AF/DI status	
AF	75
DI	85
Other	859
School size	
Less than 400	253
400-599	164
600 or more	602
Free/reduced lunch	
Less than 75 percent	663
75 percent or more	356
Reconstitution eligibility status	
Eligible	454
Ineligible	565
SPI performance	
Missing data	120
Low scores	268
Medium scores	316
High scores	315
Change in SPI over 3 years	
Not available	115
No change or decline in scores	168
Increase of 1 to 5 points	250
Increase of 6 to 10 points	287
Increase over 10 points	199
Length of tenure	
-1	11
2 years or less	304
3-5 years	243
6-10 years	147
More than 10 years	314
Teacher certification	
Provisional	214
Not provisional	721
Not certified	84

A3. Response rates by strata: Principal

Principal stratum	Percent of strata
Total	93.9
None	80.0
Regular elementary schools	93.4
Regular elementary/middle schools	100.0
Regular middle schools	87.5
Regular high schools	80.0
AF/DI schools	97.7
City-wide schools	100.0
Special education centers	100.0
Alternative schools	93.9

A4. Response rates by strata: Teachers

Teacher stratum	Percent of strata	Ineligible*
Total	69.1	35
Regular elementary schools	68.8	12
Regular elementary/middle schools	74.3	3
Regular middle schools	66.4	6
Regular high schools	69.5	3
AF/DI schools	65.2	3
City-wide schools	71.3	4
Special education centers	69.7	2
Alternative schools	71.6	2

*Thirty-five teachers selected in the sample had left BCPSS by the time they received the survey.

A5. Response rates by strata: Parents

Teacher stratum	Ratio
Total	27.3
Regular elementary schools	29.8
Regular elementary/middle schools	35.7
Regular middle schools	26.7
Regular high schools	21.1
AF schools	25.4
DI schools	27.4
City-wide schools	31.3
Special education centers	26.5
Alternative schools	24.3

4. Findings on Student Achievement

Evaluation findings indicate that BCPSS has made broad-based progress toward achievement goals but still must work diligently to accelerate student learning. Specifically:

- *Achievement in BCPSS has improved in the years that followed implementation of The Master Plan. Results of the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills/5 (CTBS/5), the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP), and the Maryland Functional Tests (MFT) all show improved performance, though to different degrees. While BCPSS has begun to close the gap between its students and students statewide in a number of areas on the MSPAP, achievement on the CTBS/5 and the MSPAP remains considerably lower than state averages and falls far short of state standards in all subjects and all grades examined in the evaluation. Projections of future performance based on current rates of growth indicate that more students will perform at higher levels of achievement, but that the system must accelerate its rate of progress to meet the targets it has set for itself for achievement by 2004.*
- *Special education students and students in all racial/ethnic groups showed evidence of better performance over the years.*
- *The impact of whole-school reforms is varied. Students in Achievement First schools demonstrated significantly higher gains on the MSPAP, but not on the CTBS/5, than those in matched comparison schools. Students in Direct Instruction schools showed no significant differences in performance from those in comparison schools. While both sets of schools will have to struggle to meet BCPSS' targets for success set for 2004, the challenge will be greater for the DI than the AF schools.*
- *RE schools have accelerated their rate of growth and are showing progress. Analyses at the school level indicate these schools have grown at a faster rate than non-RE schools since the passage of SB 795.*
- *Attendance has increased modestly at the elementary school level. Dropout rates have remained generally unchanged since the introduction of The Master Plan. The number of students graduating with high school diplomas also has increased during this period.*

Introduction

The City-State Partnership was created for the express purpose of improving the achievement of students in the Baltimore City Public School System. While inadequacies in the education of students with disabilities put the spotlight on students considered to have special needs, even a cursory examination of data revealed that all students were being poorly served. BCPSS test performance was consistently at the bottom of the state, and progress was minimal. Objective 1 and all initiatives undertaken under the auspices of The Master Plan were designed to further improve student achievement, some through activities designed to change methods of teaching; others less directly through marshalling of resources in support of student learning. In this section of the evaluation report, we discuss progress in student achievement, examining both actual change over time and projected patterns of change based on performance to date.

Key Questions and Sources of Data

The evaluation of progress in student achievement centers on the following questions:

- Has achievement in BCPSS improved significantly since implementation of The Master Plan overall?
- How has the performance of students in special educational programs been impacted?
- Are students in all racial/ethnic groups showing improved performance?
- How do patterns of achievement in BCPSS compare to achievement in the state overall?

- How do patterns of achievement in BCPSS compare to achievement in similar urban districts?
- What trends in performance can be predicted based on rates of post-Master Plan progress?
- How do predicted patterns of performance compare with targets set in The Master Plan?
- How have whole-school reforms impacted achievement?
- Have attendance and dropout rates improved significantly since implementation of The Master Plan?
- Have high school completion and diploma rates improved significantly?

We used several kinds of information to address these questions. Achievement questions are addressed using measures of performance on three standardized assessments required by the Maryland State Department of Education: [10]

- Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills/5 (CTBS/5),[11] administered statewide at grades 2, 4, and 6, and in BCPSS at grades 1–7.
- Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) exams, administered in grades 3, 5, and 8.
- Maryland Functional Tests (MFT), the state's high school exit exams, which have key reporting points in grades 9 and 11.

The evaluation also incorporates data from other indicators that were used in an earlier Master Plan as important precursors of achievement: attendance, dropout rates, and high school completion rates.

Although data are reported on all of the above measures, three points should be noted. First, our most detailed analyses have been reserved for the MSPAP because of the prominent role it plays in the Maryland School Performance Program. Second, although other subjects are tested regularly in BCPSS, our analyses focus on reading, writing, and mathematics because these are the critical subjects identified in the original Master Plan. Finally, although testing on the various measures occurs at many grade levels, our analyses focus primarily on the grades that are required for state reporting.

In doing these analyses, we tried to rely on summary data available at the school or systemwide levels. Information was provided by BCPSS and MSDE in electronic files, supplemented as necessary by data from state and district report cards available on the Internet. Files used in examining the impact of reform interventions, based on school-level data provided by BCPSS, were reanalyzed to produce separate scores for groups of schools participating in the Direct Instruction and Achievement First whole-school reform models. These files were also used to compare performance of reconstitution-eligible (RE) and non-reconstitution-eligible (non-RE) schools. Individual student data were not used in any of the analyses.

Findings

Our findings address the following:

- Achievement in BCPSS at the system level;
- Achievement of selected groups of schools; and
- Other indicators of progress.

[10] BCPSS has recently released a report on the Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SAT Performance of the Graduating Class of 2001, August 2001). This report shows that more students are attempting these challenging assessments, and that overall performance has decreased substantially in some schools. We do not repeat these analyses here, but will refer to them in our chapter discussion.

[11] This test is also called the Terra Nova.

Achievement in BCPSS at the System Level[12]

In this section, we first examine achievement overall and then consider findings for special education students and students from different racial/ethnic groups.

System-Level Achievement in BCPSS[13]

Analysis of systemwide achievement shows that progress has been made in learning since the implementation of SB 795 in BCPSS, especially at the early grades. On all three measures of achievement—the MSPAP, the CTBS/5, and the MFT (through 2000)—test scores have improved for both regular and special education students. On the MSPAP, BCPSS has made gains that are greater than the state overall. Analyses of projected performance, based on current rates of progress, suggest that meeting the targets set in the 2001–02 Master Plan will demand even greater increases in student learning. These targets are challenging, but not inappropriate, given expectations for higher quality education in BCPSS through the City-State Partnership.

In our examination of systemwide achievement, we look at progress to date and predictions for the future. In doing so, we also examine current trends in light of 1) targets established by BCPSS in the 2001-2002 Master Plan (Table 4-1), and 2) Maryland state standards for satisfactory performance.

Table 4-1.
Goals for BCPSS student achievement on the MSPAP, CTBS/5, and MFT

Test	2004 target
MSAP	Percent satisfactory or higher
Grade 3	
Reading	30
Writing	40
Mathematics	30
Grade 5	
Reading	30
Writing	35
Mathematics	35
Grade 8	
Reading	30
Writing	40
Mathematics	35
CTBS/5	Median percentile rank
Grade 2	
Reading	55
Mathematics	50
Grade 4	
Reading	55
Mathematics	50
MFT	Percent passing
Grade 9	
Reading	97
Mathematics	93
Writing	93
Grade 11	
Reading	99
Mathematics	99
Writing	99

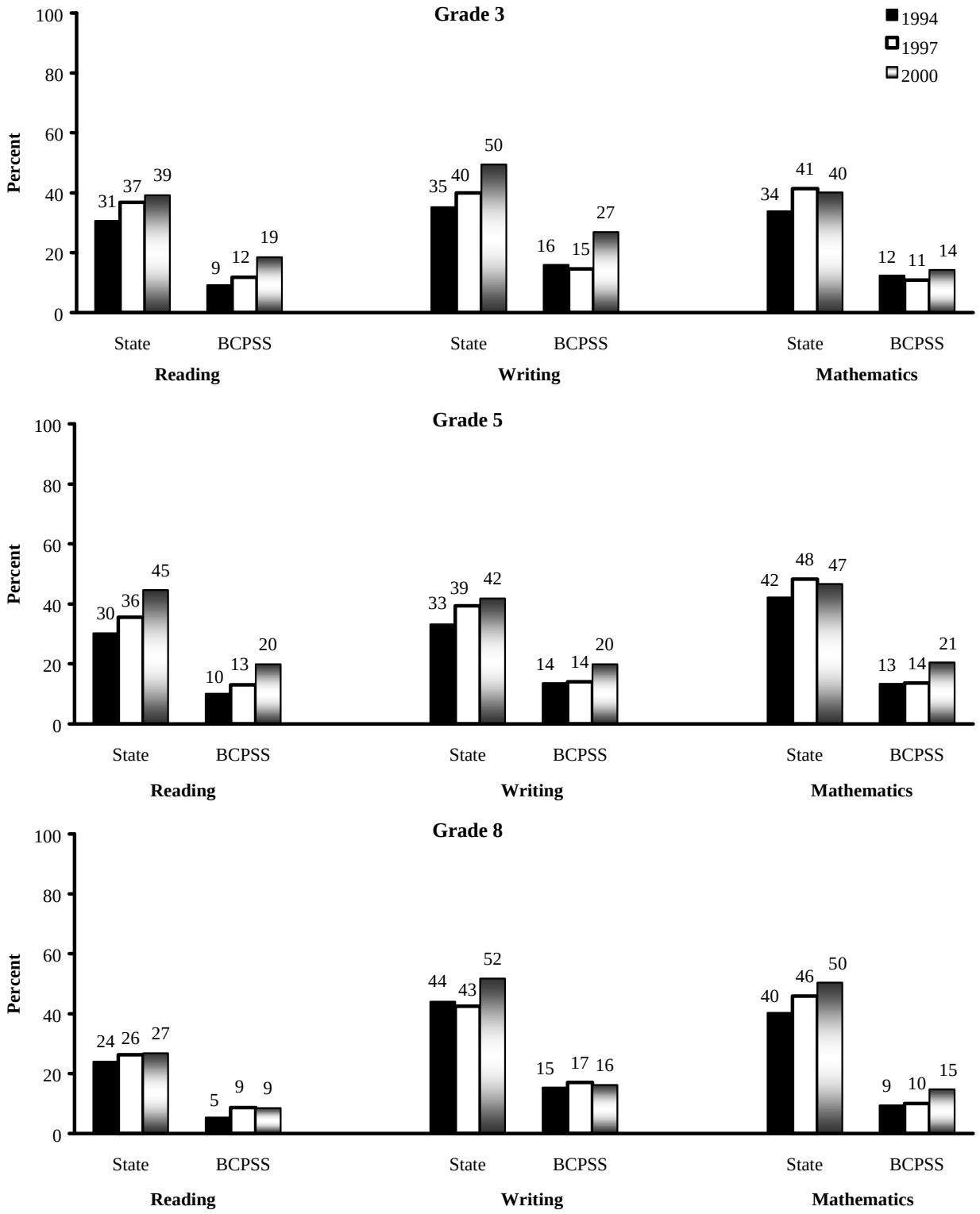
SOURCE: Baltimore City Public School System, The BCPSS Master Plan 2001–2002 Update.

Progress in system-level achievement has been widely acknowledged both in official publications of MSDE and BCPSS and in the popular press. There have been improvements in MSPAP passing rates in grades 3 and 5 in all subjects (reading, writing, and mathematics) since The Master Plan was initially implemented. Performance of 3rd grade students increased by 1 to 7 percentage points; performance of 5th grade, by 5 to 7 percentage points. In 8th grade, the pattern is somewhat different, with generally flat performance, except for a 5 percentage point gain in mathematics (Figure 4-1). Comparisons to state performance show that district achievement consistently fell below state levels and far short of the 70 percent passing rate expected by the state on the MSPAP. Such discrepancies are not uncommon in comparing the performance of low income, urban districts with state overages. Moreover, as Figure 4-2 clearly shows, since SB 795 was enacted, students in BCPSS are improving at a faster rate than are students statewide in a number of subject areas.

[12]In addition to using state performance levels as benchmarks, the evaluation also compared BCPSS performance to performance in similar school districts. Westat identified three school districts—the District of Columbia, Milwaukee, and New Orleans—that are comparable in terms of size, percentage of African American students, and level of poverty as measured by the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch. Direct comparisons of achievement among schools in the four districts cannot be made because they administer different tests at different grades utilizing different procedures. Nonetheless, we examined patterns of performance using both national percentiles and proficiency scores. Patterns differed by grade, subject matter, and test metric. No consistent conclusions can be drawn about the relative success of these districts.

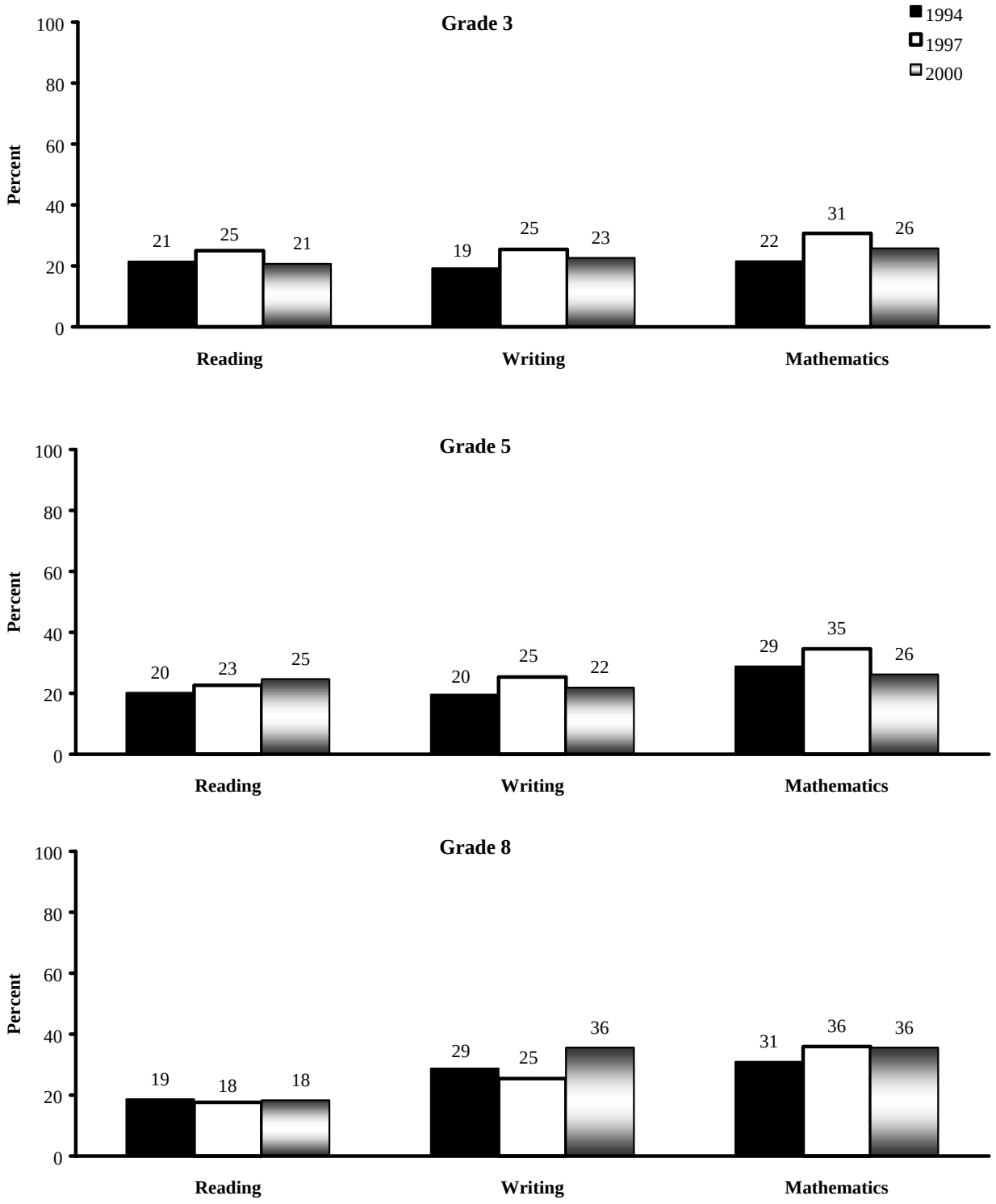
[13]In this section on system-level achievement, we examine data for all regular students and special education students. We also looked at data by racial/ethnic group but felt the results could be misleading given that BCPSS is over 85 percent African American.

Figure 4-1.
Percentage of BCPSS students and students statewide attaining satisfactory performance on the MSPAP, by grade and subject: 1994, 1997, and 2000



SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland School Performance Report 2000. Available: http://www.msp.msde.state.md.us

Figure 4-2.
Differences in percentage of BCPSS students and students statewide attaining satisfactory performance on the MSPAP, by grade and subject: 1994, 1997, and 2000



NOTE: Differences computed by Westat.

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland School Performance Report 2000. Available: http://www.msp.msde.state.md.us

Recent reports have shown that CTBS achievement has improved overall since 1997, especially at the earliest grade levels, when the test was first administered in the district (Figure 4-3). However, in grades 2, 4, and 6—the only grades systematically tracked by the state—improvement has been uneven. The largest gains were found for grade 2 students, with both reading and mathematics showing improvement. Mathematics also improved slightly in grades 4 and 6. However, reading in grades 4 and 6 showed no improvement (Figure 4-4). Moreover, as with the MSPAP, there remain sizable differences between statewide and district performance on the CTBS/5 in all areas, grades, and years.

Figure 4-5 shows that from 1993 to 2000, MFT cumulative pass rates of BCPSS 9th grade students moved within a narrow range around 90 percent in reading. In mathematics, pass rates moved from 48 percent in 1993 to 61 percent in 2000, with most of the increase occurring after 1998. Writing pass rates also fluctuated prior to 1998, but increased by nearly 12 points to 76 percent in the years following implementation of The Master Plan. Pass rates of 11th grade students were considerably higher. Following small declines in performance through 1997, small increments in pass rates were evident beginning in 1998. By 2000, all 11th grade passing rates were above 90 percent, except for mathematics at 83 percent. Again, however, 9th and 11th grade pass rates remain somewhat lower than the state average, with the largest discrepancies arising in mathematics.[14]

More detailed data on performance on these three assessments in presented in Attachment A at the end of this chapter.

A second step in our systemwide analyses aimed at determining if performance targets set in the 2002 Master Plan are realistic. We examined whether attaining the targets was possible if current trends remained stable.

We did this by taking trends in rate of change since The Master Plan was initiated and extending these trends into future years using a straight line projection. CTBS/5 projections are based on actual performance trends from 1998 to 2001, and MSPAP and MFT projections, on actual performance trends from 1998 to 2000 (Tables 4-2, 4-3, and 4-4, respectively). We recognize that projections based on 3 years of data are of limited reliability. However, while caution is required in interpreting these results, because our task was to gauge future prospects based on observations in the 3 years following adoption of The Master Plan in 1998–99, we believe our analyses to be of value.

Table 4-2.
Normal curve equivalents on the CTBS/5, by grade and subject: Projected performance versus Master Plan targets,* 2002–04

Grade/subject	2002	2003	2004
Grade 2			
Reading			
Target.....	47.4	51.1	55.3
Projected.....	44.3	49.3	54.3
Mathematics			
Target.....	48.9	52.6	55.3
Projected.....	48.7	58.2	67.7
Grade 4			
Reading			
Target.....	45.2	48.9	52.6
Projected.....	31.0	30.5	30.0
Mathematics			
Target.....	43.6	46.8	50.0
Projected.....	36.3	40.8	45.3
Grade 6			
Reading			
Target.....	44.1	48.4	52.6
Projected.....	23.7	23.2	22.7
Mathematics			
Target.....	42.2	46.2	50.0
Projected.....	26.0	28.5	31.0

*Targets have been converted from median national percentiles to normal curve equivalents for purposes of these analyses.

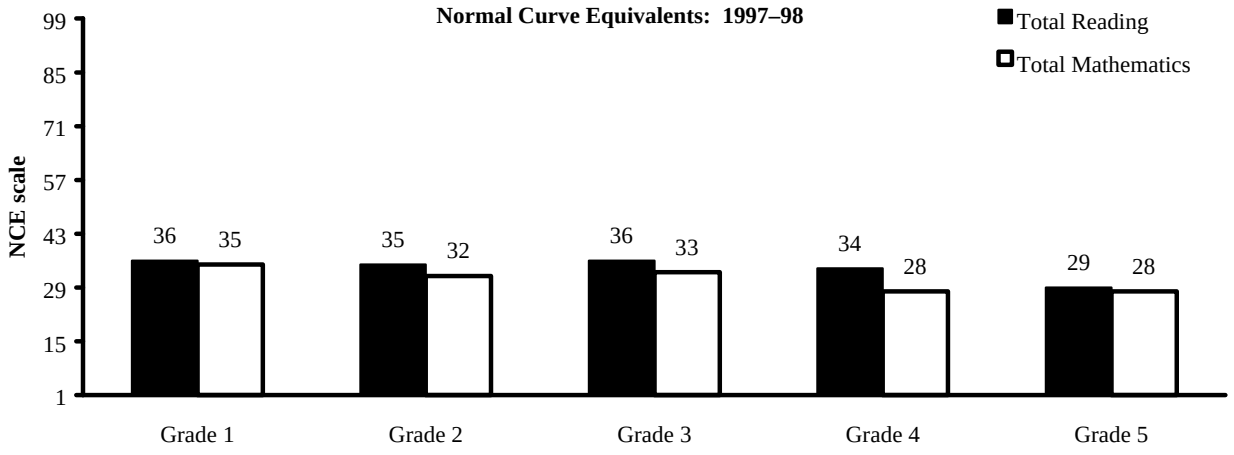
NOTE: Projections for 2002–04 computed by Westat.

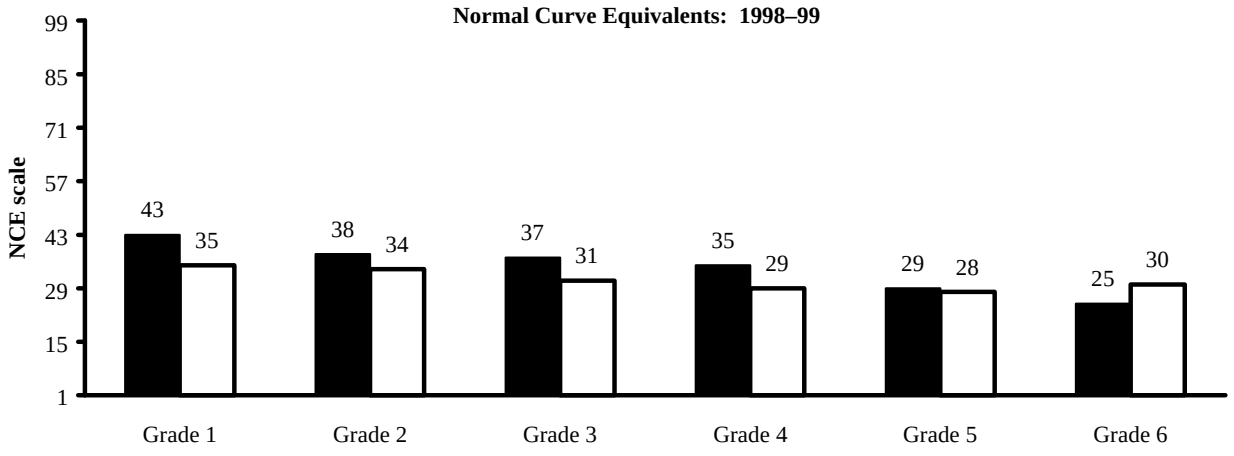
SOURCE: Baltimore City Public School System, The BCPSS Master Plan 2001–2002 Update.

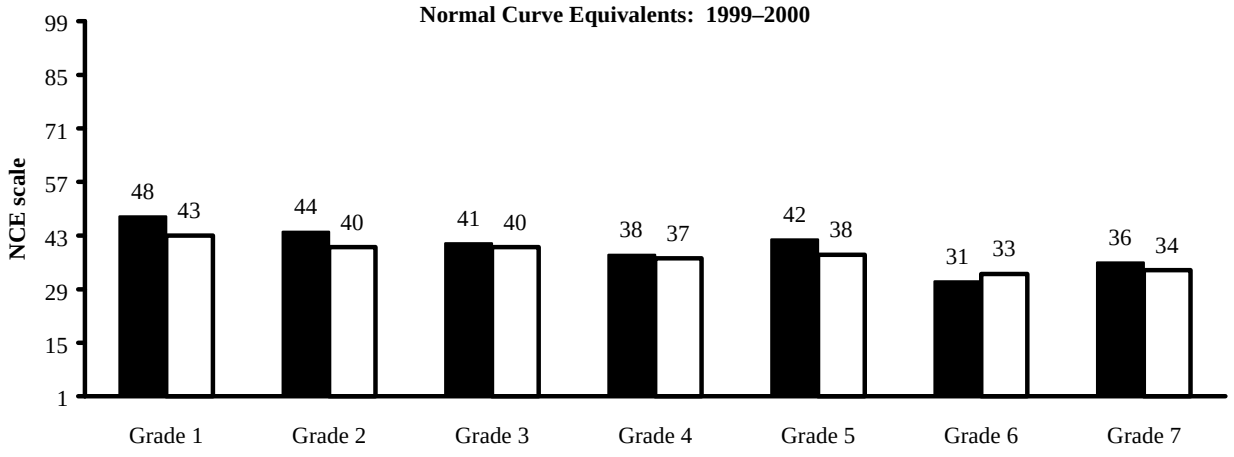
Looking first at the CTBS/5, we found that targets will be met at grade 2, but not grades 4 or 6. The differences increase across grade levels, with the largest discrepancies for grade 6.

[14]Preliminary results for 2001 suggest that there may be a drop in passing rates on the MFT, but official data have not yet been released by the state.

Figure 4-3.
CTBS/5 tests results for Baltimore City public schools, by grade

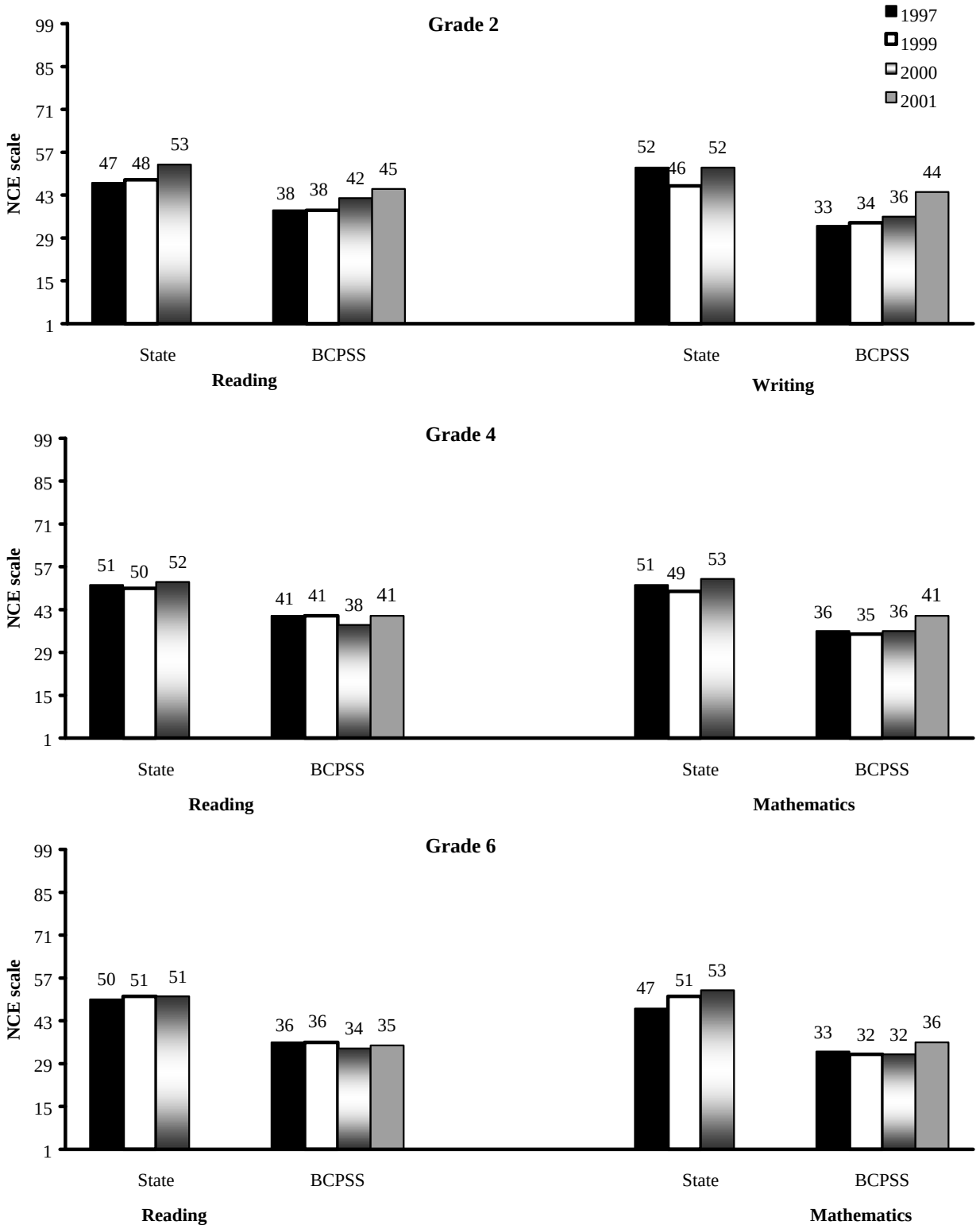






SOURCE: Baltimore City Public Schools.

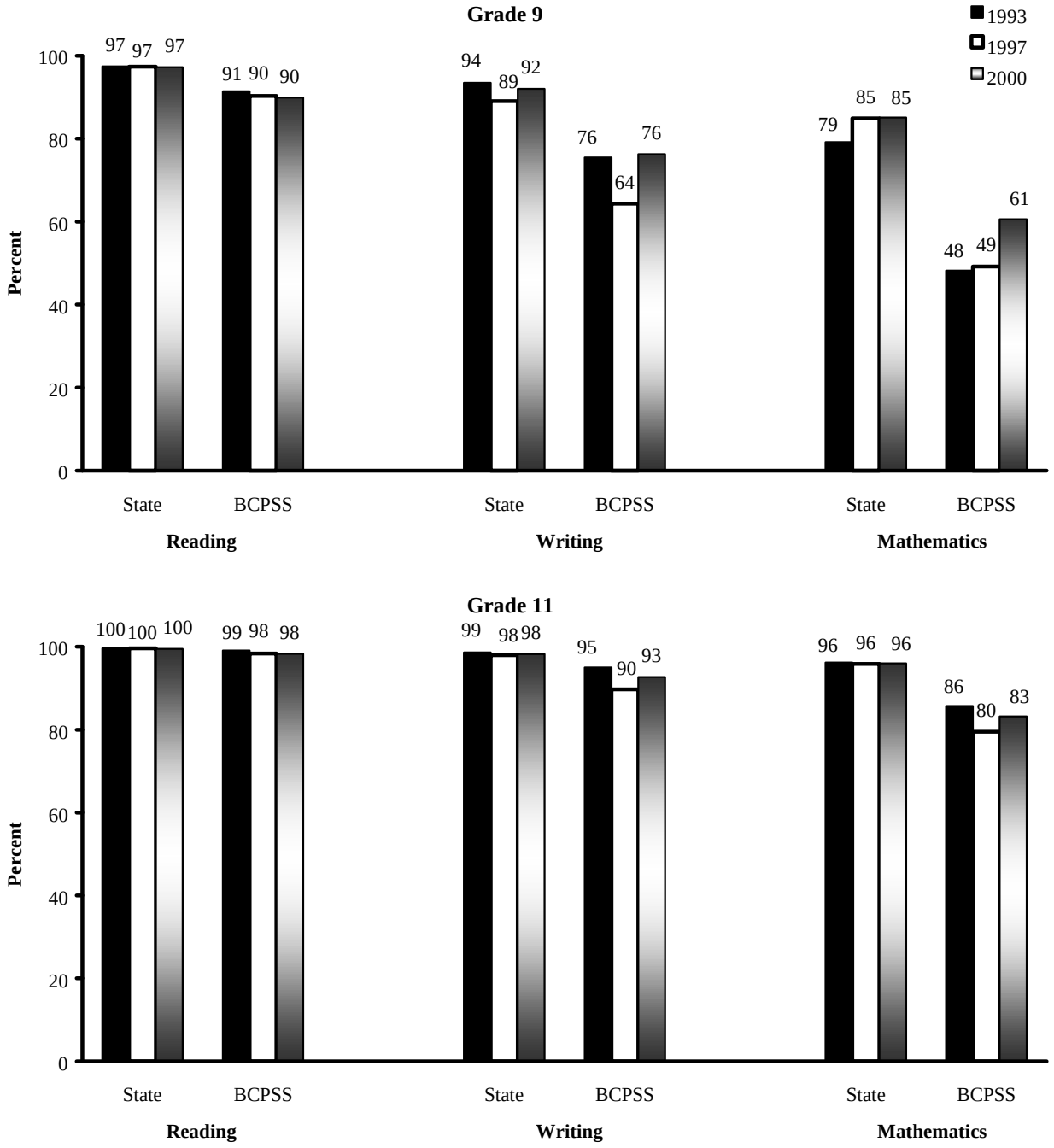
Figure 4-4.
Normal curve equivalents on the CTBS/5 statewide and in BCPSS: Selected years, 1997–2001



NOTE: 2001 data not available from MSDE. These scores different from the ones in Figure 4-3 because the state data for grades 2, 4, and 6 prior to 2001 were based on a sample of students. Normal curve equivalents computed by Westat.

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland School Performance Report 2000. Available: http://www.msp.msde.state.md.us

Figure 4-5.
MFT pass rates for the state and BCPSS, by grade and subject: 1993, 1997, and 2000



SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland School Performance Report 2000. Available: http://www.msp.msde.state.md.us

Table 4-3.
Percentage of students attaining satisfactory performance on MSPAP, by grade and subject: Projected performance versus Master Plan targets, 2001–04

Grade/subject	2001	2002	2003	2004
Grade 3				
Reading				
Target	21.4	24.2	27.1	30.0
Projected	18.8	19.8	20.8	21.7
Writing				
Target	30.6	33.8	36.9	40.0
Projected	30.1	33.2	36.3	39.3
Mathematics				
Target	18.8	22.6	28.3	30.0
Projected	14.1	14.6	15.2	15.7
Grade 5				
Reading				
Target	21.4	24.3	27.1	30.0
Projected	22.2	25.0	27.8	30.6
Writing				
Target	23.4	27.3	31.1	35.0
Projected	22.1	24.7	27.4	30.0
Mathematics				
Target	23.7	27.5	31.2	35.0
Projected	23.7	27.2	30.7	34.2
Grade 8				
Reading				
Target	15.3	19.3	23.4	30.0
Projected	9.2	10.1	11.0	11.9
Writing				
Target	27.1	30.6	34.0	40.0
Projected	30.3	34.8	39.4	43.9
Mathematics				
Target	20.7	24.6	28.6	35.0
Projected	15.6	16.6	17.7	18.7

NOTE: Projections for 2001–04 computed by Westat.

SOURCE: Baltimore City Public School System, The BCPSS Master Plan 2001–2002 Update.

MSPAP projections show a more positive picture. Fifth grade students are expected to be most successful in meeting the targets. Counter to previous discussions regarding comparative performance across grade levels, our projections suggest that 3rd grade students will fare less well, with performance falling well below targets except in writing. However, here, too, 8th grade performance will fall farthest from targets except in writing.

Findings for the MFT provide a more optimist picture. MFT projections show that the 9th grade target in writing will be easily met. Performance appears to fall a bit short in 9th grade reading and mathematics. In 11th grade, projections show that targets will be met in all three subjects. However, if MFT scores do show a decline in 2001, the outlook for the future will need to be revisited.

Table 4-4.
MFT cumulative pass rates, by grade and subject: Projected performance versus Master Plan targets, 2001–04

Grade/subject	2001	2002	2003	2004
Grade 9				
Reading				
Target	92.3	93.8	95.4	96.0
Projected	90.7	91.5	92.3	93.1
Writing				
Target	80.2	84.4	88.7	93.0
Projected	81.0	85.7	90.4	95.1
Mathematics				
Target	70.1	77.8	85.4	93.0
Projected	66.3	72.0	77.7	83.4
Grade 11				
Reading				
Target	98.3	98.6	98.8	99.0
Projected	98.7	99.1	99.5	99.9
Writing				
Target	94.2	95.8	97.4	99.0
Projected	94.4	96.1	97.8	99.5
Mathematics				
Target	86.9	91.0	95.0	99.0
Projected	87.5	91.8	96.1	100.0

NOTE: Projections for 2001-04 years computed by Westat.

SOURCE: Baltimore City Public School System, The BCPSS Master Plan 2001–2002 Update.

Overall, these findings indicate that the BCPSS targets for 2004 cannot be reached by continuing current learning rates. Attaining the targets will require continued increases in the rates of student learning.

Table 4-5 presents a somewhat more positive view of current picture translating MSPAP projected pass rates into the number of students performing at satisfactory levels or higher in the next 3 years, assuming that current rates of progress continue.[15] These data predict substantial increases in numbers of students

[15]We have constructed this table using a constant enrollment figure in order to show the magnitude of change with increased passing rates. However, actual numbers will be smaller if projected decreases in enrollment come to pass.

attaining satisfactory performance by 2004, compared to 2000, even though target rates may not be attained.

Table 4-5.
Change in number of BCPSS students attaining satisfactory performance in MSPAP: 2000 and projected for 2004

Grade/subject	Number		Change
	Actual 2000	Projected 2004	
Grade 3			
Total/projected total*	8,930	8,930	0
Reading	1,652	1,938	286
Writing	2,402	3,509	1,107
Mathematics	1,277	1,402	125
Grade 5			
Total/projected total*	8,730	8,730	0
Reading	1,737	2,671	934
Writing	1,737	2,619	882
Mathematics	1,790	2,986	1,196
Grade 8			
Total/projected total*	7,090	7,090	0
Reading	603	844	241
Writing	1,858	3,113	1,255
Mathematics	1,049	1,326	277

*Total based on year 2000 staying constant across years 2001–04.

SOURCE: Public School Enrollment Projections, 2000–2009 (September 2000). Maryland Department of Planning.

Performance of Special Education Students

BCPSS has been providing data on the achievement of special education students in a systematic faction only since 1998. While this fact provides an inobstrusive measure of both neglect before and change after 1998, the lack of data constrains our ability to examine progress. Figures 4-6 and 4-7, respectively, provide summaries of MSPAP and MFT performance of special education students from 1998 through 2000.[16] As would be expected, on both assessments, the data show consistently lower performance by special education students both in absolute terms and in comparison to the performance of students in regular education programs. Considering trends, we find some improvements occurring in the MSPAP achievement of special education students, particularly those in 5th grade, from 1998 to 1999. However, performance still hovers at the very low end of the scale, with passing rates in 2000 remaining below 10 percent for reading, writing, and mathematics.

MFT results reflected higher levels of achievement in all 3 years, which is to be expected given the less demanding coverage in exit exams. For 11th grade students, between 1998 and 2000, passing rates in reading remained fairly steady at around 86–88 percent, while passing rates in mathematics and writing increased by 15 and 10 percentage points, respectively. Passing rates for 9th grade students declined in reading, but increased in mathematics and writing.

Achievement in Selected Groups of Schools

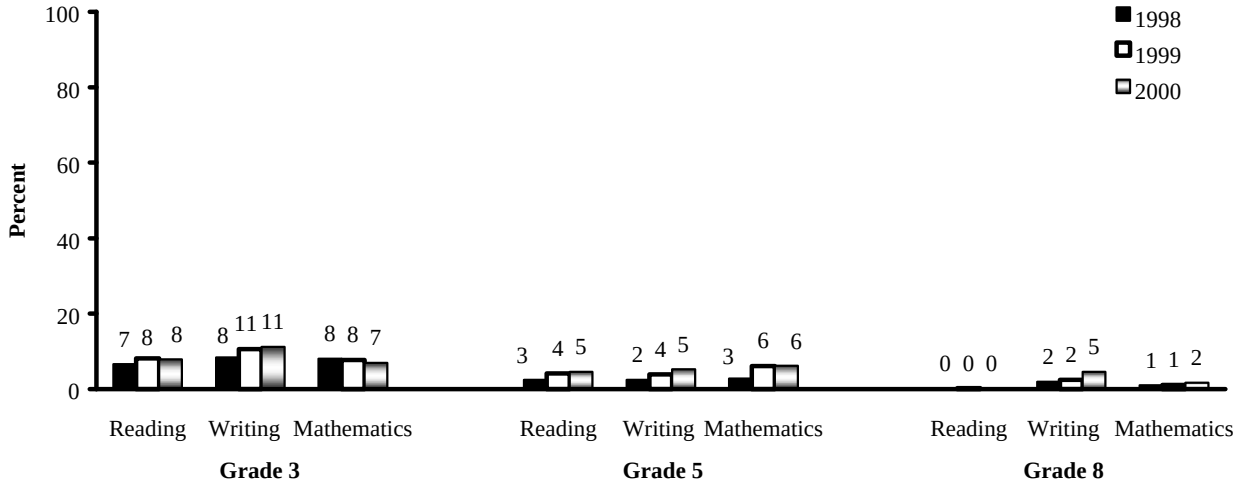
Comparisons of the performance of schools participating in the Direct Instruction (DI) and Achievement First (AF) schools with the performance of similar nonparticipating schools show that significant differences were found for AF schools on the MSPAP but not DI schools on either the MSPAP or the CTBS/5. Performance in AF schools exceeded that in the comparison sample in reading but not mathematics. Comparisons between RE schools and non-RE schools generally favored the former.

We also looked at projected performance for DI and AF schools compared to targets for 2004 established by BCPSS in The Master Plan for 2001–2002. These analyses show both sets of schools meeting or coming close to meeting projections in the CTBS/5. On the MSPAP, DI falls short and AF projections vary considerably by cohort.

In this section, we examine more closely the performance of selected subgroups of schools. First, we look at performance in schools that have adopted whole-school reform models. Second, we look at changes over time in the achievement

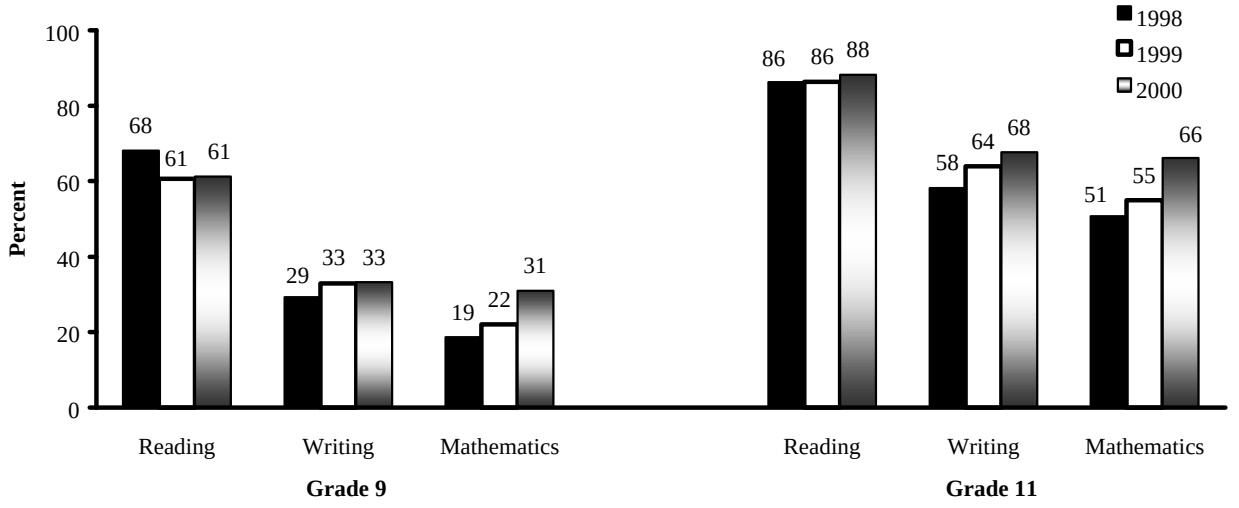
[16] We could not locate any BCPSS data prior to 1998 for special education students on either of these tests. Existing data are not disaggregated in any way, i.e., type of setting, student demographic characteristics, etc.

Figure 4-6.
Pass rates on MSPAP for special education students, by grade and subject: 1998–2000



SOURCE: Baltimore City Public School System, Maryland School Performance Reports, 1997–98, 1998–99, 1999–2000.

Figure 4-7.
Pass rates on MFT for special education students, by grade and subject: 1998–2000



SOURCE: Baltimore City Public School System, Maryland School Performance Reports, 1997–98, 1998–99, 1999–2000.

of schools that have been identified as reconstitution eligible.

Achievement of Whole-School Reform Models

BCPSS schools have adopted several different approaches to improve achievement. Two of these approaches have been singled out for special attention in this evaluation: schools that have implemented Direct Instruction (DI) and Achievement First (AF).[17] DI represents a very structured approach that involves a great deal of content repetition and practice. Teachers must be certified in DI methods and strategies and must work from prepared scripts rather than developing their own lessons. DI was first introduced into BCPSS schools in 1996–97, the year before The Master Plan was adopted. Although DI instruction has been implemented in reading, language arts, mathematics, and spelling, only achievement results in reading, writing, and mathematics are included in our analyses.

AF schools focus specifically on improving student literacy. Not tied to any single curriculum or any other formal instructional program, AF provides instructional support to schools through intense onsite professional development for teachers and principals. It also includes a strong parental involvement component. The goal of AF interventions is to help schools become effective learning organizations, enable principals to function as effective instructional leaders, and empower teachers to become effective at teaching reading and writing.

In this section, we provide two types of analyses: comparison of the performance of schools using each of these reform models with similar nonparticipating schools, and projections of performance in these schools measured against targets set by BCPSS in the 2001–02 Master Plan. To determine the success of AF and DI, we examined performance trends from 1993 through 2000 on the MSPAP and from 1997 through 2001 on the CTBS/5. Because interventions were phased in over several years, schools were divided into cohorts according to year of implementation. Separate analyses were conducted for each cohort. Table 4-6 shows the number of schools in each cohort. To provide a more definitive basis for judging the success of each intervention, AF and DI schools were matched with comparison schools. Matches were based on 1993 MSPAP reading performance, specifically, 5th grade scores for elementary schools, and 8th grade scores for middle schools.[18] Attachment B presents data for the AF/DI and comparison schools.

Table 4-6.
Number of schools in each whole-school reform cohort, by initiative and program year

Reform effort	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
AF.....	—	—	—	—	10	18	1
DI.....	—	—	6	5	6	—	—

NOTE: The single school in the AF 2000 Cohort has been excluded from analyses.

SOURCE: Baltimore City Public School System, school-level ASCII files.

Given that the district had already begun to show improvement when these reform efforts were introduced, we set a strict criterion for success. We asked whether, after adopting a particular approach to reform, the schools demonstrated significantly greater improvements in performance than comparison schools during the same periods of time. To make this determination, regression lines were fit to performance trends for the years prior to and the years following adoption of the model. We estimated slopes of these lines to determine average annual improvements in achievement for each group of schools. Differences in the pre- and post-implementation slopes were determined for each group and compared to corresponding differences in comparison schools. Differences between "program schools" (AF and DI) and comparison schools on this measure were assessed for significance using sign tests, which

[17]A more detailed discussion of these models is presented in the chapter on instructional practices.

[18]Inspection of the data on the CTBS/5 indicated similar performance.

provide a count of instances in which one approach has a significantly greater impact than its comparison. Sign test results were viewed as indicators of program success. Attachment C describes the procedure uses for carrying out these analyses.

MSPAP reading, writing, and mathematics performance for DI schools are shown in Table 4-7, where cohorts are identified by starting year. DI 96, for example, comprises all schools that began DI instruction in 1996; and DI 97, those schools that started the program in 1997.

These results show considerable variation in the patterns of achievement among DI schools, with most changes being relatively small. According to the analyses, with increased exposure to DI instruction, there is modest improvement in reading achievement in all three 3rd grade cohorts and improvements in writing in two of the three cohorts. Third grade mathematics achievement tended to decline somewhat with years in the program. Among 5th grade students, mathematics performance also tends to decline with exposure to DI, while reading and writing achievement showed modest gains.

Trends in CTBS/5 performance for the DI schools are shown on Table 4-8. Here, our assessment is limited to reading and mathematics. This table shows a more positive picture, with performance increasing over time. Indeed, the DI schools have shown improvement on the CTBS/5 in both subjects in both grades.

Table 4-7.
Percentage of students in DI schools attaining satisfactory performance on the MSPAP, by grade, subject, and cohort: 1993–2000

Grade/subject and cohort	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Grade 3								
Reading								
DI 96	—	9.8	13.0	15.5	18.0	13.3	17.4	16.1
DI 97	—	6.3	7.5	4.3	7.9	6.8	10.0	9.4
DI 98	—	8.7	14.0	4.9	7.6	12.7	10.8	13.1
Writing								
DI 96	25.1	14.8	15.5	15.9	17.9	21.3	26.1	30.3
DI 97	14.4	9.8	11.2	5.1	10.6	11.4	15.2	17.4
DI 98	18.3	16.9	18.2	13.7	13.5	23.0	19.3	15.0
Mathematics								
DI 96	9.6	6.7	15.9	14.5	14.5	10.2	11.7	10.6
DI 97	4.0	8.1	4.0	3.1	5.7	5.7	7.6	7.6
DI 98	6.2	18.4	24.7	4.7	6.8	11.2	6.0	2.5
Grade 5								
Reading								
DI 96	9.8	11.4	11.2	12.6	11.7	12.7	17.4	18.0
DI 97	6.8	5.2	10.3	8.4	9.3	12.0	15.1	11.8
DI 98	3.6	8.8	7.7	6.6	4.1	11.2	12.8	13.1
Writing								
DI 96	17.1	13.2	16.4	20.8	13.7	19.2	20.0	19.1
DI 97	16.4	12.0	10.8	12.8	13.2	10.3	10.2	14.9
DI 98	14	8.6	9.0	10.4	9.5	9.0	13.2	14.8
Mathematics								
DI 96	15.7	14.1	19.4	18.2	14.2	10.8	14.5	14.0
DI 97	9.6	5.4	15.6	2.5	9.7	4.7	9.3	6.5
DI 98	8.1	8.8	14.9	7.2	4.7	10.4	8.5	6.1

NOTE: Percentages for each cohort computed by Westat.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School System.

Table 4-8.
Normal curve equivalents on CTBS/5 for DI schools, by grade, subject, and cohort: BCPSS 1998–2001

Grade/subject and cohort	1998	1999	2000	2001
Grade 2				
Reading				
DI 96.....	41.9	42.2	46.0	50.4
DI 97.....	33.3	36.5	40.0	43.2
DI 98.....	36.7	35.1	36.7	45.1
Mathematics				
DI 96.....	33.4	36.9	44.8	52.3
DI 97.....	23.3	22.3	33.7	40.4
DI 98.....	27.0	29.5	33.7	43.9
Grade 4				
Reading				
DI 96.....	38.5	41.5	37.8	43.8
DI 97.....	37.3	34.6	36.9	40.0
DI 98.....	34.5	31.2	32.3	37.6
Mathematics				
DI 96.....	34.4	33.6	39.9	42.5
DI 97.....	23.7	23.3	34.1	35.9
DI 98.....	25.5	24.5	32.8	36.3

NOTE: NCEs for each cohort computed by Westat.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School System.

Examination of the relative performance of the DI schools and their comparison group schools shows no statistically significant differences for the DI and comparison schools on either the CTBS/5 or the MSPAP. Sign tests presented in Table 4-9 provide these data. DI schools provide no advantage in test performance on either outcome measure.

The picture for schools participating in AF is both more positive and more consistent. Table 4-10 presents performance trends for AF schools on the MSPAP by school year. These data show that 3rd and 5th grade students in the 1998 and 1999 cohorts made modest gains in reading, writing, and mathematics. On the CTBS/5, improvement is shown for all grades in both reading and mathematics (Table 4-11). Sign tests assessing these trends against the performance of comparison schools indicate that excluding mathematics, which was not a content focus in AF schools, AF schools made significantly greater post-implementation progress than did comparison schools in corresponding years (Table 4-12). When mathematics performance is examined, AF schools continue to be superior to their comparisons on MSPAP, and have only a small advantage on the CTBS/5. These differences are not, however, statistically significant.

Table 4-9.
Sign test results: DI versus comparison schools

Category	MSPAP	CTBS/5
	Reading/writing/ mathematics	Reading/ mathematics
Sum of sign test	2	17
Count of sign test.....	28	30
Success rate.....	7.1%	56.7%
Sign test *p*-value	1.000	0.292

NOTE: Sign test results computed by Westat.

These findings in some ways confirm and in other ways disagree with results from other studies. Despite differences in methodology, a study of AF interventions conducted by the Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins arrived at a similar but stronger conclusion about the success of AF support strategies. Focusing on individual student performance over time, as opposed to our analyses of school-level performance, the researchers found clear value-added effects of AF support on reading achievement and on learning of basic and advanced literacy skills (Borman, Rachuba, and Hewes, 2001). In our view, the two studies reflect different perspectives. The Hopkins longitudinal study speaks to the effectiveness of the approach for students with consistent, long-term exposure to DI methods in a constant school environment. Our results provide a picture of district performance under prevailing conditions, where mobility is high, and on a given testing date, the mix of students will have varied experiences.

Table 4-10.
Percentage of students in AF schools attaining satisfactory performance on MSPAP, by grade, subject, and cohort: 1993–2000

Grade/subject and cohort	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Grade 3								
Reading								
AF 98		13.8	13.0	11.4	14.2	16.0	16.0	24.2
AF 99		8.0	9.0	10.2	9.3	10.4	12.5	17.1
Writing								
AF 98	15.9	17.8	18.4	19.0	15.5	19.3	28.8	35.2
AF 99	13.9	15.2	17.4	15.2	13.7	16.8	21.3	27.3
Mathematics								
AF 98	8.4	18.3	25.8	14.4	13.8	18.5	17.7	26.1
AF 99	5.6	12.0	13.2	6.7	8.2	6.1	8.8	10.0
Grade 5								
Reading								
AF 98	5.0	9.7	9.1	13.7	14.5	12.1	15.1	21.3
AF 99	6.1	9.4	9.8	10.0	10.8	13.7	13.1	17.9
Writing								
AF 98	14.3	13.7	16.7	19.4	15.6	15.9	14.4	23.4
AF 99	14.4	10.8	13.7	16.8	11.1	15.2	13.7	17.7
Mathematics								
AF 98	9.8	16.3	25.2	19.0	17.7	18.7	16.8	28.5
AF 99	9.4	11.9	17.1	10.2	10.6	10.8	14.3	14.2

NOTE: Percentages for each cohort computed by Westat.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School System.

Table 4-11.
Normal curve equivalents on the CTBS/5 for AF schools, by grade, subject, and cohort

Grade/subject and cohort	1998	1999	2000	2001
Grade 2				
Reading				
AF 98	35.3	39.4	42.3	45.8
AF 99	34.3	37.5	41.1	44.8
Mathematics				
AF 98	30.2	36.8	41.1	44.9
AF 99	28.5	32.6	39.0	41.1
Grade 4				
Reading				
AF 98	36.7	36.5	35.0	41.2
AF 99	35.8	33.0	34.4	42.5
Mathematics				
AF 98	28.8	32.5	35.8	39.4
AF 99	24.4	24.4	33.6	40.1

NOTE: NCEs for each cohort computed by Westat.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School System.

Table 4-12.
Sign test results: AF versus comparison schools

Category	MSPAP		CTBS/5	
	Reading/ writing	Reading/ writing/ mathe-matics	Reading	Reading/ mathe-matics
Sum of sign test	9	10	7	13
Count of sign test	12	18	12	24
Success rate	75.0%	55.6%	58.3%	54.2%
Sign test *p*-value	0.073	0.407	0.387	0.419

NOTE: Sign test results computed by Westat.

A study of Direct Instruction outcomes conducted at Johns Hopkins University (MacIver, Kemper, and Stringfield, 2000) reported striking improvement in computation skills of students who remained in DI schools over time, somewhat less improvement in mathematics concepts, and substantial progress in reading as well. Again, in this study, the more encouraging findings resulted from assessing students, as opposed to school-level performances, over time. But the researchers' endorsement of DI came with qualifications. While noting that DI is a viable

approach to whole-school reform in reading and in mathematics, they concluded that while it may not necessarily perform better than other curriculum alternatives, it has produced sufficient achievement gains to justify its continuation as a reform option.

Turning to future performance, Tables 4-13 and 4-14 compare projected DI achievement with Master Plan targets on the CTBS/5 and MSPAP, respectively. Corresponding comparisons for AF cohorts are presented in Tables 4-15 and 4-16. For DI, projections overwhelmingly show schools meeting targets on the CTBS/5. On MSPAP, DI schools will attain only a few of the targets at the current rate of learning.

Table 4-13.
Normal curve equivalents on the CTBS/5 for DI schools by grade, subject, and cohort: Projected performance versus Master Plan targets, 2002–04

Grade/subject and cohort	2002	2003	2004
Grade 2			
Reading			
Target	47.4	51.1	55.3
Projected			
DI 96	56.0	61.0	65.9
DI 97	52.8	57.9	62.9
DI 98	53.6	58.7	63.7
Mathematics			
Target	48.9	52.6	55.3
Projected			
DI 96	50.4	55.6	60.7
DI 97	47.2	52.4	57.6
DI 98	48.0	53.2	58.4
Grade 4			
Reading			
Target	45.2	48.9	52.6
Projected			
DI 96	48.9	53.5	58.0
DI 97	46.3	50.9	55.5
DI 98	47.8	52.4	56.9
Mathematics			
Target	43.6	46.8	50.0
Projected			
DI 96	43.3	47.9	52.5
DI 97	40.8	45.3	49.9
DI 98	42.2	46.7	51.3

NOTE: Percentages for each cohort computed by Westat. Projections for 2002 and 2004 computed by Westat.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School System.

Table 4-14.
Percentage of students in DI schools attaining satisfactory performance on the MSPAP, by grade, subject, and cohort: Projected performance versus Master Plan targets, 2001–04

Grade/subject and cohort	2001	2002	2003	2004
Grade 3				
Reading				
Target	21.4	24.2	27.1	30.0
Projected				
DI 96	15.0	16.0	17.1	18.2
DI 97	10.3	11.1	11.8	12.7
DI 98	14.2	15.1	16.2	17.2
Writing				
Target	30.6	33.8	36.9	40.0
Projected				
DI 96	21.4	22.7	24.1	25.6
DI 97	15.1	16.1	17.2	18.4
DI 98	20.3	21.6	23.0	24.4
Mathematics				
Target	18.8	22.6	28.3	30.0
Projected				
DI 96	14.4	15.4	16.5	17.6
DI 97	9.9	10.6	11.4	12.2
DI 98	13.6	14.6	15.6	16.7
Grade 5				
Reading				
Target	21.4	24.3	27.1	30.0
Projected				
DI 96	15.0	16.0	17.1	18.2
DI 97	10.3	11.1	11.8	12.7
DI 98	14.2	15.1	16.2	17.2
Writing				
Target	23.4	27.3	31.1	36.0
Projected				
DI 96	21.4	22.7	24.1	25.6
DI 97	15.1	16.1	17.2	18.4
DI 98	20.3	21.6	23.0	24.4
Mathematics				
Target	23.7	27.5	31.2	35.0
Projected				
DI 96	14.4	15.4	16.5	17.6
DI 97	9.9	10.6	11.4	12.2
DI 98	13.6	14.6	15.6	16.7

NOTES: Percentages for each cohort computed by Westat. Projections computed by Westat.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School Systems.

Table 4-15.
Normal curve equivalents on the CTBS/5 for AF schools, by grade, subject, and cohort: BCPSS projected performance versus Master Plan targets, 2002–04

Grade/subject and cohort	2002	2003	2004
Grade 2			
Reading			
Target	47.4	51.1	55.3
Projected			
AF 98	56.8	62.6	68.0
AF 99	54.6	60.5	66.0
Mathematics			
Target	48.9	52.6	55.3
Projected			
AF 98	51.2	57.2	62.9
AF 99	49.0	55.0	60.8
Grade 4			
Reading			
Target	45.2	48.9	52.6
Projected			
AF 98	50.9	56.3	61.5
AF 99	49.4	54.7	60.0
Mathematics			
Target	43.6	46.8	50.0
Projected			
AF 98	45.4	50.7	56.1
AF 99	43.8	49.1	54.5

NOTES: Percentages for each cohort computed by Westat. Projections computed by Westat.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School System.

Table 4-16.
Percentage of students in AF schools attaining satisfactory performance on MSPAP, by grade, subject, and cohort: Projected performance versus Master Plan targets, 2001–04

Grade/subject and cohort	2001	2002	2003	2004
Grade 3				
Reading				
Target	21.4	24.2	27.1	30.0
Projected				
AF 98	27.8	34.3	41.4	49.0
AF 99	20.6	26.0	32.3	39.3
Writing				
Target	30.6	33.8	36.9	40.0
Projected				
AF 98	37.3	44.7	52.3	59.7
AF 99	28.7	35.3	42.5	50.0
Mathematics				
Target	18.8	22.6	28.3	30.0
Projected				
AF 98	27.0	33.4	40.4	47.9
AF 99	19.9	25.2	31.4	38.3
Grade 5				
Reading				
Target	21.4	24.3	27.1	30.0
Projected				
AF 98	27.8	34.3	41.4	49.0
AF 99	20.6	26.0	32.3	39.3
Writing				
Target	23.4	27.3	31.1	35.0
Projected				
AF 98	37.3	44.7	52.3	59.7
AF 99	28.7	35.3	42.5	50.0
Mathematics				
Target	23.7	27.5	31.2	35.0
Projected				
AF 98	27.0	33.4	40.4	47.9
AF 99	19.9	25.2	31.4	38.3

NOTES: Percentages for each cohort computed by Westat. Projections computed by Westat.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School System.

AF schools also show relatively better performance on the CTBS/5 and fare better on the MSPAP projections. There are, however, large differences in the 1998 and 1999 cohorts.

Achievement of Reconstitution-Eligible Schools

Reconstitution-eligible schools are identified through a process used by the MSDE to intervene in schools that have exhibited a pattern of chronic failure over a period of years. MDSE closely monitors schools and provides additional resources to help schools improve their overall functioning with the expressed goal of improving achievement. Chapter 5 provides a full discussion of the process by which schools are designated RE and how their subsequent performance determines their subsequent status.

Tables 4-17 and 4-18 indicate that RE schools exhibited quite varied patterns of achievement in the years following implementation. Some of the cohorts showed substantial growth in some subjects, while others exhibited quite a bit of fluctuation. Sign tests shown in Table 4-19 indicate nonetheless that improvements were significantly greater than in non-RE schools on the MSPAP and on the CTBS/5.

Other Indicators

This section looks at progress in increasing attendance, lowering dropout rates, and students' completing high school and attaining diplomas.

Table 4-17.
Normal curve of equivalents on CTBS/5 for RE schools, by grade, subject, and cohort: 1998–2001

Grade/subject and cohort	1998	1999	2000	2001
Grade 2				
Reading				
RE 96	35.5	36.7	39.5	43.2
RE 97	35.1	41.6	42.9	50.3
RE 98	36.9	37.3	39.9	43.7
RE 99	35.8	39.3	41.3	43.7
Mathematics				
RE 96	27.9	30.0	38.4	43.2
RE 97	25.2	31.9	36.2	50.2
RE 98	31.0	30.9	38.0	43.8
RE 99	27.5	26.1	35.3	36.3
Grade 4				
Reading				
RE 96	35.1	34.6	35.4	39.8
RE 97	34.8	36.7	33.4	41.2
RE 98	35.0	31.9	35.7	40.8
RE 99	36.5	38.3	34.7	39.9
Mathematics				
RE 96	26.0	24.6	35.3	38.4
RE 97	21.3	24.0	32.6	37.0
RE 98	26.7	26.1	35.5	38.0
RE 99	26.1	26.8	33.5	37.8
Grade 6				
Reading				
RE 95	NA	38.2	43.0	44.5
RE 96	NA	33.8	35.5	37.4
RE 97	NA	31.7	31.9	34.3
RE 98	NA	33.6	35.2	35.6
Mathematics				
RE 95	NA	40.2	40.5	40.9
RE 96	NA	29.9	33.8	34.9
RE 97	NA	27.1	29.4	31.4
RE 98	NA	31.7	36.0	37.5

NA – Not available in BCPSS files.

NOTE: NCEs for each cohort computed by Westat.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School System.

Table 4-18.
MSPAP pass rates in RE schools, by grade, subject, and cohort: 1993–2000

Grade/subject and cohort	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Grade 3								
Reading								
RE 95	NA	0.0	6.5	15.0	3.6	5.4	5.6	0.0
RE 96	NA	7.2	5.9	7.3	9.5	9.5	12.5	16.0
RE 97	NA	3.6	4.8	2.1	6.9	7.9	9.0	14.2
RE 98	NA	9.9	11.1	7.7	6.5	11.6	11.8	16.4
RE 99	NA	7.6	13.2	8.6	12.4	13.3	8.8	11.9
Writing								
RE 95	9.8	0.0	12.9	20.0	5.9	4.8	11.9	3.0
RE 96	19.2	15.0	8.6	12.2	12.0	14.7	18.7	26.2
RE 97	9.7	8.4	6.7	7.3	8.4	11.8	16.2	22.7
RE 98	15.6	17.2	15.8	14.6	10.1	19.0	20.9	24.1
RE 99	11.5	7.0	19.5	10.0	19.7	15.2	17.8	17.1
Mathematics								
RE 95	0.0	0.0	12.9	28.3	13.2	3.2	1.8	0.0
RE 96	6.0	7.2	6.8	4.4	7.5	7.5	7.2	10.4
RE 97	1.2	5.8	6.3	0.6	3.3	7.3	4.6	5.5
RE 98	7.6	23.7	21.8	6.4	5.8	10.8	8.5	10.5
RE 99	4.3	3.7	12.1	5.9	11.2	5.4	2.3	7.5
Grade 5								
Reading								
RE 95	4.8	6.0	2.6	2.1	7.5	2.0	0.0	2.3
RE 96	6.0	7.7	6.3	8.1	9.0	10.1	12.7	14.3
RE 97	1.0	5.6	5.5	3.5	4.4	8.2	10.6	12.7
RE 98	5.1	8.6	8.1	9.1	8.5	10.9	12.6	15.1
RE 99	6.8	6.1	7.7	11.3	15.5	10.5	14.5	23.7
Writing								
RE 95	7.9	1.5	5.1	8.5	8.6	9.7	2.2	10.0
RE 96	14.2	11.5	7.5	14.6	10.4	11.6	12.5	15.3
RE 97	7.9	8.3	9.0	7.3	5.9	10.2	11.1	16.9
RE 98	13.1	12.3	13.2	16.6	7.7	13.0	11.9	15.5
RE 99	16.3	9.8	10.0	14.6	15.2	9.2	11.5	19.0
Mathematics								
RE 95	4.8	0.0	10.3	17.0	24.1	16.1	21.7	2.0
RE 96	9.1	8.4	6.7	7.0	7.9	8.1	10.6	12.3
RE 97	2.2	6.2	10.4	2.8	4.7	2.7	5.3	8.7
RE 98	9.2	15.7	18.3	12.1	7.2	12.6	12.3	14.3
RE 99	10.1	6.3	11.3	6.0	13.5	4.3	7.5	13.1
Grade 8								
Reading								
RE 95	6.0	4.3	9.0	10.5	11.4	12.6	13.3	10.8
RE 96	3.3	6.2	6.2	7.5	6.9	5.2	5.0	8.1
RE 97	1.0	3.3	4.0	2.8	3.0	3.2	2.8	4.9
RE 98	6.0	6.6	9.7	8.2	6.8	7.5	8.5	8.4
RE 99	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Writing								
RE 95	15.5	14.2	14.8	20.7	21.0	22.0	23.9	28.5
RE 96	9.4	15.5	8.7	14.9	15.3	14.5	16.1	25.4
RE 97	2.4	9.7	9.2	10.4	9.9	14.2	15.0	26.7
RE 98	13.5	18.6	18.1	18.4	14.2	18.3	23.4	28.8
RE 99	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Mathematics								
RE 95	9.4	9.5	13.9	11.1	13.5	16.9	21.8	21.3
RE 96	3.5	9.2	6.8	9.1	7.6	10.7	8.6	14.3
RE 97	1.7	6.9	10.4	1.7	3.8	6.4	6.4	8.4
RE 98	6.6	11.4	19.5	10.4	10	14.8	18.4	18.6
RE 99	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

*This cohort has no middle school.

NOTE: Percentages for each cohort computed by Westat. Where zeros are shown for this cohort, records indicate that none of the students in this school attained satisfactory performance.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School System.

Table 4-19.
Sign test results: RE versus non-RE schools

Category	CTBS/5 Reading/ mathematics	MSPAP Reading/writing/ mathematics	MFT Reading/writing/ mathematics
Sum of sign test	42	36	13
Count of sign test	66	42	21
Success rate	63.6%	85.7%	61.9%
Sign test *p*-value	0.018	0	0.192

NOTE: Sign test results computed by Westat.

Table 4-20.
Attendance rates for students in special and regular education programs, by grade: 1993–2000

Category	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Satisfactory (passing) standard	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0
Grades 1-5								
All BCPSS	93.0	94.6	93.6	93.1	94.1	94.5	94.1	94.0
Special education*	—	—	—	—	—	—	93.9	93.0
Grades 6-8								
All BCPSS	83.7	86.4	85.1	85.1	86.9	87.6	87.5	87.3
Special education*	—	—	—	—	—	—	86.6	85.0
Grades 9-12								
All	79.3	80.7	78.3	77.4	78.6	78.8	77.3	79.9
Special education*	—	—	—	—	—	—	73.2	74.8

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland School performance Report 2000. Available: http://www.msp.msde.state.md.us

Attendance and Dropout Rates

Attendance has increased modestly at the elementary school level, and dropout rates have remained generally unchanged since introduction of The Master Plan. The number of students graduating with high school diplomas also has increased during this period.

Attendance and dropout rates are key factors in the Maryland School Performance Program. The data presented in Tables 4-20 and 4-21 show that performance on these two indicators has been mixed. From 1993 to 2000, attendance in elementary schools has met or come close to the state standard of 94 percent each year. Performance in middle and high schools, however, has consistently fallen short of that goal, ranging from 84 to 87 percent in grades 6–8 and 77 to 80 percent in grades 9–12. At the elementary and middle school levels, attendance rates for special education students were comparable to those other student in 1999 and 2000, the only years for which the data were available. Dropout rates for special and regular education students showed greater differentiation. By district standards, a 3 percent dropout rate is considered satisfactory. Relative to that standard, in two of the last 3 years, the system has done a good job of retaining special education students, with dropout rates under 2 percent.[19] In contrast, BCPSS has lost 11 to 12 percent of 9th grade

Table 4-21.
Dropout rates for students in special and regular educational programs: 1998–2000

Type of student	1998	1999	2000
Regular	11.08	12.40	11.67
Special education	7.05	1.01	1.54
All students	10.22	10.85	10.40

SOURCE: Baltimore City Public School System, Maryland School Performance Report, 1997–98, 1998–99, 1999–2000.

[19]There is some debate regarding the accuracy of this figure. We are providing what has been given in published reports.

students in regular programs during the last 3 years.[20]

High School Completion Rates

Table 4-22 indicates that the percentage of students receiving diplomas has increased by approximately 2 percentage points during the last 3 years, while the percentage receiving certificates has gone down by a corresponding amount. By 2000, 98 percent of graduating students received diplomas.

References

Borman, G. D., Rachuba, L. T., and Hewes, G. M. (2001). A Quasi-Experimental Analysis of Achievement Outcomes for the 1998–1999 Achievement First Schools and Matched Control Schools. Draft report for BCPSS.

MacIver, M. P., Kemper, E., and Stringfield, S. (2000). *The Baltimore Curriculum Project: Four Year Report.* Baltimore, MD. Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University.

Table 4-22.
Number and percent of students awarded high school graduation certificates versus diplomas: 1998–2000

Category	1998		1999		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Maryland high school certificate	188	4.8	178	4.5	90	2.4
Maryland high school diploma	3,727	95.2	3759	95.5	3,652	97.6

SOURCE: Baltimore City Public School System, Maryland School Performance Report, 1997–98, 1998–99, 1999–2000.

[20]Our comparisons to other jurisdictions indicate that in 1997–98, the dropout rate for regular education students in BCPSS was slightly lower than in comparable jurisdictions. Baltimore was 11.08; DC, 12.8; Milwaukee, 12.4; and New Orleans, 14.8

Attachment A.

Detailed Data on Assessments

Table A-1.
Percentage of students attaining satisfactory performance on the MSPAP statewide and in BCPSS, by grade and subject: 1993–2000

Grade/subject	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Grade 3								
Reading								
State	—	30.6	34.0	35.3	36.8	41.6	41.2	39.2
BCPSS	—	9.2	11.4	11.2	11.8	16.6	15.6	18.5
Writing								
State	35.1	35.2	39.3	40.9	40.0	46.9	47.1	49.5
BCPSS	18.1	16.0	16.8	16.2	14.6	20.8	24.4	26.9
Mathematics								
State	28.6	33.9	42.0	38.7	41.4	41.6	38.9	40.1
BCPSS	7.1	12.4	15.0	8.7	10.8	13.2	11.4	14.3
Grade 5								
Reading								
State	24.7	30.2	29.5	33.7	35.6	40.4	41.4	44.6
BCPSS	7.3	10.0	9.2	10.9	13.0	14.3	15.7	19.9
Writing								
State	36.8	33.2	36.7	42.3	39.3	42.0	38.6	41.8
BCPSS	17.6	13.6	13.2	18.0	14.0	14.6	15.7	19.9
Mathematics								
State	39.5	42.1	44.7	47.8	48.2	47.9	46.2	46.7
BCPSS	11.8	13.3	16.7	13.2	13.6	13.5	16.2	20.5
Grade 8								
Reading								
State	24.6	24.0	27.6	28.6	26.3	25.5	25.3	26.8
BCPSS	5.1	5.4	7.4	7.9	8.7	6.7	7.1	8.5
Writing								
State	36.3	44.0	42.1	43.0	42.5	43.5	46.0	51.8
BCPSS	13.2	15.3	13.8	17.3	17.1	17.1	20.2	16.2
Mathematics								
State	35.8	40.3	42.3	43.3	45.9	47.4	49.0	50.4
BCPSS	5.4	9.4	12.4	8.6	10.0	12.7	12.8	14.8

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland School Performance Report 2000. Available: http://www.msp.msde.state.md.us

Table A-2.
Normal curve equivalents on the CTBS/5 statewide and in BCPSS, by grade and subject: 1997–2001

Grade/subject	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Grade 2					
Reading					
State	47	—	48	53	*
BCPSS	38	—	38	42	45
Mathematics					
State	52	—	46	52	*
BCPSS	33	—	34	36	44
Grade 4					
Reading					
State	51	—	50	52	*
BCPSS	41	—	41	38	41
Mathematics					
State	51	—	49	53	*
BCPSS	36	—	35	36	41
Grade 6					
Reading					
State	50	—	51	51	*
BCPSS	36	—	36	34	35
Mathematics					
State	47	—	51	53	*
BCPSS	33	—	32	32	36

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland School Performance Report 2000. Available: http://www.msp.msde.state.md.us

Table A-3.
MFT pass rates for the state and BCPSS, by grade and subject: 1993–2000

Grade/subject	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Grade 9								
Reading								
State	97.4	96.9	97.1	97.2	97.3	97.4	97.0	97.2
BCPSS	91.4	89.3	90.5	90.6	90.3	91.2	89.1	89.9
Writing								
State	93.5	88.0	88.3	82.5	89.0	89.8	92.0	92.0
BCPSS	75.5	63.6	59.4	54.3	64.3	65.6	71.6	76.3
Mathematics								
State	79.2	79.4	81.1	83.0	84.9	84.8	85.3	85.1
BCPSS	48.2	45.1	43.7	46.2	49.2	49.4	54.9	60.6
Grade 11								
Reading								
State	99.6	99.7	99.5	99.6	99.6	99.5	99.4	99.5
BCPSS	99.1	98.6	98.1	98.0	98.4	97.8	97.9	98.3
Writing								
State	98.6	98.6	98.5	97.7	98.0	97.8	98.2	98.2
BCPSS	95.0	93.6	92.6	89.6	89.7	88.9	91.0	92.7
Mathematics								
State	96.2	96.1	96.4	95.9	95.9	95.6	95.7	96.0
BCPSS	85.7	85.1	84.6	81.6	79.5	77.3	78.9	83.2

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland School Performance Report 2000. Available: http://www.msp.msde.state.md.us

Attachment B.

Data for AF and DI and Comparison Schools and RE and Non-RE Schools

Table B-1.
Percentage of students in DI and comparison schools attaining satisfactory performance on the MSPAP, by grade, subject, and cohort: 1993–2000

Grade/subject, and cohort	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Grade 3								
Reading								
Comparison	*	8.3	11.6	10.9	11.0	16.2	16.8	21.9
DI 96	*	9.8	13.0	15.5	18.0	13.3	17.4	16.1
DI 97	*	6.3	7.5	4.3	7.9	6.8	10.0	9.4
DI 98	*	8.7	14.0	4.9	7.6	12.7	10.8	13.1
Writing								
Comparison	15.8	15.8	17.7	16.4	13.8	21.7	27.5	28.8
DI 96	25.1	14.8	15.5	15.9	17.9	21.3	26.1	30.3
DI 97	14.4	9.8	11.2	5.1	10.6	11.4	15.2	17.4
DI 98	18.3	16.9	18.2	13.7	13.5	23.0	19.3	15.0
Mathematics								
Comparison	5.4	9.7	17.0	7.9	12.6	14.9	16.2	17.7
DI 96	9.6	6.7	15.9	14.5	14.5	10.2	11.7	10.6
DI 97	4.0	8.1	4.0	3.1	5.7	5.7	7.6	7.6
DI 98	6.2	18.4	24.7	4.7	6.8	11.2	6.0	2.5
Grade 5								
Reading								
Comparison	6.8	10.6	8.6	10.4	13.7	15.2	21.4	24.9
DI 96	9.8	11.4	11.2	12.6	11.7	12.7	17.4	18.0
DI 97	6.8	5.2	10.3	8.4	9.3	12.0	15.1	11.8
DI 98	3.6	8.8	7.7	6.6	4.1	11.2	12.8	13.1
Writing								
Comparison	18.6	14.4	14.0	20.6	15.4	15.3	19.9	23.9
DI 96	17.1	13.2	16.4	20.8	13.7	19.2	20.0	19.1
DI 97	16.4	12.0	10.8	12.8	13.2	10.3	10.2	14.9
DI 98	14	8.6	9.0	10.4	9.5	9.0	13.2	14.8
Mathematics								
Comparison	14.3	17.4	20.0	15.0	17.5	21.8	26.8	31.9
DI 96	15.7	14.1	19.4	18.2	14.2	10.8	14.5	14.0
DI 97	9.6	5.4	15.6	2.5	9.7	4.7	9.3	6.5
DI 98	8.1	8.8	14.9	7.2	4.7	10.4	8.5	6.1

*No data for schools on BCPSS' file.

NOTE: Percentages for each cohort computed by Westat.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School System.

Table B-2.
Normal curve equivalents on CTBS/5 for DI and comparison schools, by grade, subject, and cohort: 1998–2001

Grade/subject and cohort	1998	1999	2000	2001
Grade 2				
Reading				
Comparison	36.7	39.1	40.1	44.1
DI 96	41.9	42.2	46.0	50.4
DI 97	33.3	36.5	40.0	43.2
DI 98	36.7	35.1	36.7	45.1
Mathematics				
Comparison	33.9	32.2	40.3	45.4
DI 96	33.4	36.9	44.8	52.3
DI 97	23.3	22.3	33.7	40.4
DI 98	27.0	29.5	33.7	43.9
Grade 4				
Reading				
Comparison	36.4	35.2	37.1	40.1
DI 96	38.5	41.5	37.8	43.8
DI 97	37.3	34.6	36.9	40.0
DI 98	34.5	31.2	32.3	37.6
Mathematics				
Comparison	30.2	29.8	39.2	43.3
DI 96	34.4	33.6	39.9	42.5
DI 97	23.7	23.3	34.1	35.9
DI 98	25.5	24.5	32.8	36.3

NOTE: NCEs for each cohort computed by Westat.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School System.

Table B-3.
Percentage of students in AF and comparison schools attaining satisfactory performance on MSPAP, by grade, subject, and cohort: 1993–2000

Grade/subject and cohort	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Grade 3								
Reading								
Comparison	*	7.6	9.2	10.0	10.0	16.6	15.2	18.5
AF 98	*	13.8	13.0	11.4	14.2	16.0	16.0	24.2
AF 99	*	8.0	9.0	10.2	9.3	10.4	12.5	17.1
Writing								
Comparison	17.0	16.2	14.6	15.6	12.3	20.9	22.2	26.6
AF 98	15.9	17.8	18.4	19.0	15.5	19.3	28.8	35.2
AF 99	13.9	15.2	17.4	15.2	13.7	16.8	21.3	27.3
Mathematics								
Comparison	5.4	9.4	13.7	6.6	8.8	16.1	12.6	15.5
AF 98	8.4	18.3	25.8	14.4	13.8	18.5	17.7	26.1
AF 99	5.6	12.0	13.2	6.7	8.2	6.1	8.8	10.0
Grade 5								
Reading								
Comparison	6.0	9.4	7.2	10.9	12.1	13.9	13.8	16.8
AF 98	5.0	9.7	9.1	13.7	14.5	12.1	15.1	21.3
AF 99	6.1	9.4	9.8	10.0	10.8	13.7	13.1	17.9
Writing								
Comparison	16.5	14.4	11.6	16.1	12.5	13.9	14.0	18.1
AF 98	14.3	13.7	16.7	19.4	15.6	15.9	14.4	23.4
AF 99	14.4	10.8	13.7	16.8	11.1	15.2	13.7	17.7
Mathematics								
Comparison	9.8	12.1	15.3	11.4	12.4	12.9	15.3	21.0
AF 98	9.8	16.3	25.2	19.0	17.7	18.7	16.8	28.5
AF 99	9.4	11.9	17.1	10.2	10.6	10.8	14.3	14.2

*No data for these schools on BCPSS' file.

NOTE: Percentages for each cohort computed by Westat.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School System.

Table B-4.
Normal curve equivalents on the CTBS/5 for AF and comparison schools, by grade, subject, and cohort: 1998–2001

Grade/subject and cohort	1998	1999	2000	2001
Grade 2				
Reading				
Comparison	37.6	37.5	40.9	43.5
AF 98	35.3	39.4	42.3	45.8
AF 99	34.3	37.5	41.1	44.8
Mathematics				
Comparison	33.7	30.1	40.0	44.9
AF 98	30.2	36.8	41.1	44.9
AF 99	28.5	32.6	39.0	41.1
Grade 4				
Reading				
Comparison	36.0	34.7	37.2	39.4
AF 98	36.7	36.5	35.0	41.2
AF 99	35.8	33.0	34.4	42.5
Mathematics				
Comparison	28.0	29.3	37.7	40.9
AF 98	28.8	32.5	35.8	39.4
AF 99	24.4	24.4	33.6	40.1

NOTE: NCEs for each cohort computed by Westat.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School System.

Table B-5.
Normal curve equivalents on CTBS/5 for RE and non-RE schools, by grade, subject, and cohort: 1998–2001

Grade/subject and cohort	1998	1999	2000	2001
Grade 2				
Reading				
Non-RE	36.4	38.0	41.7	45.8
RE 96	35.5	36.7	39.5	43.2
RE 97	35.1	41.6	42.9	50.3
RE 98	36.9	37.3	39.9	43.7
RE 99	35.8	39.3	41.3	43.7
Mathematics				
Non-RE	34.4	32.5	41.7	46.7
RE 96	27.9	30.0	38.4	43.2
RE 97	25.2	31.9	36.2	50.2
RE 98	31.0	30.9	38.0	43.8
RE 99	27.5	26.1	35.3	36.3
Grade 4				
Reading				
Non-RE	36.9	35.8	34.9	39.8
RE 96	35.1	34.6	35.4	39.8
RE 97	34.8	36.7	33.4	41.2
RE 98	35.0	31.9	35.7	40.8
RE 99	36.5	38.3	34.7	39.9
Mathematics				
Non-RE	28.7	29.9	37.0	41.6
RE 96	26.0	24.6	35.3	38.4
RE 97	21.3	24.0	32.6	37.0
RE 98	26.7	26.1	35.5	38.0
RE 99	26.1	26.8	33.5	37.8
Grade 6				
Reading				
Non-RE	*	33.7	34.5	36.0
RE 96	*	33.8	35.5	37.4
RE 97	*	31.7	31.9	34.3
RE 98	*	33.6	35.2	35.6
Mathematics				
Non-RE	*	31.2	34.8	36.1
RE 96	*	29.9	33.8	34.9
RE 97	*	27.1	29.4	31.4
RE 98	*	31.7	36.0	37.5

*No data for these schools in BCPSS' file.

NOTE: NCEs for each cohort computed by Westat.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School System.

Table B-6.
Percentage of students in RE and non-RE schools attaining satisfactory performance on the MSPAP, by grade, subject, and cohort: 1993–2000

Grade/subject and cohort	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Grade 3								
Reading								
Non-RE	NA	11.1	15.0	15.0	15.0	21.5	20.5	21.6
RE 96	NA	7.2	5.9	7.3	9.5	9.5	12.5	16.0
RE 97	NA	3.6	4.8	2.1	6.9	7.9	9.0	14.2
RE 98	NA	9.9	11.1	7.7	6.5	11.6	11.8	16.4
RE 99	NA	7.6	13.2	8.6	12.4	13.3	8.8	11.9
Writing								
Non-RE	18.0	17.8	22.2	21.2	17.6	26.2	31.2	31.5
RE 96	19.2	15.0	8.6	12.2	12.0	14.7	18.7	26.2
RE 97	9.7	8.4	6.7	7.3	8.4	11.8	16.2	22.7
RE 98	15.6	17.2	15.8	14.6	10.1	19.0	20.9	24.1
RE 99	11.5	7.0	19.5	10.0	19.7	15.2	17.8	17.1
Mathematics								
Non-RE	6.3	13.8	20.4	11.7	15.7	18.8	18.3	20.1
RE 96	6.0	7.2	6.8	4.4	7.5	7.5	7.2	10.4
RE 97	1.2	5.8	6.3	0.6	3.3	7.3	4.6	5.5
RE 98	7.6	23.7	21.8	6.4	5.8	10.8	8.5	10.5
RE 99	4.3	3.7	12.1	5.9	11.2	5.4	2.3	7.5
Grade 5								
Reading								
Non-RE	6.7	9.5	10.3	13.7	14.3	15.6	17.9	21.4
RE 96	6.0	7.7	6.3	8.1	9.0	10.1	12.7	14.3
RE 97	1.0	5.6	5.5	3.5	4.4	8.2	10.6	12.7
RE 98	5.1	8.6	8.1	9.1	8.5	10.9	12.6	15.1
RE 99	6.8	6.1	7.7	11.3	15.5	10.5	14.5	23.7
Writing								
Non-RE	17.1	14.7	16.4	20.5	15.6	15.8	18.2	21.8
RE 96	14.2	11.5	7.5	14.6	10.4	11.6	12.5	15.3
RE 97	7.9	8.3	9.0	7.3	5.9	10.2	11.1	16.9
RE 98	13.1	12.3	13.2	16.6	7.7	13.0	11.9	15.5
RE 99	16.3	9.8	10.0	14.6	15.2	9.2	11.5	19.0
Mathematics								
Non-RE	11.7	13.5	21.6	17.6	16.7	18.7	20.9	26.0
RE 96	9.1	8.4	6.7	7.0	7.9	8.1	10.6	12.3
RE 97	2.2	6.2	10.4	2.8	4.7	2.7	5.3	8.7
RE 98	9.2	15.7	18.3	12.1	7.2	12.6	12.3	14.3
RE 99	10.1	6.3	11.3	6.0	13.5	4.3	7.5	13.1

Table B-6.
Percentage of students in RE and non-RE schools attaining satisfactory performance on the MSPAP, by grade, subject, and cohort: 1993–2000 (continued)

Grade/subject and cohort	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Grade 8								
Reading								
Non-RE	5.0	6.1	8.2	10.8	9.7	7.5	6.7	10.6
RE 96	3.3	6.2	6.2	7.5	6.9	5.2	5.0	8.1
RE 97	1.0	3.3	4.0	2.8	3.0	3.2	2.8	4.9
RE 98	6.0	6.6	9.7	8.2	6.8	7.5	8.5	8.4
RE 99	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Writing								
Non-RE	9.2	17.9	16.4	25.0	18.3	19.9	19.4	28.4
RE 96	9.4	15.5	8.7	14.9	15.3	14.5	16.1	25.4
RE 97	2.4	9.7	9.2	10.4	9.9	14.2	15.0	26.7
RE 98	13.5	18.6	18.1	18.4	14.2	18.3	23.4	28.8
RE 99	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Mathematics								
Non-RE	3.1	9.8	15.7	12.5	13.0	16.4	11.1	18.8
RE 96	3.5	9.2	6.8	9.1	7.6	10.7	8.6	14.3
RE 97	1.7	6.9	10.4	1.7	3.8	6.4	6.4	8.4
RE 98	6.6	11.4	19.5	10.4	10	14.8	18.4	18.6
RE 99	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

*This cohort has no middle school.

NOTE: Percentages for each cohort computed by Westat. There is only one school in Cohort RE 95. Where zeros are shown for this cohort, records indicate that none of the students in this school attained satisfactory performance.

SOURCE: ASCII files supplied by Baltimore City Public School System.

Attachment C: Procedure for Conducting Sign Tests

The following procedure was used to assess progress of the AF, DI and RE schools.

Step 1. Generate average scores:
We first take the school level data and calculate an average score for schools within every cohort (i.e., AF96, 97, etc.). For example, schools A, B, C, participating in AF in 95 (AF95) have MSPAP reading scores in 1995 of 10, 20, and 30 respectively. The average score in MSPAP reading for the AF95 cohort is (10 + 20 + 30) / 3 = 20. The variables used are percent of students passing at the satisfactory level. The subject areas looked at were reading, mathematics and writing for MSPAP and MFT and reading and math for CTBS.

Step 2. Fit two regression lines, one for the "Pre-implementation scores" and the other for the "Post-implementation scores:" Once the average scores for each group for each year were calculated, we then fit a linear regression line to the data before and after program participation. Take the same example described earlier, the pre-test data points are 1993, 1994, and post-test data points are 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 for AF95. If there is only one data point for the pre or post interval, no regression line was fitted.

Step 3. Assess growth:
The slopes (b coefficient) of the pre and post regression lines represent average annual growth before and after program implementation.

Step 4. Calculate differences in growth (delta b):
We calculated differences in growth separately for the program (AF, DI, or RE) schools and their comparison schools. The difference between the pre and post growth of the program schools ("delta program") indicates changes occurring before and after the program initiation. It should be noted that this comparison does not separate program effects from other effects that might be occurring. The delta for the comparison schools captures the effects of factors other than the particular program.

Step 5. Assess program effect (delta delta b):
The program (AF, DI, or RE) effect is determined by calculating the difference between the delta b of the "program" schools and that of the "comparison" schools. This is the "true" program effect. This delta of delta b statistic is then categorized into four groups: 1) positive (delta of delta $b_s > 1.0$); 2) trivial positive (1.0 ~ 0); 3) trivial negative (0~ -1.0); and 4) negative (< -1.0) (see the standard setting document).

Step 6. Conduct significance test (sign test):
Program schools that demonstrate a positive effect are coded as "1" (#1 and #2 in Step 5 above); those with no positive impacts are coded as "0" (#3 and #4 in Step 5 above). A statistical procedure known as "sign test" is then conducted. The research hypothesis is: Does the observed success rate for the program differ from what would be expected if the distribution were random? For example, if there are 7 out of 10 programs that show a positive impact, is that significantly different from the chance (5 out of 10)?

5. Findings on Instructional Programs

Introduction

Since the passage of Senate Bill 795, considerable effort has gone into enhancing instruction and instructional support services. In this chapter we examine some of the strategies undertaken, focusing on their development, and where possible, what is known about their impacts. We look not only at strategies that directly impact what is taught, but also at efforts undertaken to make the learning environment more friendly and supportive.

Section 1 examines the citywide curriculum and steps taken to ensure a consistent, challenging program of studies is provided for all students. We look at the curriculum in terms of how it was selected, how it is being implemented, and the extent it appears to serve both regular and special education students.

Section 2 examines the student promotion and retention policy. We look at what the policy addresses, how it has been received, and the services that have been developed to support it.

Section 3 examines major whole-school reform models. The models are described and their efficacy is discussed.

Section 4 discusses other intervention programs such as the ready-to-learn initiatives, class-size reduction, and middle school and high school efforts.

Section 5 discusses what we have found out about supports for reconstitution-eligible schools. We summarize the steps that BCPSS has taken to provide extra support to these schools and examine the extent to which these supports appear to be in place.

Section 6 discusses special education services. To some extent, special education has been previously addressed in our discussion of the citywide curriculum. However, in this section we summarize activities related to compliance and raise some questions regarding current management strategies.

Section 7 examines parental involvement, one of the critical supports to instruction. We discuss what has been done to engage parents more fully in the schools from the points of view of both the community and staff.

Finally, Section 8 examines another important support for instruction, the maintenance of a secure, civil, and orderly environment. The focus is a consideration of policies developed to address student behavior and the extent to which they are bringing about change.

Citywide Curriculum Framework

We found that BCPSS has taken major steps in establishing citywide curricula aligned to the Maryland Content Standards, Learning Outcomes, and High School Core Learning Goals. We found a strong relationship between the Maryland Content Standards and Learning Outcomes and the BCPSS Content Standards for English/language arts for grades K–12 and mathematics for grades K–8. The process used for selecting the textbooks was reasonable and included the involvement of critical stakeholder groups.

The system has worked to supply teachers with the supports, materials, and resources needed to implement the curricula. Although some teachers feel that they do not have a sufficient number of textbooks and some are concerned about the alignment of the textbooks with the milestone tests and curricula, even those who see gaps feel the situation is improved.

A program of professional development has been put in place to assist teachers in learning to use the new curricular tools. While the majority of teachers (71%) report having received training, those who may need it the most, new teachers and teachers who are provisionally certified, have had significantly less training.

The milestones test developed to monitor progress over the year appear problematic at present. Both what they measure and how they are used needs closer examination.

Finally, although BCPSS has been moving toward greater inclusion of students with disabilities, it appears that more support is needed to assist classroom teachers in using the citywide curricula with students with special needs.

Recommendations:

- *Alignment of the mathematics curriculum, textbooks, and milestones assessments needs to be reviewed.*
- *The implementation of the milestone assessments should be reviewed. Improvements should be made in the use of the milestone assessments to inform instruction and monitor progress.*
- *Further training regarding inclusion, especially in the use of the textbooks, curriculum, and milestone assessments needs to be provided.*
- *Staff development should be upgraded so that it is strongly linked to student learning.*
- *New teachers and those who have been provisionally certified need to receive training in BCPSS' curriculum and textbooks.*
- *Sufficient textbooks for all students, especially those at the middle school level, must be provided.*

We understand that BCPSS has already taken steps to begin to address some of these issues. One of these steps is the plan to conduct a curriculum audit. Also, a new assessment specialist has been given responsibility for the re-named testing program, now called the Curriculum Assessment Program.

Introduction

Senate Bill 795 required that The Master Plan identify the actions necessary to provide effective curriculum and instructional programs, including the development and dissemination of "a citywide curriculum framework reflecting state learning outcomes, including Maryland School Performance Program Standards, and an appropriate developmental sequence for students" (Section 4-309(D)(4)(I)) and "an effective educational program for meeting the needs of students at risk of educational failure" (Section 4-309(D)(4)(III)). In addition, Section 4-309(D) required The Master Plan to identify actions to "develop an effective system of providing instructional materials and support services," and "provide appropriate methods for student assessment and remediation."

The Senate Bill gave the New Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners the authority to select textbooks (Section 4-316(a)(4)). Furthermore, the Chief Academic Officer was required to develop a mechanism or plan for effective teacher participation in the development of the curriculum, instruction, and professional staff development (Section 14).

According to the initial Master Plan, during the 1997–98 school year, BCPSS analyzed its curriculum for alignment with state learning outcomes. Areas of misalignment were changed, and curriculum guides then were distributed to each teacher. Curriculum was addressed under Objective 1, which focused on increasing student achievement. In particular, Strategy 1.1.1 called for establishing a prekindergarten through grade 12 curriculum framework and content standards. The action steps for advancing this strategy provided for:

- Refining BCPSS curriculum based on new state standards and having one set of standards for all students, including those with disabilities and other learning needs;
- Standardizing curriculum usage around a few textbook series aligned with state standards;
- Purchasing textbooks;
- Developing a plan for evaluating students; and
- Training teachers in the use of the new materials.

The plan called for implementing one core subject area per year at the K–8 level, beginning with reading and language arts. The implementation schedule for the core curriculum is shown in Exhibit 5-1.

Evaluation

In evaluating what has been accomplished under The Master Plan, we developed an extensive list of research questions regarding the citywide curriculum framework and quarterly milestone assessments (Exhibit 5-2). Our approach for addressing these questions was multifaceted. Our activities included document reviews, interviews with senior BCPSS staff, items on the principal and teacher surveys, and interviews conducted on site at 25 schools.

Exhibit 5-1.
Implementation schedule for the core curriculum

Year	Instructional focus	
	K–8	High school
1998–1999	Language arts/reading	English I-IV, algebra, biology, and American government
1999–2000	Mathematics	Science
2000–2001	Science	U.S. history, and world history
2001–2002	Social studies	Additional areas, to be determined
2002–2003	Foreign language and arts (grades 5-12)	

Exhibit 5-2.
Research questions

Citywide curriculum framework

- In what content areas have curriculum frameworks been developed?
- What grade levels are covered in each of them?
- If frameworks are not complete, what are the plans for completing them?
- How are the frameworks aligned to the Maryland Learning Outcomes and the Maryland High School Core Learning Goals?
- Have curricula been adapted to include modifications for students with disabilities?
- What is the nature of the evidence?
- Is there a plan in place for implementing the new frameworks?
- Is the plan being implemented according to pre-established timelines and other benchmarks?
- Is there a system in place for monitoring the implementation of these activities?
- What approach was used to ensure that the new textbooks selected were consistent with the curriculum frameworks?
- How were the needs of all learners, including those with disabilities, taken into consideration in the selection of textbooks? Have supplementary aides and services been put in place to provide classroom teachers with the competencies needed to address the learning needs of students with diverse needs?
- How were classroom teachers involved in the development of curriculum frameworks and the selection of textbooks?
- To what extent are the new math, reading, and science textbooks used throughout the system?
- How much training did teachers receive prior to the adoption of the new textbooks?
- What percentage of teachers received this training?
- Did teachers consider the training to be adequate?

Quarterly milestone assessments

- Has an assessment system been established?
- Is it comprehensive with regard to subject areas and grades?
- How have students with disabilities been included in the system?
- If the system is not yet completely in place, is there a plan in place for completing its development?
- Is this plan sound?
- Are the assessments being implemented?
- How is administration of the milestones being consistently monitored?
- Are data from the assessments being reported in a timely fashion?
- Are the reports clear and easy to use?
- Are the reports being used?
- What impacts have the assessments had on school programs or supports to individual students?

The evaluation's Joint Oversight Committee[21] asked Westat to concentrate on reading/language arts and mathematics, particularly at the elementary levels. We were asked to look at science to a much lesser extent. However, under The Master Plan, BCPSS has done considerable work in many content areas. Exhibit 5-3 shows a chronological summary of BCPSS' accomplishments regarding curriculum. Priority initiatives for the 2001–02 school year are shown in Exhibit 5-4.

In the next section we examine BCPSS' approach to selecting citywide curricula. In subsequent sections we 1) evaluate the process used; 2) comment on the extent to which various components—training, materials, assessments, and other supports—have been provided; and 3) look carefully at the use of these curricula with different groups of learners. We close our analysis with a look at quality of instruction, a critically important area that this evaluation was able to address to only a limited extent.

Approach for Selecting Curricula

Reacting to the concerns raised by high student mobility and the proliferation of different curricula, one the first activities undertaken by BCPSS under the new City-State Partnership was to select curricula and textbooks that would be used citywide. The first content area in which BCPSS began to develop curriculum and select textbooks was reading/language arts. During the spring of 1998, BCPSS developed content standards in this area for prekindergarten through grade 12 based on the Maryland Learning Outcomes, Core Learning Goals, and the April 1998 draft Content Standards.

The textbook selection process got underway while the content standards were being written. It had been decided early in the process that the curriculum would have a strong phonics base in kindergarten through grade 2 and a strong integrated language arts focus in grades 3–8. BCPSS elementary and middle schools were surveyed to determine what reading/language arts materials they were using, and a similar survey was made of surrounding districts. A materials-selection committee, which included teachers in the membership, was established.

BCPSS then determined which publishers would be invited to participate in the selection process. The selected publishers were requested to submit reports showing how their materials were aligned with the MSPAP and evaluation data on the impact of using the materials on student achievement. Committee members were asked to evaluate each set of materials on six dimensions, including whether or not strategies were provided for all students regardless of primary language, literacy levels, or abilities, but disabilities was not specifically mentioned. In addition, teachers and school-based administrators were surveyed about professional development needs. Based on the information collected, the committee recommended that the following reading/language arts series be adopted: Open Court (also known as SRA/McGraw Hill's *Collections for Young Scholars*) for grades K–2; Houghton Mifflin's *Invitations to Literacy* for grades 3–5; and McDougal Littell's *The Language of Literature* and *The Writer's Craft* for grades 6–8. The New Board of School Commissioners approved these series as well as textbooks for English I, II, III, and IV.

Development of the K–5 mathematics curriculum went through a somewhat different process and began prior to the passage of SB 795. In June 1996, BCPSS' proposal for revising the curriculum, known as Mathematics: Application and Reasoning Skills (MARS), was funded by NSF. Input into the development of the curriculum was obtained from more than 300 teachers and 31 principals. The original plan called for piloting the draft curriculum in 41 schools during 1997–98. However, after it was presented to the interim Chief Executive Officer in July 1997, the decision was made to pilot it in all elementary schools, except those participating in Direct Instruction. Textbook selection occurred during the 1998–99 school year, and teachers were included in the selection

[21]The Joint Oversight Committee (JOC) was composed of representatives from MSDE and BCPSS, who provided guidance and support for the conduct of the evaluation.

Exhibit 5-3.
Chronology of BCPSS accomplishments regarding curriculum under The Master Plan

1998–1999

- Developed a new reading/language arts curriculum
- Adopted and purchased reading/language arts textbooks for all students
- Developed milestones
- Developed a plan to implement a new math curriculum and made related textbook adoptions
- Purchased algebra and geometry textbooks.
- Published outline and textbook utilization guide for algebra II
- Published outlines for precalculus and calculus

1999–2000

- Implemented the K-8 mathematics program
- Developed an end-of-year course assessment for biology
- Developed standards for the fine arts (dance, music, and visual arts)
- Published outline and textbook utilization guide for chemistry
- Updated outlines and textbook utilization guides for algebra I, geometry

2000–2001

- Purchased new science materials for grades 6-8
- Planned for implementation of science curriculum Pre-K-5
- Offered algebra I and geometry both as single courses and as a two-course sequence for the first time
- Offered transitional mathematics in zoned high schools for students who did not pass the MFMT before entering high school
- Developed end-of-course tests for biology I, algebra I, and geometry
- Adopted a fine arts strategic plan and initiated the development of the fine arts curriculum
- Initiated plans for the expansion of the modern language program
- Aligned the high school Latin, Spanish, and French curricula with national standards for foreign language instruction
- Started planning for the implementation of the gifted and talented program

Exhibit 5-4.
BCPSS priority initiatives for 2001–02

- Continue to implement reading curriculum prekindergarten–12
- Fully implement the mathematics curriculum prekindergarten–12
- Fully implement the newly adopted science curriculum prekindergarten–5
- Implement science curriculum 6–12
- Maintain at the current level implementation of the Fine Arts Strategic Plan
- Develop and implement plan for expansion of gifted and talented program K–12
- Plan for implementation of the English as a second language pre-k through 12 according to School Board policy
- Expand the modern and classical language program in grades 3 through 12
- Continue to integrate social studies into the instructional program (including beginning the process for adopting textbooks)
- Develop a new prekindergarten–8 theme for the mathematics/science/technology school in the Southeast area

committee. The amount of alignment of the commercial textbooks to BCPSS' draft curriculum was one of the standards used in the selection process. Four commercial products were piloted. The textbooks that were adopted were *Math in My World*, published by McGraw Hill, and *Investigations in Data, Number and Space*, published by Scott Foresman Addison Wesley.

BCPSS had planned to revise the draft mathematics curriculum guidelines when the revised State Learning Outcomes and Content Standards became available in May 2000. During the 2000–2001 school year, the curriculum was revised and distributed in February and March 2001.

The selection process for the adoption of the science materials was similar to the process for reading/language arts, although a longer time frame was available for the elementary materials. Science content standards were developed for grades K–12 during the spring of 1998. High school textbooks were selected in 1998 and the spring of 1999. For the elementary grades, a pilot of the recommended text was conducted during winter 2001. Training for elementary teachers was scheduled for summer 2001, with implementation planned for the current school year.

Appropriateness of Approach for Selecting Curricula

The approach taken by BCPSS regarding the development of reading/language arts content standards and the selection of textbooks was reasonable under the circumstances. Ideally, content standards should be fully in place before textbook selection is conducted. However, if BCPSS had waited for all the pieces to be in place at the ideal time, implementation would have been considerably delayed.

In making its selection of textbooks in reading/language arts, BCPSS can be commended for collecting information from a variety of sources and including teachers on the materials-selection committee. The committee required the publishers being considered to provide information on the alignment of the materials with the MSPAP and data on the impact of the materials on student achievement, evidence of the importance that the committee placed on these key factors. The committee used a number of dimensions to rate the materials. However, one dimension that should have received much more attention, given the importance of the special education court case, was the provision of strategies for students with disabilities. In addition, the appropriateness of the materials for other students at risk of academic failure should have been an item for the raters to consider.

The process for developing the mathematics curriculum was begun as part of an NSF grant. It included a considerable amount of input from teachers and principals. Changes in the process occurred because of changes outside of BCPSS. The first was the passage of the Senate Bill 795, which prompted the district to expand the pilot of the draft curriculum to all elementary schools with the exception of those participating in Direct Instruction. The second was the delay in the State Learning Outcomes and Content Standards. In order to produce materials that were current with the state materials, BCPSS decided to delay finalizing the draft of its curriculum and instead provided addenda to teachers to reflect the relationship between the curriculum and the newly adopted textbooks. The result was that the mathematics curriculum was in a transition state for more than a year and a half.

Reasonableness of Implementation Plan

The original plan for implementing the use of new curriculum materials, with one core subject area being introduced each year, was quite ambitious given all the other changes that were being implemented in the district. It is not surprising that the schedule has slipped somewhat. As noted in the previous section, some difficulties arose during the implementation of the mathematics curriculum. Wisely, BCPSS decided to spend an additional year on mathematics before moving on to science implementation.

It was a reasonable decision to begin with the reading/language arts curriculum because many of the skills in this area greatly enhance development in other core subjects. Generally, the implementation of the reading/language arts curriculum seems to have gone smoothly. One area that needed additional training was at the transition point between the two reading series as students moved from the Open Court series in grade 2, which is phonics based, to the Houghton Mifflin series, which has more of an integrated language arts focus, in grade 3. BCPSS has provided this additional training.

The strategies for the implementation of the reading/language arts curriculum were sound. During the summer after adoption, BCPSS provided 5-day training sessions on the materials and the content standards to all elementary and middle school teachers who teach reading/ language arts. A compressed version of the training was provided in late August 1998 for new teachers. The publishing companies participated in the provision of the training and provided onsite staff technical assistance at individual schools during the year. During the first year, day-long grade-level training was provided to teachers, monthly training was provided to teacher leaders, and additional training was provided to administrators.

Teachers' Evaluations of the Curriculum Training

While many teachers have received training from BCPSS regarding the new curriculum and textbooks, many others have not. For example, on the teacher survey, 71 percent reported that they had received training from BCPSS in implementing the new curriculum (Table 5-1). Teachers who reported that they had received this training were more likely to be fully certified, at the school for more than 10 years, and at a school in which the SPI performance index had increased by more than 10 points.

While it is important that the more experienced, fully certified teachers receive training in the new curriculum, it is perhaps even more important that new teachers do. One group of new elementary teachers that we interviewed on site spoke of the extensive amount of curriculum materials they had received. During the year it had been difficult for them to determine how much to cover in the various units. Only toward the end of the year have they finally gotten a complete picture of how everything falls into place.

Table 5-1.
Percentage of teachers indicating they received training from BCPSS in implementing the new curriculum

School/teacher characteristic	Percent
Total	71
Change in SPI over 3 years	
No change or decline in scores	57
Increase of 1 to 5 points	77
Increase of 6 to 10 points	67
Increase over 10 points	79
Length of tenure	
2 years or less	56
3-5 years	69
6-10 years	83
More than 10 years	82
Teacher certification	
Provisional	59
Certified	77

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

About half (52 percent) of all teachers said they had received training from BCPSS in the use of the new reading curriculum or English textbooks, and 43 percent said they had received such training on the use of the new mathematics textbook (Table 5-2). Variations by school and teacher characteristics followed similar patterns for reading/English and mathematics. For example:

- Elementary teachers were far more likely than high school teachers to receive training on the use of reading/English and mathematics textbooks.
- Teachers in regular and Achievement First schools were more likely than teachers in alternative and citywide schools to have been trained.

- Teachers in Direct Instruction schools were less likely than teachers in regular schools to have been trained, a result that would be expected given that the DI schools do not use the BCPSS curriculum.

- Teachers with provisional certification were less likely then fully certified teachers to have received textbook training.

- Teachers who had been at the school for 2 years or less were less likely to have received this training than were teachers who had been at the school for more than 2 years.

Table 5-2.
Percentage of teachers indicating that they received training from BCPSS on the use of new materials

School/teacher characteristic	New reading curriculum or English textbooks	New mathematics textbooks
Total	52	43
Instructional level		
Elementary	70	60
Elementary/middle	57	47
Middle	37	26
High	26	23
School status		
Regular schools	53	46
AF/DI schools	59	45
Alternative schools	34	27
Special education schools	58	34
Citywide schools	22	21
AF/DI status		
AF	76	54
DI	32	31
Length of tenure		
2 years or less	42	27
3-5 years	54	52
6-10 years	56	53
More than 10 years	60	48
Teacher certification		
Provisional	41	37
Certified	57	47

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Teachers who had received training from BCPSS in the use of the new reading curriculum or English textbooks and the mathematics textbooks were asked about the usefulness of the training in several dimensions. Responses were similar for the two content areas with a little over half of the teachers saying that the training provided useful information to a good or great extent on most of the dimensions (Table 5-3).

Table 5-3.
Percentage of teachers saying that the training provided useful information to a good or great extent

Dimension	Reading/ English	Mathematics
Content	67	62
Pedagogy	55	53
Portfolio development	38	33
Assessment of student achievement	53	56
Higher standards for learning	58	60

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Teachers who had participated in the BCPSS training for the new textbooks were asked to evaluate the training. Again, responses were similar for the two content areas. For most of the factors queried, more than two-thirds of the respondents agreed that they applied to the training. The factor on which only about half of the teachers agreed was that the training adequately covered the use of reading materials with students with disabilities (Table 5-4).

Table 5-4.
Percentage of teachers agreeing that various factors applied to the training

Factor	Reading/ English	Mathematics
Enough time was allowed for training and followup	60	69
Textbooks were available for use during the training	81	88
The training adequately covered the use of the materials with students with disabilities	48	58
Quality of the training was excellent	79	78
Training helped the teacher become more effective	77	75

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Availability of Textbooks, Supplies, and Materials

Information on the availability of textbooks, supplies, and materials came from the principal and teacher surveys and from interviews during the onsite visits. Overall, 71 percent of the principals said that their schools had sufficient material resources (Table 5-5). However, responses varied by type of school and tenure of the principal. For example:

- Principals of elementary and elementary/ middle schools were more likely than middle and high school principals to say that their school had sufficient materials.
- Principals of alternative schools and schools that had implemented Achievement First or Direct Instruction were much more likely to say that their schools had sufficient materials than were principals of citywide and special education schools.

Table 5-5.
Percentage of principals agreeing that their school has sufficient material resources

School/principal characteristic	Percent
Total	71
Instructional level	
Elementary	73
Elementary/middle	86
Middle	62
High	56
School status	
Regular schools	66
AF/DI schools	83
Alternative schools	100
Special education schools	57
Citywide schools	43
AF/DI status	
AF	88
DI	76
Length of tenure	
2 years or less	71
3-5 years	84
More than 5 years	56

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

- Principals who had been in their positions for 3–5 years were much more likely to consider their materials to be sufficient than were principals who had been in their positions for more than 5 years.

On the survey, 73 percent of all teachers reported that they had sufficient textbooks for all their students (Table 5-6). Responses differed by level and type of school. For example:

- Teachers in middle school were less likely than teachers at other instructional levels to say they had sufficient textbooks.
- Compared to regular schools, citywide schools were more likely to have sufficient textbooks and special education schools were less likely.

Table 5-6.
Percentage of teachers agreeing that they have sufficient textbooks for all of their students

School/teacher characteristic	Percent
Total	73
Instructional level	
Elementary	75
Elementary/middle	75
Middle	59
High	82
School status	
Regular schools	72
AF/DI schools	72
Alternative schools	77
Special education schools	52
Citywide schools	91

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Overall, half of all teachers said they had sufficient supplies and materials for all their students (Table 5-7). Responses differed by school and teacher characteristics. For example:

- Teachers in middle school were less likely than teachers at other instructional levels to report that they have sufficient materials.
- Teachers in schools with high SPIs and in schools in which the SPIs had increased by

more than 10 points were more likely to report that they had sufficient materials.

- New teachers and those who had provisional certification were less likely to report that they had sufficient materials.

Table 5-7.
Percentage of teachers agreeing that they have sufficient supplies and materials for all of their students

School/teacher characteristic	Percent
Total	50
Instructional level	
Elementary	54
Elementary/middle	57
Middle	37
High	48
SPI performance	
Low scores	44
Medium scores	46
High scores	59
Change in SPI over 3 years	
No change or decline in scores	43
Increase of 1 to 5 points	49
Increase of 6 to 10 points	46
Increase over 10 points	57
Length of tenure	
2 years or less	41
3-5 years	52
6-10 years	50
More than 10 years	58
Teacher certification	
Provisional	40
Certified	55

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

While survey responses indicate adequate textbooks, supplies, and materials in general, they also show that sufficiency is more of an issue at the middle and high school levels. And, we realize that our survey question might have been answered differently had we asked about adequacy for various purposes, if separate questions had been asked for adopted textbooks and other books, and if separate questions were asked for each subject area. (Several survey respondents added comments that there were insufficient materials for social studies.) Our discussions at the schools we visited provide some background information for these responses.

At the elementary level, teachers reported that there were sufficient textbooks for reading/language arts and mathematics. They were appreciative of the kits containing math manipulatives because in the past they had to collect all the materials themselves. They liked the hands-on materials that have been provided in science. However, they felt that these materials were not connected to anything, mainly because they had not yet received the new science textbooks. Distribution of the new science textbooks and training in them was planned for the summer after our data collection. Teachers reported on the need to update the social studies materials, which is on the schedule for the future.

In contrast, at one middle school, because of students moving in and out from other districts, there are not enough textbooks for all of the students. It has been difficult to get the books back from students who leave, so new books have been designated for classroom use only. In another middle school, the language arts textbooks do not go home because teachers and the principal worry that the books won't be brought back to school. As a result of this practice, the teachers have to photocopy pages of the textbook for each of the students and assign homework based on those pages. Often the photocopy machine is either occupied or broken.

At one zoned high school, all regular classes were issued new textbooks, but the special education students received old books. We received some conflicting information from the principal and teachers about the sufficiency of textbooks and materials. While the principal stated that all students have textbooks that they can take home, one mathematics teacher indicated that she did not have enough books to send home with the students because her classes had to share the books. Many teachers in this school reported that they have been forced to alter the curriculum due to lack of materials. Furthermore, there was a general consensus among teachers that the school is not getting the resources and materials that it needs to promote learning. They have frequent equipment problems. For example, teachers are

only allowed to make a certain number of copies per month. If they exceed that number, they must pay out of their own pocket—certainly a major problem for teachers of classes that do not have enough textbooks for all of the students.

Alignment Among Curriculum, Textbooks, and Assessments

Under The Master Plan, BCPSS has put considerable effort into developing content standards in a variety of subject areas. Efforts were made to relate the standards to the Maryland Content Standards, the Maryland Learning Outcomes, and the Maryland High School Core Learning Goals, as well as to national standards such as those from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. While the MSDE materials show what students should know at the end of 3rd, 5th, 8th, and 12th grade, the grades in which state testing is conducted, the BCPSS materials show standards for each grade level individually. These standards were used to select textbooks and develop the milestone tests.

Westat reviewed the BCPSS elementary and middle school English/language arts content standards and compared them to the Maryland Content Standards and the Maryland Learning Outcomes. A similar review was done comparing the BCPSS high school English content standards with the state standards and High School Core Learning Goals. We found a very strong relationship between the BCPSS and state materials at all levels. Similarly, the BCPSS elementary and middle school mathematics content standards were compared with the Maryland Content Standards and the Maryland Learning Outcomes and, again, Westat found a strong relationship between them.

During the site visits, staff were generally satisfied with the alignment of the BCPSS curriculum, textbooks, and milestone tests for English/language arts. However, some confusion existed regarding which program to use for teaching writing. One possibility is the Houghton Mifflin reading series, which contains a writing component. Second, some schools in the district participated in the Integrated Language Arts (ILA) Project in recent years as a result of grant funding. The staff development program focused on teaching strategies related to the MSPAP. During 2000–2001, the focus was on writing with an emphasis on getting students to write more, to use different types of sentences, and to provide more details. Third, in at least one area, the administrator was promoting the use of Power Writing. In one school, staff were confused about which of the latter two programs to use. They raised the issue with the ILA specialist, who said the school should use the area administrator's preference.

For mathematics, a number of teachers interviewed on site felt that there was a mismatch between what was in the textbook, what was in the curriculum, and the skills and knowledge assessed on the milestone tests. Teachers were confused about having to skip around in the text in order to follow the curriculum. They complained that the materials had been sent to the school piecemeal, and that the assessments sometimes covered materials that weren't scheduled to be assessed until after the test was administered.

Some of these complaints reflect the fact that the mathematics curriculum has been in transition for over a year and a half. Receiving quarterly addenda has been confusing to some teachers. Now that the revised curriculum has been completed, this should no longer be an issue. Staff in the curriculum office said that in developing the curriculum, a conscious decision had been made to cover topics such as geometry, measurement, and money prior to the March CTBS tests that contain these topics. Thus, teachers must skip around in the textbook to cover these topics, which were said to be discrete and not require prerequisite skills from parts of the textbook that had not been covered. However, skipping around in the textbook has confused some teachers and at least a few interviewed on site felt that there was a problem about not covering prerequisite skills. The planned curriculum audit should determine if this is a problem. Finally, the Curriculum Office said that there had been a problem with the tests being given before the end of the quarter. As a result, teachers did not have the opportunity to cover all

the topics on the tests. Adjustments are being made to address this problem.

Usefulness of Milestone Assessments

The BCPSS quarterly milestone assessments were designed to measure student progress in reading and mathematics in grades 1 through 8. They were implemented beginning in fall 1999. As noted in the previous section, in the evaluation, we found that the milestone assessments seem to be somewhat problematic as currently implemented. Overall, 56 percent of all principals said that the quarterly milestone assessments of student achievement were useful in determining the progress of students to a good or great extent (Table 5-8). Similarly, 57 percent said that the milestone assessments were useful in helping teachers revise instructional strategies. Variations in responses occurred by school characteristics. For example:

- Elementary principals were much more positive about the assessments than their colleagues at other levels.
- Principals of Achievement First and Direct Instruction schools were more positive than principals in regular schools and other special schools regarding the utility of the assessments.[22]
- Principals of high poverty schools and schools whose SPI scores had increased by more than 10 points were more positive than their colleagues about the milestone assessments.
- Only about a third of the principals in special education schools thought that the quarterly milestone assessments were useful in determining the progress of students to a good or great extent, and none of them thought that the assessments were useful in helping teachers revise instructional strategies.

[22]It should be noted that the milestones for the DI schools are different from those used in the rest of the district.

Teachers were more negative in their assessments than the principals. When teachers were asked to what extent the quarterly milestone assessments of student achievement are useful in determining the progress of students, only 33 percent of them said to a good or great extent. Similarly, when asked to what extent the quarterly milestone assessments are useful in helping teachers revise their instructional strategies, 35 percent of all teachers said to a good or great extent.

Table 5-8.
Percentage of principals evaluating the effect of quarterly milestone assessments with regard to reform efforts as good/great

School/principal characteristic	Useful in determining student progress	Useful in helping teachers revise instructional strategies
Total	56	57
Instructional level		
Elementary	70	68
Elementary/middle	32	37
Middle	26	43
High	50	50
School status		
Regular schools	52	55
AF/DI schools	72	72
Alternative schools	40	40
Special education schools	33	.
Citywide schools	50	50
AF/DI status		
AF	75	79
DI	67	60
Free/reduced lunch		
Less than 75 percent	45	50
75 percent or more	68	64
Change in SPI over 3 years		
No change or decline in scores	61	65
Increase of 1 to 5 points	38	41
Increase of 6 to 10 points	51	55
Increase over 10 points	71	66

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

During the site visits, a number of comments were made about the assessments that reinforce an emergent sense that they need to be revisited. Teachers expressed concerns about teaching to the tests. Some teachers commented that the

reading assessments are very time consuming to score, since they involve partial credit. When asked whether they know of any procedures for checking the scoring to make sure that it had been done correctly, no acknowledgement of such procedures was made. Teachers also complained that the assessments used vocabulary that students hadn't been taught.

Principals and teachers thought that the assessments should be seen as one means of monitoring student progress throughout the school year. They felt that the assessments have been afforded far too much weight in the process of deciding on promotion or retention relative to other factors such as classroom participation, the student's rate of progress, and information that teachers have on students. One teacher said, "Progress is sufficient to promote, but it does not always mean the child is ready." Teachers also expressed concern at the lack of alignment between milestone assessments and the CTBS. One teacher asked, "What do you prepare the kid for?"

In addition, the teachers in one school stated that both last year and this year, the quarterly milestone assessments came late or came without answer keys. When asked about whether or not they received feedback from these tests, blank stares were the common response. They indicated that they scored the tests and sent the data in to the central office. They didn't recall getting anything back. It appeared that from the point of view of teachers, these assessments were not providing them with information they could use.

However, some teachers commented that the milestone assessments had helped to show them where they should be in their textbooks throughout the year. Nevertheless, they were also concerned that they may not have adequately covered a particular topic before moving on because of what would be covered in the assessment.

Effectiveness for Regular and Special Education Students

All teachers responding to the survey were asked to provide the total number of students that they teach who receive special education services, that is, have IEPs. The data provide some indication of the large number of students with disabilities in BCPSS and, consequently, the importance of having curriculum materials and instructional approaches that meet their needs. Overall, teachers reported that they teach an average of 10 special education students. However, the numbers vary considerably by instructional level (Table 5-9). At the elementary level, teachers have an average of about six students with disabilities. At the middle and high school levels, the average is much higher, but since students switch classes at these levels, teachers work with multiple groups of students. But the number of special education students taught by middle school teachers is almost twice as high as the number taught by high school teachers. Based on information at one of the site visits, a possible explanation is that some of the special education students are 16 years old in 9th grade and drop out at the higher levels.

Table 5-9.
Teachers' estimates of the average number of students they teach who receive special education services

School/teacher characteristic	Students
Total	10.0
Instructional level	
Elementary	5.6
Elementary/middle	10.2
Middle	18.8
High	9.8

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Fewer than half of all principals said that the supports for assisting classroom teachers in including students with special needs in their classrooms were adequate to a good or great extent (Table 5-10). Variations occurred by school characteristics. For example:

- Principals in elementary schools were more positive than their colleagues regarding inclusion supports.

- The smaller the school, the more positive the principal was regarding inclusion supports.

- Principals of alternative, Direct Instruction, and Achievement First schools were far more positive about the supports for including students with special needs in their classes than were principals of regular schools.

Table 5-10.
Percentage of principals evaluating the supports to assist classroom teachers in including students with special needs in their classes as adequate to a good/great extent

School/principal characteristic	Percent
Total	47
Instructional level	
Elementary	56
Elementary/middle	25
Middle	24
High	41
School status	
Regular schools	37
AF/DI schools	71
Alternative schools	83
Special education schools	33
Citywide schools	43
AF/DI status	
AF	67
DI	76
School size	
Less than 400	62
400-599	44
600 or more	34

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Both principals and teachers were asked if several types of supports are being provided to assist classroom teachers in including students with special needs. Responses from the principals and the teachers were quite different, with a much lower percentage of teachers reporting that the support was available (Table 5-11). Possible reasons for the difference are that teachers may not be aware of the full range of resources that are available or that support staff intended to provide such services are not available to individual teachers to the extent administrators perceive them to be.

Table 5-11.
Comparison of the percentage of principals and teachers reporting that various types of support are available

Support	Principals	Teachers
Instructional consultation	91	64
Supplemental aides	78	49
Co-teaching	71	45
Resource room	67	51

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal and Teacher Surveys, 2001.

Responses from principals indicated certain trends in the types of support available among the various kinds of schools (Table 5-12). For example:

- Instructional consultation is widely used by all types of schools.

- All principals of special education schools reported using all four types of support.

- Overall, about two-thirds of all types of schools except special education schools provide resource rooms, according to the principals.

- Supplemental aides were more likely to be used in Direct Instruction, elementary/middle, and high schools than other types of schools.

- Co-teaching was more likely to be used by elementary and middle schools and less likely to be used by high schools, citywide schools, and alternative schools.

While a variety of supports are in place, overall, teachers do not seem to feel they receive adequate support for inclusion. Only 43 percent agreed that the school system gave them the support they needed to include students with special needs in their classes. Some teachers were less positive about the support than their colleagues (Table 5-13). For example,

Table 5-12.
Percentage of principals indicating that various supports are available to assist classroom teachers regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in their classes

School/principal characteristic	Instructional consultation	Supplemental aides	Co-teaching	Resource room
Total	91	78	71	67
Instructional level				
Elementary	91	77	73	64
Elementary/middle	84	89	68	74
Middle	95	67	76	70
High	94	88	47	65
School status				
Regular schools	88	75	75	65
AF/DI schools	95	83	64	69
Alternative schools	100	57	57	71
Special education schools	100	100	100	100
Citywide schools	100	100	50	67
AF/DI status				
AF	96	79	64	68
DI	94	88	65	71

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

- Teachers in middle schools were less positive than teachers at other instructional levels about the supports for inclusion.
- Teachers in schools with low SPI scores were less positive than teachers in higher performing schools about the supports for inclusion.

Table 5-13.
Percentage of teachers agreeing that the school system gave them the support they needed to include students with special needs in their classes

School/teacher characteristic	Percent
Total	43
Instructional level	
Elementary	50
Elementary/middle	45
Middle	29
High	38
SPI performance	
Low scores	32
Medium scores	43
High scores	51

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

While teachers do not feel they have adequate supports for including students, they are generally positive about the concept of inclusion. Overall, 61 percent said that special education students benefited from being included. However responses varied by instructional level (Table 5-14). For example:

- Middle school teachers were less positive than their colleagues about including special education students in their classes.

Table 5-14.
Percentage of teachers agreeing that the special education students benefited from being included in their classes

School/teacher characteristic	Percent
Total	61
Instructional level	
Elementary	67
Elementary/middle	71
Middle	47
High	59

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

About half of all teachers said that general education students benefited from special education students being present. Responses varied by type of school (Table 5-15). For example:

- Teachers in Achievement First and Direct Instruction schools were more positive than their colleagues about the benefits to general education students.

Table 5-15.
Percentage of teachers agreeing that the general education students benefited from the special education students being present in their classes

School/teacher characteristic	Percent
Total	49
School status	
Regular schools	46
AF/DI schools	63
Alternative schools	39
Special education schools	37
Citywide schools	47

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

In order to prepare teachers for inclusion, BCPSS has offered training on the topic. Overall, 63 percent of teachers reported that they had received training from BCPSS in teaching special populations, which includes students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, and gifted students. Differences were found by teacher and school characteristics (Table 5-16). For example:

- Teachers who were certified were more likely to have received training in teaching special populations than were teachers with provisional certification.

- Teachers who had been at the school for more than 10 years were more likely to have had training than were teachers who had been at the school for 2 years or less.

- Teachers in special education schools were more likely to have training regarding teaching special populations from BCPSS than were teachers in regular schools.

Table 5-16.
Percentage of teachers indicating they received training from BCPSS in teaching special populations

School/teacher characteristic	Percent
Total	63
School status	
Regular schools	64
AF/DI schools	56
Alternative schools	74
Special education schools	82
Citywide schools	64
Length of tenure	
2 years or less	48
3-5 years	65
6-10 years	74
More than 10 years	72
Teacher certification	
Provisional	52
Certified	69

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Teachers report that on average they have received 12.1 hours of professional development regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in their classes during the past 3 years (Table 5-17).

- Teachers in alternative schools reported an average of 22.2 hours of training regarding inclusion of students with special needs, significantly more than teachers in regular schools.

- Teachers in Achievement First schools reported an average of 9 hours of training, significantly less than teachers in regular schools.

Table 5-17.
Average number of hours of professional development that teachers had regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in their classes in the last 3 years

School/teacher characteristic	Hours
Total	12.1
School status	
Regular schools	12.4
AF/DI schools	9.5
Alternative schools	22.2
Special education schools	30.5
Citywide schools	12.2
AF/DI status	
AF	9.0
DI	10.4

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

These data indicate that while teachers have had training regarding the inclusion of students with special needs, they do not feel that they have adequate support. BCPSS should examine what is being covered in the training on inclusion. As noted earlier, only about half of the teachers thought that the training for the new reading textbooks adequately covered the use of the materials with students with disabilities. Evidently, this topic must be made much more explicit in the training. Although the elementary reading textbook utilization guides provided for each grade level contain some information for modifying lessons, teachers apparently need to learn more about possible modifications and specifically how to apply them in the classroom. Some followup work with individual teachers might be needed.

During the site visits, teachers expressed concerns about testing and special education students. A high school teacher said, "You are supposed to teach a child on instructional level, but then we test them at three to four grade levels above their instructional level. If a child fails the test, they have to keep retaking it until they pass. They make them fail over and over and over again, even when they are within a couple of points of passing."

Elementary teachers raised similar concerns about the milestone assessments. Students were being tested at higher levels than they were functioning. When this situation was raised with the special education staff, they commented that unless modifications are written in the IEP, students take the regular tests. At the high school level, students on a diploma track must participate in district and statewide assessments. The new Chief Academic Officer said that she would work with the special education staff on the issue of making accommodations for special education students.

Quality of Instruction

Many factors contribute to the provision of quality instruction. We looked at three dimensions that related to the curriculum:[23]

- Are the teachers prepared in the use of the curriculum and textbooks?
- Are the materials meeting the needs of the students?
- What are teachers' opinions of the curriculum and textbooks?

Almost three-fourths (73 percent) of all principals reported that the teachers in their schools were prepared in the use of the new textbooks and curriculum to a good or great extent (Table 5-18). In addition, 60 percent of all principals said that the new curriculum materials were meeting the needs of students in their schools to a good or great extent. Variations in response occurred by type of school and principal characteristic and were similar to opinions regarding the new curriculum and textbooks. For example:

- Principals at elementary and elementary/middle schools were more positive than principals of middle and high school principals about the preparation of teachers in the use of the new textbooks and

[23]A thorough examination of instructional quality would consider additional factors such as instructional practices, assignments, feedback, etc. Such a broad-based examination was beyond the scope of this study. BCPSS should consider a more indepth examination of this area.

curriculum and in how the curriculum materials were meeting the needs of students.

- Principals of special education, citywide and alternative schools were less positive than principals of regular schools about teacher preparation and whether student needs were being met.

- The higher the SPI score and the greater the change in the SPI score over the last 3 years, the more likely principals were to report that the teachers were prepared in the use of the curriculum materials; this pattern was less consistent regarding meeting student needs with the materials.

- Principals who had been in their positions for 2 years or less were less positive than more veteran principals regarding teachers' preparation in the use of the new curriculum materials and meeting student needs with the materials.

Altogether, 88 percent of the principals of Direct Instruction schools said that the teachers were prepared in the use of the new textbooks and curriculum. The same percentage of Direct Instruction principals said that the new curriculum materials were meeting the needs of students. However, DI schools are not using the BCPSS curriculum and textbooks. Rather, they use materials specific to Direct Instruction, and we assume that principals of Direct Instruction schools were actually responding to the DI materials. Principal responses indicate that teachers are well prepared in the use of these materials and, in the principals' opinion, the materials are meeting student needs. As mentioned in the section on whole-school reform models, DI was given more of a mixed review in the onsite visits.

Overall, teachers were less positive than the principals about the materials. When asked to what extent the new curriculum materials were meeting the needs of the students in their classes, 44 percent of all teachers said to a good or great extent.

Table 5-18.
Percentage of principals evaluating the preparation of teachers to use new textbooks and curriculum and their value in meeting students' needs as good/great

School/principal characteristic	Teachers prepared in the use of new text books and curriculum	New curriculum materials meet the needs of students
Total	73	60
Instructional level		
Elementary	80	68
Elementary/middle	75	62
Middle	62	38
High	42	33
School status		
Regular schools	75	57
AF/DI schools	78	75
Alternative schools	43	43
Special education schools	50	40
Citywide schools	50	43
AF/DI status		
AF	71	67
DI	88	88
SPI performance		
Low scores	66	58
Medium scores	71	56
High scores	79	67
Change in SPI over 3 years		
No change or decline in scores	64	58
Increase of 1 to 5 points	69	53
Increase of 6 to 10 points	76	59
Increase over 10 points	86	69
Length of tenure		
2 years or less	64	47
3-5 years	78	70
More than 5 years	80	70

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

At the elementary level, staff were especially satisfied with the reading program and felt that the textbooks were very useful. They felt that the phonics-based reading program was having an impact at the early grades. They report that more time is being spent on real literature for children, a facet of the new reading series. The new reading and math texts were said to have many performance tasks in them, which help to prepare students for the MSPAP.

Many middle school teachers said that the new textbooks are very effective. While some felt that the expectations are too high and that the material is often too advanced, most viewed the new texts as more fun and vibrant. This is especially helpful with the more difficult subjects such as science, since the new books tend to be more interactive and allow for more hands-on activity and experimentation. One problem noted was that there are assumptions about what has previously been learned in grades 1–5. Since most of the current students came through the system prior to the introduction of the uniform curriculum, many are not at the level expected for 6th–8th graders. This makes it hard to cover the material in the grade-level texts. The special education teachers echoed this problem even more strongly.

Both the principal and teachers at another middle school spoke favorably of the new curriculum and textbooks. They commented on how they are consistent with the MSPAP and on the overall quality of the language arts materials. They also believed that the science and mathematics texts were effective because they are performance-based, thus allowing students to do hands-on performance tasks.

On the survey, teachers were asked about the extent to which BCPSS professional development activities had enhanced their students' learning in five curriculum areas. The overall percentage of teachers reporting that the training had enhanced student learning was modest, i.e., 39 percent for reading, 36 percent writing, and 30 percent for mathematics (Table 5-19).

Responses varied by teacher and school characteristics:

- Elementary teachers were significantly more likely than high school teachers to say that student learning had been enhanced in reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Teachers in schools with 75 percent or more of the students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch were more likely than their colleagues to report that student learning had been enhanced in reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Teachers in schools in which the SPI performance had changed by more than 10 points were significantly more likely than teachers in schools in which the SPI had shown no change or had declined to say that student learning had been enhanced by BCPSS training in reading.
- Teachers who had been at the school for 2 years or less were less likely than teachers who had been at the school for more than 10 years to say that student learning had been enhanced in the area of reading.

Table 5-19.
Percentage of teachers indicating that their professional development activities through BCPSS have much or very much enhanced their students' learning in reading, writing, and mathematics

School/teacher characteristic	Reading	Writing	Math
Total	39	36	30
Instructional level			
Elementary	48	43	36
Elementary/middle	37	30	31
Middle	41	37	26
High	22	24	21
Free/reduced lunch			
Less than 75 percent	31	31	27
75 percent or more	50	42	35
Change in SPI over 3 years			
No change or decline in scores	24		
Increase of 1 to 5 points	39		
Increase of 6 to 10 points	39		
Increase over 10 points	49		
Length of tenure			
2 years or less	30		
3-5 years	42		
6-10 years	45		
More than 10 years	44		

NOTE: The cells with no data were intentionally left blank because differences were not statistically significant.

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Quality of instruction can be enhanced if supports are in place to help teachers with curriculum issues. Overall, 83 percent of the teachers reported that they have someone they can ask for help when they have questions about the curriculum. Fully 91 percent of all teachers agreed that they had colleagues with whom they can collaborate and share ideas. In addition, 81 percent said that they had a supportive principal. The role of the principal can play a key role in providing quality instruction. The Achievement First reform program, in particular, places substantial emphasis on the role of principal as instructional leader and expects principals to spend a significant amount of time in the classroom. According to our survey, principals report that they spend an average of 9.9 hours in the classroom in an average week (Table 5-20). Differences by school and principal characteristics are noted:

Table 5-20.
Average number of hours principals spent in the classroom in an average week

School/principal characteristic	Hours
Total	9.9
Instructional level	
Elementary	10.9
Elementary/middle	8.1
Middle	8.4
High	8.5
School status	
Regular schools	9.8
AF/DI schools	11.2
Alternative schools	7.3
Special education schools	9.0
Citywide schools	7.6
AF/DI status	
AF	11.5
DI	10.7
Change in SPI over 3 years	
No change or decline in scores	9.5
Increase of 1 to 5 points	9.1
Increase of 6 to 10 points	9.2
Increase over 10 points	11.6
Length of tenure	
2 years or less	10.3
3-5 years	10.2
More than 5 years	9.0

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

- Principals who report spending the most time in the classroom were those in schools whose SPI scores had increased by more than 10 points, and the Achievement First schools.
- Principals of alternative schools report spending the least amount of time in the classroom.
- Principals of elementary schools report that they spend more time in the classroom than principals at other levels.
- Principals who had been in their positions for 5 years or more report that they spend less time in the classroom than principals who had been in their positions for less time.

Finally, we asked about teacher expectations, i.e., the extent to which expectations are clear and targeted at high levels. This area is very important as abundant literature exists supporting the importance of clear and challenging expectations for the learning of *all* students. Some of our interviews and observations suggested that low expectations may be a problem in BCPSS. Because achievement is relatively low compared to other jurisdictions in Maryland, there may be a tendency for all schools, even ones serving more advantaged students, to set the bar too low and be satisfied with moderate success.

The survey data indicate that if this is a real problem, neither principals or teachers are aware that it is so. Responses from principals and teachers were quite similar, with about 80 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that teachers set high expectations for students to learn, teachers regularly challenge students with rigorous instruction, and teachers believe students can do the work (Table 5-21).

Table 5-21.
Percentage of principals and teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing that teachers used various approaches to convey expectations

Approach	Principals	Teachers
Teachers set high expectations for students to learn	86	86
Teachers regularly challenge students with rigorous instruction	75	80
Teachers believe students can do the work	89	85

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal and Teacher Surveys, 2001.

Principals' responses varied by school characteristics (Table 5-22). For example:

- Principals of elementary schools were more positive about teachers' approach to their work than were principals of middle and high schools;
- Principals of citywide schools were more positive than high school principals overall about teachers' approach to their work;
- Principals of schools with high SPI scores and schools which had increases in SPI scores of more than 10 points were more likely to agree about teachers' approach to their work than their colleagues.

Table 5-22.
Percentage of principals agreeing or strongly agreeing that teachers use various approaches to convey expectations

School/principal characteristic	Teachers set high expectations for students to learn	Teachers regularly challenge students with rigorous instruction	Teachers believe students can do the work
Total	86	75	89
Instructional level			
Elementary	88	81	92
Elementary/middle	95	82	95
Middle	76	57	81
High	68	53	74
School status			
Regular schools	85	77	88
AF/DI schools	86	79	93
Alternative schools	71	57	86
Special education schools	86	57	86
Citywide schools	100	63	88
AF/DI status			
AF	84	76	88
DI	88	82	100
SPI performance			
Low scores	77	64	83
Medium scores	80	78	88
High scores	96	83	94
Change in SPI over 3 years			
No change or decline in scores	83	67	83
Increase of 1 to 5 points	88	75	84
Increase of 6 to 10 points	79	68	91
Increase over 10 points	93	93	95

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

- Principals of alternative and special education schools were less likely than their colleagues in regular schools to agree that teachers regularly challenge students with rigorous instruction.

Overall, 84 percent of teachers reported that they have a clear understanding of what they are expected to achieve (Table 5-23). Teachers who have been at the school for 2 years or less are less likely than their colleagues to have a clear understanding of expectations.

Table 5-23.
Percentage of teachers agreeing that they have a clear understanding of what they are expected to achieve

School/teacher characteristic	Percent
Total	84
Length of tenure	
2 years or less	77
3-5 years	85
6-10 years	88
More than 10 years	90

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Recommendations

In our interview with BCPSS' new Chief Academic Officer, we learned that a curriculum audit was planned for the coming year. Particularly given the issues concerning the mathematics curriculum, this audit is an important step to take before further curriculum materials are developed.

Our recommendations on other curriculum issues are as follows:

- The implementation of the milestone assessments should be reviewed. Improvements should be made in the use of the milestone assessments to inform instruction and monitor progress.
- Further training and followup regarding inclusion, especially in the use of the textbooks, curriculum, and milestone assessments, needs to be provided.
- New teachers and those who have been provisionally certified need to receive greater training in BCPSS' curriculum and textbooks.
- Sufficient textbooks for all students, especially those at the middle school levels, must be provided.

We understand that BCPSS has already taken steps to begin to address some of these issues. For example, a new assessment specialist has been given responsibility for the re-named testing program, now called the Curriculum Assessment Program.

Student Promotion and Retention Policy

BCPSS has begun to take steps to identify students who are not achieving the district's academic standards and to respond to their needs. New testing protocols are in place to assess students' performance throughout the school year and at key transition points during their academic careers. The district has instituted special interventions to help at-risk students achieve the academic standards, including programs conducted during the regular school day, before and after school, on weekends, and during the summer.

Findings from the school visits and surveys indicate that principals, teachers, and parents supported the objectives of the initial policy of ending social promotion, but they do not feel that the policy—as it was understood and implemented—was achieving the goals to any great extent. There is no consensus regarding the effect that the policy has had on student performance or on the level of parental concern over students' performance. In addition, there is widespread confusion about the criteria for promotion and frustration with the lack of alignment between the BCPSS milestones and the statewide assessments.

Recommendations:

- *Clarification of the criteria used to promote 8th graders is needed.*
- *The relationship of the assessment used to determine eligibility for promotion and other standardized tests should be reviewed.*
- *A system is needed to ensure timely notification of parents when their children are recommended for summer school.*
- *A plan needs to be developed for monitoring and evaluating the impact of this policy on student achievement.*

Introduction

Prior to the initial implementation of The Master Plan, social promotion was common, few opportunities were available for students to receive supplemental support, and few demands were placed on students to participate in remedial programs. For example, according to data from the Division of Research, Evaluation and Accountability, student retention rates for the 1996–97 school year were very low, even though the number of students who failed to perform at grade level was very high.[24] The district had much work to do to provide the support system and instill the expectations needed to boost student performance.

The district recognized that it would take time to achieve the goals, and that initial strategies to identify the best retention and promotion practices might have to be revised based on early experiences. In the summary of its final report, the Student Promotion and Retention Task Force wrote:

> The mandate in The Master Plan for the development of a promotion and retention policy that "holds all students accountable for demonstrating mastery of BCPSS Content and Performance Standards" shows BCPSS' commitment to high standards and belief that all students have the potential to achieve them. The Task Force fully concurs, and our work is dedicated to developing a set of recommendations that will enable all students to meet high performance standards.
>
> We do not think, however, that the path will be quick or easy. The Master Plan paves the way for comprehensive educational reform that will greatly improve student achievement. Still, we—like every other urban school system—have a long way to go before improvement leads to grade-level performance.
>
> This forces us, as we have emphasized in this Report, to be realistic and to structure a promotion and retention policy that requires that the high promotion standards be implemented simultaneously with

[24]Retention rates for each primary grade were approximately 5 percent in 1st grade, 4 percent in 2nd grade, 3.5 percent in 3rd grade, 2 percent in 4th grade, and 1 percent in 5th grade.

adequate instructional interventions. BCPSS must try to spell out what these interventions should be, what they will cost and what is a feasible plan for implementing them.[25]

The district has continued to focus on issues related to promotion and retention in the 2000–2001 Master Plan Update. The efforts are primarily embodied in Objective 1 of The Master Plan: Increase student achievement prekindergarten through 12th grade. Plans call for an increase in instructional time during the regular school day,[26] before and after school, and during the summer. The plan also calls for delivery of enhanced services to rising 9th graders whose assessment scores indicate risk of academic failure. Below, we highlight the strategies included in the 2000–2001 Master Plan Update.

- Strategy 1.2.1: Implement extended day academic activities in elementary schools. This strategy was carried forward from previous revisions of The Master Plan. However, in the 2000–2001 Update, the district expressed the goal of expanding the focus of the activities to include middle schools and high schools.

- Strategy 1.2.3: Provide summer instructional experiences for BCPSS students. The 2000–2001 Update includes plans to provide summer experiences for rising 3rd graders who are not reading at grade level and rising 9th graders who are not reading or computing at grade level. The budget includes funds to pay incentives to students as a way of motivating participation and to provide training to the summer school instructors.

- Strategy 1.3.1: Implement student assessment. The BCPSS has identified the components of a comprehensive assessment system to gauge student achievement at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The 2000–2001 Update calls for pilot testing and phasing in the assessments as follows:

  - Implementing prekindergarten and kindergarten assessments;

  - Piloting writing, reading, and mathematics standards-based assessments for grades 1–5;

  - Piloting writing, social studies, and science standards-based assessments for middle school grades 6–8;

  - Implementing standards-based assessments for high school grade levels according to the following schedule: 1) U.S. history, 2) English II, algebra II, and chemistry, and 3) world history.

- Strategy 1.4.3: Develop and implement strategies to promote student retention and successful transitions for all students. This strategy focuses on assisting students in the transition from middle school to high school. High schools are to use assessment scores to assign at-risk students to "a full year of English/language arts and a full year of mathematics in order to prepare them for success in more advanced coursework." The 2000–2001 Update also calls for the provision of after-school and weekend mathematics and reading clinics in each of the district's high schools.

The district has established a system of interventions and student support services to ensure that progress continues, yet several impediments exist that affect the district's ability to achieve the goals. In this section, we first describe the retention and promotion policy and highlight the interventions that have been implemented. We also discuss the impediments we identified through our survey and site visit data collection efforts. We conclude this section with a discussion of findings from the site visits and surveys that are related to the new promotion and retention policy.

[25] From the *Task Force Report and Student Promotion and Retention Policy*, Office of the Chief Academic Officer, August 2000.

[26] Efforts to increase instructional time during the regular school day were focused on the extension of prekindergarten and kindergarten programs from half-day to full-day programs. See the subsection Other Initiatives in this section of the report for a discussion of these programs.

The Guiding Principles

BCPSS followed a set of six guiding principles in developing the new promotion and retention policy.

1. High promotion standards and adequate interventions must be implemented simultaneously.
2. Retention must be viewed as an intervention of last resort.
3. Promotion standards should require performance at grade level, despite the formidable task of providing interventions that enable students to meet such high standards.
4. Interventions must be based on the best available evidence of necessity and effectiveness.
5. The identification of effective interventions that enable students to meet promotion standards and their costs will require the promotion and retention policy to be phased-in over several years. In such a phase-in, the earliest grades should receive the highest priority.
6. The individual education plan (IEP) team determines how each student's disability affects his/her involvement and progress in the regular curriculum.

Exhibit 5-5 shows the summer school 2000 promotion and retention policy that resulted from the district's initial attempts to abide by these principles. During the following school year, a revised policy was developed (Exhibit 5-6). Thus, our data collection occurred at the transitional period between policies. However, during our site visits, comments generally related to the initial policy, and we have no reason to believe that staff were using the revised policy when they responded to our survey.

While the initial policy partially responded to the guiding principles, the revised version was less clearly linked in that it does not include mention of interventions or an explicit statement regarding the end of social promotion. However, the revised policy contains explicit references to the recognition of teacher and school judgment and parental notification, which were areas of concern mentioned during the site visits. In addition, the revised policy addresses students with IEPs and students for whom English is a second language.

The initial policy addressed interventions (i.e., summer school, accelerated programs) that the district would offer to assist students at risk of retention. Since the staff of many schools that participated in this evaluation seemed to focus on the initial policy and the interventions, we have described related findings in the sections that follow. Even though these findings are not directly related to the revised policy, they are still worth mentioning since many aspects of the initial policy and the interventions are still in place throughout the district.

Interventions

In accordance with the initial policy, BCPSS encouraged schools to conduct a variety of interventions during the school day, as well as before and after school, on weekends, and during the summer. Through both formal and informal referral systems, students in BCPSS schools were recommended for inclusion in the intervention programs. To ensure that the necessary interventions were provided to students, the district required each school to create a Student Support Team (SST). This requirement is still in force. Under the requirement, SSTs are to be structured and will operate according to the following standards:

- SSTs are to serve local schools as a prevention/intervention planning and implementation team for general education students who evidence achievement deficiencies in their academic and/or behavioral progress.

Exhibit 5-5.
Summer school 2000: Promotion and retention policy

1) There will be no social promotions. Promotions will be based on Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) performance, grades on report cards, and quarterly tests.

2) Children who are not reading on grade level at second (2.7) or fourth (4.7) grade on the CTBS administered in March 2000 are **strongly urged** to attend a five-week summer school between June 26 and July 28, 2000. There will be four hours of reading instruction each day for each child.

3) With the principal's recommendation, students who scored *2.5 or 2.6* in second grade and *4.5 or 4.6* in fourth grade may be promoted, whether or not they go to summer school, provided multiple criteria support the promotion.

4) Students who are reading *at or below 2.4 or 4.4* on the March CTBS are not required to attend summer school, but *may* face being retained in grade if their CTBS scores do not substantially improve or other academic criteria do not support a promotion decision.

5) Teachers may submit information for an exception by the school principal for any student who scored at/below 2.4/4.4 but who passed at minimum the last two quarterly milestones and who received reading/language arts grates at or above "Satisfactory" on his/her report card. In such documented cases, the principal has the authority to issue a promotion.

6) All students—whether or not they choose to attend summer school—who are at 2.4 or 4.4 or below will be tested at the end of summer school on Wednesday morning, July 26, from 8:00-12:00 noon. Those students who demonstrate they are reading at grade level will be promoted.

7) Children who are not reading at grade level at the end of the summer school program will remain in that grade and will be provided an *accelerated program* focused on the skills needed for success at the next grade level.

8) If a student in an accelerated program achieves grade level standards after the first quarter of the 2000–2001 school year, he/she may be promoted to the next grade at the end of the quarter.

9) Those students who do not reach grade-level by the end of the first quarter continue in the accelerated program for the year and will then move on to the next grade level. If students reach grade level by the end of the year, they will be promoted to their original grade, i.e., from the second grade accelerated program to a regular fourth grade program, or from the fourth grade accelerated program to the sixth grade. No student will be retained more than one time in the primary grades and one time in the intermediate grades.

10) Parents may appeal a principal's decision. Appeals must be submitted *in writing* directly to the principal.

SOURCE: Summer School 2000 Promotion and Retention Policy Fact Sheet.

Exhibit 5-6.
Baltimore City Public School System Student Promotion and Retention Policy

I. Elementary School Promotion Standards

A. Basic Promotion Standards: Mastery and Satisfactory Grades. To be promoted, students are expected to achieve:

1. A score of 70% on criterion-referenced tests that are based on the BCPSS content standards in reading and mathematics; **and,**

2. Satisfactory Grades for the year in Language Arts and Mathematics.

B. School Judgement: Promotional Committees and the Principal's Final Authority. Students who do not meet the mastery and Satisfactory grades standards may be eligible for promotion based on "school judgement":

1. Teacher documentation. School judgement requires documentation by the teacher of classroom evidence of sufficient performance taking into account general mastery and application of skills, grades, attendance, conduct, and maturity. In grades K-1, special consideration should be given to the wide range of cognitive, physical, social and emotional development levels which are typical for this age group. The teacher must present the documentation to a School Promotional Committee. The promotional Committee, after a review of the documentation, including information received from the IEP team for students receiving IEP services, will recommend promotion or retention to the principal.

2. Student Support Team. Each school is mandated to establish a student Support Team (SST), which makes recommendations for appropriate student placement/promotion/retention and special education referral. This is a multidisciplinary team which may include: the principal or his/her designee; the student's parent(s); the student's teacher(s); instructional support teacher, English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, a pupil services professional such as a counselor, psychologist or social worker; and any other person(s) that the principal deems appropriate, depending upon individual circumstances.

C. Individual Education Plan (IEP). For students who receive support through special education interventions, the promotion standards may not apply when deficits in academic achievement are a component of the disability. The IEP team makes the final decision about grade placement. Prior to making this decision, the IEP team (including the principal, parent, and the student's teachers) must consider:

1. The effect of the student's disability on his/her progress in the applicable area(s).

2. The progress of the student in meeting the annual goals on the IEP.

3. The social maturity level of the student.

D. Principal's final authority. After careful consideration of recommendations from the Promotional Committee, the principal makes the final decision regarding the promotion or retention of students. The principal is included in the IEP team in making decisions regarding promotion of students with disabilities.

Exhibit 5-6.
Baltimore City Public School System Student Promotion and Retention Policy (continued)

II. Middle School Promotion Standards

A. Basic Promotion Standards: Mastery and Passing Grades. To be promoted, students are expected to achieve:

1. A score of 70% on criterion-referenced tests that are based on content standards in reading and mathematics; **and**

2. Passing grades in English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies at each grade; **and**

3. Passing scores on the Maryland Functional Tests in Reading, Mathematics and Writing before being promoted from the 8th grade.

B. School Judgement: Promotional Committees. Students who do not meet the Basic Promotion standards may be eligible for promotion based on "school judgement":

1. Teacher documentation. School judgement requires documentation by the teacher of classroom evidence of sufficient performance taking into account general mastery and application of skills, grades, attendance, conduct, and maturity. The teacher must present the documentation to a School Promotional Committee. The Promotional Committee, after a review of the documentation, including information received from the IEP team for students receiving IEP services, will recommend promotion or retention to the principal.

2. Student Support Team. Each school is mandated to establish a Student Support Team (SST), which makes recommendations for appropriate student placement/promotion/retention and special education referral. This is a multidisciplinary team which may include: the principal or his/her designee; the student's parent(s); the student's teacher(s); instructional support teacher, English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, a pupil services professional such as a counselor, psychologist or social worker; and any other person(s) that the principal deems appropriate, depending upon individual circumstances.

C. Individual Education Plan (IEP). For students who receive support through special education interventions, the promotion standards may not apply when deficits in academic achievement are a component of the disability. The IEP team makes the final decision about grade placement. Prior to making this decision, the IEP team (including the principal, parent, and the student's teachers) must consider:

1. The effect of the student's disability on his/her progress in the applicable area(s).

2. The progress of the student in meeting the annual goals on the IEP.

3. The social maturity level of the student.

D. Principal's final authority. After careful consideration of recommendations from the Promotional Committee, the principal makes the final decision regarding the promotion or retention of students. The principal is included in the IEP team in making decisions regarding promotion of students with disabilities.

Exhibit 5-6.
Baltimore City Public School System Student Promotion and Retention Policy (continued)

III. Promotion Standards for Students Receiving English as a Second Language

Elementary and middle school students receiving English as a Second Language instruction, who are on a diploma track or pursuing the Maryland Learning Outcomes must meet the promotion standards. However, the School Promotional Committee must take into account the student's limited English proficiency.

IV. Parent Notification

BCPSS should notify parents of K-8 students of the promotion/retention policy at the beginning of the school year. Parents should also be alerted as soon as possible if their child is at risk of retention. Quarterly report cards ("Progress Reports") should include - in addition to the regular marks - supplementary notice when a child is considered at risk of retention. In addition, parents must be informed when the School Promotional Committee is considering promotion or retention of their child. Certified mail should be used where it is known that regular communication is a potential concern.

- They are to serve local schools as a prevention/intervention planning and implementation team for individual classroom and/or schoolwide issues that may be inhibiting climate improvements in either case.
- They are to serve local schools as the retention/promotional committee, using specified timelines, to recommend specific retentions and promotions to the principal.
- Teams are to be composed of the principal chair (or his/her designee), related service provider, general and special education teachers, health clinician (preferably nurse), Safe and Drug-Free representative (may be general or special education teacher or related service provider), and external agency representative (i.e., probation officer, school police, Department of Social Services worker, etc.).
- Some membership overlap should and will occur with the Child Study Team, although it is recommended that at least teachers be different to reduce case management and scheduling burdens on any single team member.
- Teams should be able to document, at a minimum, biweekly meetings.
- Student intervention data (i.e., presenting problem, strategies employed, results, outcome decisions, etc.) should be entered into the Special Education Tracking System (SETS) regularly, and SETS data entry training will be provided for a member of every SST (who will receive a stipend for his/her time and effort based on cases entered).
- Teams and their efforts will be monitored by Pupil Services staff as much as twice per month, and may also be visited by court representatives, while technical assistance is available at any time as needed.
- Principals must document the implementation of recommended strategies to prove that 95 percent of team-recommended strategies have been attempted, for an individual student, a classroom, or a school (i.e., cafeteria strategy).
- Parental notification will be required, and parental involvement is deeply encouraged.
- The SST approach must be viewed as a general education initiative, not a prelude to special education services or retention (although they may be possible outcomes).

To measure the effect of the SSTs, the district conducted an evaluation of the system as instituted during the 1999–2000 school year. The focus was on describing activities undertaken "From January 2000 through June 2000, 957 students in 55 schools were referred to the Student Support Team."[27] In these cases, the SSTs recommended more than 1,500 actions that included instructional strategies or accommodations (12 percent), summer school assignment (10 percent), after-school tutoring (4 percent), tutorial assistance (4 percent), Saturday school assignment, before-school tutoring, and over 35 other types of intervention. Similar interventions are available for students who are not formally referred to an SST.

Perhaps the broadest reaching interventions instituted in the district have been the summer programs, which affected perhaps 60 percent of the 2nd, 4th, and 8th grade students as well as students from other grades. Programs proposed by the district for summer 2001 included SuperKids Camp 2001, a program for grade 3; Math Works 2001, a pilot program for grades 5 and 6; and summer school programs for elementary and middle school students.[28]

SuperKids Camp 2001

The BCPSS and the Parks & People Foundation collaborate on this 7-week program designed to provide 3rd graders who are reading below grade level exposure to "a variety of academic, cultural, recreational, and social development experiences." As described in the BCPSS proposal, the program has four main goals, one of which is directly related to assisting students at risk of failure: to build reading skills and prevent summer losses.[29] The district estimates that about 1,650 students will participate. The staff-to-student ratio will be about 10:1. Staff include approximately 50 first- and second-year teachers, 100 college students, 15 master teachers, and 20 coordinators. Staff will receive 1 week of training before the program starts and continue to receive followup training throughout the summer.

Math Works

This program was to be piloted in 16 schools in the district beginning in February 2001. The program includes four components:

- Individualized math computation program;
- Interdisciplinary performance-based units (integrating reading, writing, math, science, and social studies skills and knowledge);
- Math All Summer (a program in which students and teachers exchange mathematics assignments by mail throughout the summer); and
- Staff development (continuing into the 2001–02 school year).

Summer School Program

During 2001, BCPSS spent over $11 million on 14 summer school programs.[30] More than 30,000 students were invited to participate. Eighty-two percent of these students attended 10 or more days of summer school.

The 5-week program for grades 1, 2, 4, and 5 focusing on literacy skills and mathematics was conducted in 118 schools. Students who were performing below grade level (based on CTBS/5, milestone test scores, and report card grades) were eligible to participate. The district anticipated a staff-to-student ratio of 15:1.

[27] S.J. Ruffini, 1999-2000 Student Support Team Evaluation, September 6, 2000.

[28] These programs are *not* limited to students in danger of failing.

[29] The other goals include demonstrating the effect of SuperKids Camp experience on students' academic development, assisting in recruiting new teachers for BCPSS, and creating and implementing a replicable model for effective school-community partnerships.

[30] BCPSS issued a report, *An Evaluation of Summer School in 2001 for Grades 1–8*, describing the programs and experiences of the district implementing the programs.

The 5-week program for middle school students focusing on literacy and mathematics skills was conducted in about 40 schools.[31] Students were deemed eligible to participate based on their performance in language arts and mathematics courses, and their scores on the Maryland Functional Reading, Writing, and Math Tests. The district estimated a staff-to-student ratio of 20:1.

At the conclusion of the summer programs, 1,958 students who would not otherwise have been promoted were able to advance to the next grade. Longer term impacts of the summer school experience are not known at this time.

Experiences Under and Reactions to the Initial Promotion and Retention Policy[32]

Through the site visits and surveys of principals, teachers, and parents, we gathered much information regarding the initial policy. We were especially interested in the following aspects of it:

- Clarity, i.e., the ability of staff and parents to understand the intent of the policy and the procedures called for under the policy.
- Supports and interventions, i.e., the extent to which the district provides sufficient and meaningful assistance to students.
- Parental notification and involvement, i.e., the process by which parents are informed of student progress, student eligibility for participating in intervention programs, and the possibility of student retention.

Overall, the principals, teachers, and parents supported the objectives of the initial policy, but they did not feel that the stated goals were being achieved to any great extent. Our site visits found widespread enthusiasm for the end of social promotion. We did not find a consensus regarding the effect that the policy had on the level of parental concern over students' performance—some staff thought that parents ignored or disbelieved the policy, while others mentioned that its effect had been positive. We also heard of widespread confusion about the criteria for promotion and frustration with the lack of alignment between the milestones and the statewide assessments. These feelings were confirmed by our survey findings: 50 percent of the principals reported that the policy was helpful to a good or great extent, but only 26 percent of the teachers expressed the same opinion. Table 5-24 and Table 5-25 show results from the principals' and teachers' surveys.

Table 5-24.
Percentage of principals indicating that the new promotion and retention policy is helpful to a good/great extent

School/principal characteristic	Percent
Total	50
Instructional level	
Elementary	66
Elementary/middle	42
Middle	14
High	20
SPI performance	
Low scores	67
Medium scores	42
High scores	49

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

[31] According to the district proposal, the major focus will be "helping students earn passing scores on the Maryland Functional Math, Reading, and Writing Tests."

[32] We believe that site visit participants and survey respondents were considering the initial retention and promotion policy. Comments that we heard during the site visits indicated that schools were operating under the initial policy at the time of the evaluation. For example, school staff frequently mentioned the call to stop social promotion that was contained in the initial policy.

Table 5-25.
Percentage of teachers indicating that the new promotion and retention policy is effective to a good/great extent

School/teacher characteristic	Percent
Total	26
Change in SPI over 3 years	
No change or decline in scores	19
Increase of 1 to 5 points	24
Increase of 6 to 10 points	24
Increase over 10 points	35

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

The views were not uniform, however, across various types of schools. For example:

- Principals and teachers at elementary schools viewed the policy more positively than staff at high schools.
- Principals who work in schools that have higher than average SPI scores more often reported that the policy was effective or helpful than did their counterparts at other schools.
- Teachers in schools that have experienced greater than average improvement in SPI scores were almost twice as likely to view the policy positively than teachers from schools where no change or a decline in SPI scores had occurred.

In the remainder of this section, we discuss more specific findings related to the promotion and retention policy, and also highlight a few additional concerns that merit consideration by the BPCSS.

Clarity

Overall, the initial policy was well communicated to students, staff, and parents. The one outstanding exception was the confusion experienced at the middle school level. This confusion focused on the criteria that should be used to determine whether or not a student should be promoted. One middle school principal described the new policy as a "nightmare," and some teachers said that the policy is not always followed because it is not well understood. Two questions were raised during our site visits to middle schools:

- When could an accelerated program be used and when must retention be done?
- What were the summer school placement criteria for 8th graders?

The teacher and parent surveys confirm the general findings from the site visits. On the teacher survey, most respondents indicated that the policy had been communicated clearly to at least a moderate extent to all target groups—staff, parents, students, and teachers. On the parent survey, 75 percent of respondents reported that they knew what standards their children had to meet to be promoted to the next grade. Parents who were not high school graduates expressed this opinion less frequently, while those with education beyond high school expressed it more frequently.

Supports and Interventions

Schools throughout the district have instituted a variety of special supports and interventions designed to assist students who were at risk of academic failure, including extended day programs, summer school programs, and other services. Principals expressed the most favorable opinions of these services. Among teachers and parents, there was a common perception that too little is being done, and disagreement about the effect of what has been done.

Summer school programs are available throughout the district, and 65 percent of schools offer an extended day program. During our site visits, principals expressed the belief that these supports improve student performance. The majority of respondents to the principal survey also indicated that the extended day or summer school programs have increased students' skills, knowledge, and motivation; helped them pass the

Maryland Functional Tests and meet the MSPAP and CTBS standards; and helped them better understand educational objectives and expectations for advancement (Table 5-26). One interesting aspect of these data is the response pattern of principals of schools with higher than average SPI[33] or increasing SPI scores. These principals routinely reported that the supports had higher positive effects than did the principals from any other schools.

Teachers viewed the support system less favorably than did the principals. Whereas a large majority of principals expressed the opinion that the services help students to a good or great extent, less than half the teachers expressed similar opinions (see Table 5-27). When asked to what extent the supports are adequate to assist students who are in danger of falling behind, only 37 percent of the teachers said that they were adequate to a good or great extent. Among new teachers, those from schools with lower than average SPI scores, and those from schools where the SPI scores have not increased much, this opinion was expressed even less often.

Table 5-27.
Percentage of teachers indicating that summer school and extended day programs helped students to a good/great extent

School/teacher characteristic	Percent
Total	37
SPI performance	
Low scores	28
Medium scores	37
High scores	44
Change in SPI over 3 years	
No change or decline in scores	28
Increase of 1 to 5 points	34
Increase of 6 to 10 points	35
Increase over 10 points	48
Length of tenure	
2 years or less	31
3-5 years	38
6-10 years	39
More than 10 years	43

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Table 5-26.
Percentage of principals indicating the efficacy of summer school and extended day programs was good/great

School/principal characteristic	Increasing skills/ knowledge	Increasing student's motivation	Pass Maryland Functional Test	Meet standards on MSPAP or CTBS	Expectations for advancement	Understanding objectives
Total	73	58	67	66	62	57
SPI performance						
Low scores	72	58	74	69	62	50
Medium scores	63	49	50	48	51	48
High scores	81	65	77	81	71	71
Change in SPI over 3 years						
No change or decline in scores	55	40	50	50	53	45
Increase of 1 to 5 points	68	56	72	64	59	50
Increase of 6 to 10 points	73	67	64	71	60	68
Increase over 10 points	80	56	73	70	63	54

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

[33]Information on SPI is provided in Chapter 3, Evaluation Approach.

Teachers also felt that the support system did not provide sufficient benefits to students. Fewer than half of the teachers reported that the supports enhance student learning to a good or great extent (Table 5-28). Once again, teachers from schools with lower than average SPI scores, and those from schools where the SPI scores have not increased much, were less satisfied with the support system than were teachers in general.

Table 5-28.
Percentage of teachers indicating that the summer school and extended day programs enhance student learning to a good/great extent

School/teacher characteristic	Percent
Total	37
SPI performance	
Low scores	26
Medium scores	38
High scores	43
Change in SPI over 3 years	
No change or decline in scores	23
Increase of 1 to 5 points	35
Increase of 6 to 10 points	36
Increase over 10 points	47

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Parents expressed lukewarm opinions of the summer school program as well. Nearly 22 percent of the parents reported that their children had participated in summer school in 2000. Parents of elementary school children were two to three times more likely to report summer school participation than were parents of middle school or high school students. More than 75 percent of the parents of summer school attendees indicated that their children participated based on the recommendation of the school to help ensure that the students would be promoted to the next grade. Survey data also indicate that parents with higher levels of education are more involved in the decision to send their children to summer school than are other parents.

Given the comments that principals and teachers made about the lack of parental support for and involvement in the educational programs, one might expect that a survey of parents would not generate strong support for summer school. However, as shown in Table 5-29, it is noteworthy that nearly a quarter of all parents who responded to the survey reported that they did not believe that attending summer school would help their children to any extent, and another fifth thought that the program helped only somewhat. There was one exception to this pattern. Less than 7 percent of parents of children who attend mid-sized school thought that the program had no effect.

Table 5-29.
Percentage of parents indicating the efficacy of summer school and extended day programs

School/parent characteristic	Not at all	Some-what	Great extent
Total	24	21	55
School size			
Less than 400	25	27	48
400-599	7	22	71
600 or more	31	18	51

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Parent Survey, 2001.

Parental Notification and Involvement

The lack of parental encouragement of students and their lack of participation in activities to help them become more involved in their children's education are widely seen as problems throughout BCPSS. In our discussions with school principals and teachers, we often heard that a very high proportion of parents do not participate in programs offered by the school, do not volunteer at the school, and do not motivate or encourage academic excellence in their children. At one school, we were told that many parents prefer that their children drop out of school so that they can enter the workforce and contribute to the family income. Faced with this situation, the staff from many schools expressed frustration when asked about the response of parents to the initial promotion and retention policy. While some staff said that the policy served as a wake-up call to parents, others expressed doubt that parents took the policy seriously.

The schools have taken steps to engage parents in the efforts to educate their children. Examples include the parent programs offered by the Children's Learning Initiative (CLI) and other workshops that schools provide to assist parents in their efforts to help their children with homework or test taking. As shown in Table 5-30 and Table 5-31, 75 percent of the principals reported that their schools had offered such workshops, and 27 percent of the parents reported participating in these workshops. Other findings included:

- Workshops were most commonly held at elementary schools, and the plurality of participants were parents of elementary school children.
- High schools were far less likely to have offered the workshops.

While mid-sized schools were most likely to offer the workshops, there were only small differences in the reported participation of parents by school size.

Table 5-30.
Percentage of schools offering parent workshops on helping students with homework or test-taking

School/principal characteristic	Percent
Total	75
Instructional level	
Elementary	89
Elementary/middle	77
Middle	70
High	37
School size	
Less than 400	62
400-599	91
600 or more	76

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Table 5-31.
Percentage of parents participating in parent workshops on helping students with homework or test-taking

School/parent characteristic	Percent
Total	27
Instructional level	
Elementary	36
Elementary/middle	20
Middle	19
High	20
School size	
Less than 400	33
400-599	29
600 or more	24

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Parent Survey, 2001.

The problems associated with the lack of parental involvement in efforts to ensure student promotion did not rest wholly on the parents—schools need to do a better job keeping parents informed about their children's progress and the risk of retention. For instance, while principals and teachers saw the summer school notification process as an opportunity to involve parents, the staff at several of the schools that we visited described it as a learning experience and admitted that they had not performed it well.

The most notable finding related to the summer school notification process was the difference between principals' and parents' perception of when notification occurred. An appropriate goal would be to inform the parents of the need for student participation as soon as possible—both to make the parents aware that their children's performance is substandard and to help the parents and students plan for attendance. Overall, 26 percent of the principals indicated that parents from their schools were informed less than 1 month in advance of the start of summer school (Table 5-32). In contrast, more than twice that many parents (57 percent) reported they had been notified less than 1 month prior to the start. The extent to which parents are not provided ample notice of the need to send their children to summer school must affect their willingness and ability to guarantee participation in the program.

Other related findings from the surveys include the following:

- According to the principals, middle and high schools were more likely than elementary schools to notify parents less than 1 month in advance of the start of summer school. But parents of high school students reported such short notification less often than did parents of students at any other grade level.
- Schools that have implemented Direct Instruction were the most likely to notify parents less than 1 month in advance of the start of summer school, as reported by both the principals and parents.
- Principals from schools that have experienced greater than average improvement in SPI scores were almost twice as likely to report that they had notified parents more than 1 month in advance.

Table 5-32.
Percentage of principals reporting a lag between notification of parents and the start of summer school

School/principal characteristic	Less than 1 month	1 month or more
Total	26	68
Instructional level		
Elementary	23	74
Elementary/middle	27	59
Middle	33	67
High	37	63
AF/DI status		
AF	13	88
DI	53	41
Change in SPI over 3 years		
No change or decline in scores	36	64
Increase of 1 to 5 points	31	66
Increase of 6 to 10 points	32	64
Increase over 10 points	17	83

NOTE: Percents may not add to 100 due to rounding or missing data.

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, we make several recommendations regarding the initial policy and suggest additional topics for future investigation by BCPSS. The revised policy has addressed several of the issues raised in these recommendations.

1. While the initial policy seemed clear to most people, there remained some confusion about the criteria used to promote 8th graders. Reconsideration of this aspect of the policy or clarification of the criteria was needed.
2. Staff perceived a serious lack of alignment between the assessments used to determine eligibility for promotion and other standardized tests that are used throughout the district. Either these assessments should be reviewed and possibly revised, or BCPSS should provide guidance to the principals and teachers on how to prepare students to reach both sets of standards during the regular school year.
3. Staff perceived that the student assessment scores superceded any professional evaluation of the students' skills that they might offer. While the merits of objective standards are well recognized, BCPSS might consider revisions to the process to better utilize teachers' expertise. The revised policy addresses this issue directly.
4. A system is needed to ensure timely notification of parents when their children are recommended for summer school.

Principals and teachers raised several other issues during our site visits that should be noted. While none of these issues were mentioned frequently, they merit attention due to the potential threat that each poses to the successful implementation of the policy.

- Staff expressed concern that the number of students who are retained will reflect badly on their skill and could lead to dismissal.

- Administrators have difficulty anticipating their staffing needs as a result of the new policy. One principal reported that 60 percent of 2nd and 4th graders were placed in accelerated classes after summer school. The majority of them tested out of the accelerated program after first quarter. Another principal reported that one of his feeder schools had 300 students, only 22 of whom passed the Maryland Functional Test. In both these cases, the principals did not know how they should prepare for the new school year.

- Teachers assigned to the accelerated classes do not receive sufficient guidance on the objectives, measures, and other topics.

- There is a conflict between summer school and summer staff development. Teachers tend to select one summer activity; new teachers often choose to teach summer school for the added income, but often they are the least qualified to teach the sessions and most in need of additional staff development time.

- The policy has caused space problems for the schools. Schools would like to designate a specific place for the accelerated classes, but they do not have sufficient space to do this. Also, space becomes an issue due to the high number of students being retained.

- Schools that do not operate on a traditional 9-month schedule are unable to conduct summer school, even though the need is apparent.

A plan needs to be developed for more closely monitoring and evaluating the impact of this policy. While indicators of performance have been developed to assess whether students are attaining necessary levels of achievement, we could find no comprehensive districtwide plan in place for assessing how interventions established by this policy are influencing performances. A number of issues need to be addressed:

- Are the interventions reaching those who need them because of academic problems?

- Are the interventions tailored to meet the specific problems individual students need to address?

- What are the impacts of the intervention, and where successful, do positive impacts persist or must remediation be repeated several times?

Effectiveness of Whole-School Reform Models (Direct Instruction, Achievement First, and New Schools Initiative Reforms)

SB 795 required BCPSS to develop model school reform initiatives. While a number of models are being used in BCPSS, Westat was asked to focus the evaluation on two of them, Direct Instruction (DI) and Achievement First (AF). The New Schools Initiative (NSI) was evaluated to a much lesser extent.

Our analyses indicate that these whole-school reform models have been beneficial but that it is time to take a hard look at the extent to which the current models are meeting BCPSS needs and are reflective of what is known about best practices in instruction.

AF seems to be working well and site visit data show that staff were generally quite positive about AF. They thought that the program helped to give them a more focused and consistent approach to literacy. Staff spoke highly of the supports they were receiving. The fact that AF can be used with the new BCPSS curriculum was also seen as a plus. The one area of concern regarding AF was that with so much attention placed on reading/language arts, other subjects, especially math, did not receive sufficient attention.

DI received a more mixed review, and questions remain regarding its adequacy. Criticisms centered on the highly scripted curriculum, rather than on the administration of the programs and its supports, which appear to be done well. Staff recognized the positive effect that DI has had on students' reading levels, particularly at the lower grades; some question its utility at the higher grade levels. Staff expressed concern for students who leave a DI school to attend middle school or transfer to another elementary school. They did not feel that these students were prepared for traditional instruction. Some parents felt they were unable to help their children with the homework using the DI method, despite the fact that workshops were provided to help parents learn how to use the method. Teachers were also critical of Core Knowledge, used for social studies and science, saying that it is too dense and does not allow the students to establish the proper foundations before exposing them to complex concepts. Another difficulty cited with Core Knowledge was the lack of instructional materials.

Recommendation:

We suggest that BCPSS will need to decide if it should continue operating a variety of models, if the current mix of models is optimal, or if some changes should be made. BCPSS should develop criteria by which each of the model programs should be evaluated and carry out a systematic assessment of the adequacy of the alternatives currently in place.

Introduction

Section 4-309 (D) (9) of SB 795 states that The Master Plan shall identify the actions necessary to develop model school reform initiatives. In the initial Master Plan, this issue was addressed in the following two strategies under Objective 1: Increase student achievement prekindergarten through grade 12:

- Strategy 1.1.1: Establish prekindergarten through grade 12 curriculum framework and content standards.
- Strategy 1.1.2: Implement exemplary curriculum developed outside the BCPSS.

The first of these strategies focused on the implementation of the schoolwide curricula in the various content areas and textbook adoption, which was covered in a previous section of this report. The second strategy had two facets—implementation of the Baltimore Curriculum Project curriculum in additional schools and continued implementation in others, and the preparation of a proposal for Obey-Porter funding for the implementation of exemplary high school programs. High schools would be given a limited

choice of research-based reform programs. To participate in these reform efforts, schools had to submit an application, and if approved, they had to submit a school improvement plan covering professional development, purchase of materials, instructional support and monitoring, periodic student assessment, and accommodations for students with diverse learning needs.

Some school reform models had already been implemented in BCPSS prior to the passage of SB 795; others were put into place shortly thereafter. The models that have received the most attention and are the focus of this section are the two most widely used models, Direct Instruction/Core Knowledge (referred to as the Baltimore Curriculum Project in the Initial Master Plan) and Achievement First. An alternative approach—the New Schools Initiative—is discussed to a lesser extent. The other models that have been used in the system are Success for All, Calvert, and High Schools That Work. While all these models have generally been called whole-school models, some senior staff see them primarily as reading initiatives.

Updates to The Master Plan made more specific references to some of these reform models. In The Master Plan 2000–2001 Update, Strategy 1.1.2 contained the following priority initiatives:

- Continue to implement, monitor, and assess the effectiveness of the Direct Instruction model of whole-school reform. Make modifications as necessary.
- Continue to implement, monitor, and assess the effectiveness of other whole school reform models, including Calvert and Integrated Language Arts. Make modifications as necessary.

In addition, Strategy 1.5.2 called for the provision of structural interventions to coordinate efforts at school improvement and improved student achievement. The priority initiative under this strategy is to continue to implement, monitor, and assess the effectiveness of the Central Administration Area and/or Achievement First support programs, and to make modifications as necessary. In the 2001–2001 Master Plan Update, Strategy 1.5.2 was incorporated under Strategy 1.1.2 and addressed the whole-school reform models Direct Instruction, Achievement First, Success for All, Victory Schools, and the CEO's District.

Since most of the schools participating in the reform models are reconstitution eligible, the BCPSS proposals for RE schools discuss them, particularly regarding their administration. In the 1998 RE plan, a new Central Administration Area was created to include the 15 lowest performing RE schools, which would be given a much more prescriptive approach to the curriculum. Three wholly new schools established as a part of the New Schools Initiative were a part of this area as well. All of the schools using the Direct Instruction/Core Knowledge curriculum were put into one area office. In the following year, all schools in the Central Administration Area selected one of two models, Achievement First or Success for All, based on faculty voting. The New Schools Initiative schools were no longer a part of this area and, indeed, were distributed across three areas. The 2001 BCPSS proposal for local reconstitution addresses only the newly named schools, all of which will be using the Achievement First model, although the Remedy Plan for FY 2003 proposes the expansion of DI to 11 additional schools.

Description of Models and How They Were Selected

Direct Instruction

The Direct Instruction/Core Knowledge model uses two separate and quite different programs: Direct Instruction for reading, language arts, spelling, and mathematics, and Core Knowledge for social studies and science. DI, derived from the Bereiter and Engelmann program of the mid-1960s, is supported by 25 years of basic research and evaluation studies carried out in several settings using various methodologies (Schug, Tarver, and Western, 2001). DI uses lessons that are highly structured, with careful sequencing and much repetition. Scripted lessons are provided,

so teachers do not need to do lesson plans. A whole set of instructional materials is part of the program; DI schools do not use the BCPSS curriculum. The lessons are very teacher-centered, with students grouped according to skill level. Some instruction is provided by classroom aides, who receive the same training as the teachers. Each participating school has a full-time DI coordinator. In addition, about once a month, each DI school is visited by a coach provided by an outside consulting firm. (Two companies are involved in this type of consulting work, both of which participate in BCPSS. One of the consulting companies also conducts weekly conference calls with each school's principal, DI coordinator, and coach to discuss lesson gain reports for each teacher.) Since DI uses materials that are different from the rest of BCPSS, the area does its own staff development including the summer training for all new teachers.

Core Knowledge is derived from E. D. Hirsch's work on cultural literacy. The Core Knowledge Foundation provides content guidelines for each content area and for each grade level. Specific lessons are being developed by curriculum writers on the Baltimore Curriculum Project staff, but schools basically use Core Knowledge each in their own way. Last school year, every school was required to teach one Core Knowledge unit each quarter, and they were given a specific unit to use along with an assessment. Subsequently, every core unit that must be taught has been determined, and efforts are underway to develop performance assessments for them.

Schools began implementing DI in 1996, prior to SB 795. Two foundations, the Enterprise Foundation and the Abell Foundation through its Baltimore Curriculum Project, were instrumental in bringing the program to the district. Both organizations reviewed curriculum across the country to determine what might be most appropriate, and both independently selected Direct Instruction and Core Knowledge. While the Enterprise Foundation worked with several schools in a particular part of town, the Baltimore Curriculum Project put out an RFP to which schools could respond. In the initial year, participation was not limited to schools that were low achieving. In fact, one school selected was a Blue Ribbon school.

In the second year, 1997, schools new to the program had to be reconstitution eligible, with an interest in reforming themselves, and had to have 80 percent buy-in from the faculty. In 1998, more schools that were identified as reconstitution eligible joined the program. The number of schools added each year is shown below:

Year	Implementing schools
1996	6*
1997	5
1998	6
Total	17

*One school also participates in the New Schools Initiative and another did so in the past

Achievement First

Achievement First (AF) was developed by the Baltimore-based Fund for Educational Excellence, which modeled it on a program in New York City and is implementing it in partnership with BCPSS. Described as a support system, not a program, AF is designed to be implemented over a 3-year period and is not linked to a specific curriculum. The supports include a professional developer who spends at least 2 days per week at each school and a coach for the principal who spends 1 day per week at a school. AF schools must implement five essentials:

- Schools focus on improving a single instructional priority—literacy;
- Principals develop as instructional leaders;
- Standards and student work inform instructional strategies;
- Onsite professional development in literacy improves instructional quality; and
- Family/community partnerships reinforce classroom literacy instruction.

Details about the instructional facets of the model include the following:

- Literacy block. Initially, a minimum of 90–120 minutes of uninterrupted time is spent on literacy at all grade levels. The amount of time increases to 120–150 minutes by the third year of implementation. Students are not pulled out for subjects such as physical education or music during the literacy block time.
- Classroom environments become print rich. Every classroom has a home lending library and a reading corner. Student work, word walls, and process charts are posted.
- Resource allocation. School improvement plans focus on literacy; other programs are reduced.
- Principal in classroom. Initially principals spend a minimum of 60 minutes per day in the classroom during the literacy block time. This time increases to 90 minutes per day by year 3.
- Standards. Teachers develop clear expectations about student work that are connected to the new Baltimore City standards.
- Student progress. The progress of students reading below level is checked on a regular basis. By year 3, students are regrouped after each 8-week assignment.

Implementation of Achievement First began in spring 1998. As shown below, additional schools have adopted the program each year since then.

Year	Implementing schools
Spring 1998	3
1998–1999	7*
1999–2000	18**
2000–2001	1
2001–2002	7

*Two of these schools participated for only 1 year.

**Two were later reconstituted by the state.

Since so many other schools had inquired about AF, an indirect model was developed for the 2000–2001 school year for schools in two BCPSS administrative areas. One facilitator was provided in each area to work primarily with the master teacher, principal, and assistant principal, but no other supports were provided. Where respondents to the principal survey were asked to indicate the reform programs in which their school participates, 30 principals in non-AF schools said they were AF participants. Some are participating in the indirect model, and we suspect that others are in schools that have adapted parts of Achievement First on their own. One school that hosted a site visit had established the literacy block but said it could not afford the cost of the additional supports. This school is not located in either of the administrative areas that used the indirect model.

New Schools Initiative

The New Schools Initiative (NSI) stemmed from a statement by the judge in the special education lawsuit who said that independent, nonprofit groups should open schools. It was thought that if improvements were made in regular education, the education for special education students would improve as well. In spring 1996, the New Schools Advisory Board was established and began developing an RFP for the operation of these schools. Three options were available:

- Schools could be wholly new, that is, started from scratch. The building used would not be owned by the City of Baltimore and the students would not all come from a pre-existing school.
- A school within a school could be established. That is, a new school would be formed in a wing or floor of an under-enrolled school.
- The operation of an existing school could be converted to an independent nonprofit group. Initially, all conversion schools needed to be reconstitution eligible.

Schools in the New Schools Initiative are given four areas of autonomy:

- Curriculum. Schools are not required to use the BCPSS textbooks or local assessments.
- Governance. Schools are not required to have a principal or a school improvement team. They are not required to follow the BCPSS calendar; that is, they can be year-round schools and they may start later.
- Budget. Schools can decide how the money will be spent. They have the option of receiving cash up front and then being audited at the end of the school year.
- Staffing. Schools can do their own recruiting and hiring; they don't have to rely on the requirements of the BCPSS Human Resources Department. Conversion schools had the authority to start with all new staff.

During the 2000–2001 school year, five schools participated in the New Schools Initiative. Characteristics of these schools are shown in Table 5-33. Four schools that had participated in NSI at some time since its inception have terminated their connections to the program.

Several changes were made in the New Schools Initiative RFP developed for the 2001–02 school year. For the first time, for-profit organizations were permitted to participate. Wholly new schools were to have a building identified from the start, and they were given the opportunity of taking a full year for planning. Conversion schools needed to show support from the school, e.g., the principal, school improvement team, PTO, and neighborhood improvement association. One additional school has been accepted: The Baltimore Curriculum Project's proposal to operate Barclay Elementary/Middle School as a conversion school that will be reinvigorating implementation of the Calvert curriculum already used by the school.

Table 5-33.
Characteristics of schools in the New Schools Initiative

School	Operator	Type	Curriculum	Grades	Enrollment
Midtown Academy	Midtown Academy, Inc.	Wholly new	Open Court, Core Knowledge, Civic Responsibility, Arts	K–6	135
New Song Academy	New Song Community Learning Center, Inc.	Wholly new	Calvert Curriculum, Expeditionary Learning, Year-round school	K–8	112
Rosemont Elementary	Coppin State College	Conversion	BCPSS curriculum, Thinking Skills Curriculum	Pre-K–5	396
Walbrook High School	Uniform Services Academy at Walbrook	Conversion	Academies of Maritime & Transportation, Business and Technology, Fire and Emergency Services, and Criminal Justice	Grades 9–12	2,100
City Springs Elementary	Baltimore Curriculum Project, Inc.	Conversion	Direct Instruction	Pre-K–5	296

Monitoring

Several mechanisms have been put in place for monitoring the DI schools. The DI program itself comes with some monitoring features. Generally, teachers are to cover one lesson per day, and every 10th lesson, students have to pass a test. Student progress is charted every week. Schools engaging in the DI program frequently use outside consulting groups to assist, and the DI area administrator has been successful in having two of the largest, and competing, DI consultant groups involved in monitoring for BCPSS. The approach taken by the groups differs somewhat, particularly regarding reporting procedures and documentation. One group collects the lesson gain reports from every teacher each week and reviews them in a conference call involving the principal, DI coordinator (a BCPSS staff person), and the coach (person provided by the consulting firm who also visits each school about once per month). The other DI consulting group has a consultant spends 2 days per month in a school. A major goal of the DI area is to have the DI coordinator in each building take over the activities of the outside consultants. Finally, the Baltimore Curriculum Project, one of the groups that brought DI to the district in the first place, is conducting an evaluation of six of the schools. Draft results of the fourth year of the evaluation are summarized in the next section.

Monitoring for Achievement First follows a somewhat different pattern. The Fund for Educational Excellence, which designed the program and has a major role in its implementation, does some monitoring of the progress of the participating schools on state tests. Many of the participating schools are in the Central Administrative Area, and the area administrator pays close attention to their progress. However, he is quick to point out that there are other schools in the area participating in a different reform model and that additional AF schools are located in other areas (Note: this whole structure has changed for the 2001–02 school year.) Thus, no one person on staff at BCPSS oversees Achievement First.

In prior years, schools in the New Schools Initiative have been scattered across the administration areas. The program administrator and staff in the schools feel that they are frequently forgotten, in part because they are so dispersed. The result is that they sometimes receive notification of requirements that don't apply to them, even though they may be required for all other BCPSS schools. At other times they don't receive some information, e.g., materials about summer school, because there is an assumption that they won't be participating. The program administrator feels that under the new administrative structure with all the schools in one area, the NSI will be more of a presence and receive more attention.

One might expect that with efforts involving the implementation of several model programs, there would also be a strong evaluation component. However, this has not been the case. The evaluation that has taken place has been conducted by external groups and has focused largely on test data.

According to an analysis by the Fund for Educational Excellence (Copeland, 2001), the composite index scores on the MSPAP 2000 for the state as a whole went up 2 points. Across all of BCPSS, the scores increased by 3.5 points. Overall, the AF schools increased by 6 points, but the original 10 schools increased by 9 points and the 17 later schools by 4.9 points. In contrast, the DI schools increased by just 1 point. The DI area director indicated that more attention on the skills needed for MSPAP was planned because only modest gains had occurred on the state assessment. He said that CTBS scores had shown gains.

The evaluation of Direct Instruction by the Center for the Social Organization of Schools (MacIver, Kemper, and Stringfield, 2000) included six DI schools and six schools that were demographically matched to them. (DI staff have some concerns that the comparison schools may not be well matched.) The report focuses largely on student test scores, but implementation issues and perceptions of teachers, principals, and DI coordinators also are discussed. The evaluation showed that students in DI schools made considerable progress in reading during the 4 years, but students at the control schools were

achieving at the same level. In mathematics, the DI students showed more growth in computation than the control group, but were not significantly improved in mathematics concepts compared to the control. The evaluators considered "the implementation of Direct Instruction at the BCP schools to be on the high end of scale." However, they noted that the outside consultants included the rate of lesson coverage as a part of their definition of successful implementation and were thus blurring the lines between implementation and student outcomes. Another evaluation finding was that the partnership of Direct Instruction and Core Knowledge has not been an equal one, with teachers reporting that Core Knowledge is the first to be cut. In summary, the evaluators state:

> We interpret these findings as evidence that Direct Instruction is a viable whole-school reform option for raising student achievement in reading and mathematics. While the reform may not necessarily perform better than other curricular alternatives, it has produced sufficient achievement gains to justify its continuation as a reform option. In schools where teachers have become heavily invested in the program and scores are rising, we believe it is particularly important to continue implementing the reform, since change would be potentially disruptive.

The Fund for Educational Excellence has funded two additional and ongoing studies of Achievement First. One is a quasi-experimental analysis of achievement data from the first 10 schools implementing Achievement First and a matched control group. The second study is looking at the implementation of the program, assessing changes in teacher quality, tracking the short- and long-term effects of the program on staff and students, and comparing results to those in the first study of achievement data.

While these analyses are important, they are far too limited, and only one provides information for program improvement. Indeed, such an important component of the response to SB 795 needs far more scrutiny and systemic examination. We strongly recommend that BCPSS undertake or commission such a study. This issue is discussed further in the recommendations subsection of this section.

Comparison of Models

While both Achievement First and Direct Instruction have a strong emphasis on literacy, their approach is quite different. For language arts instruction, schools participating in AF are using the BCPSS curriculum and textbooks; in contrast, DI schools use the DI curriculum and materials. For other subject areas, AF schools use the BCPSS curriculum and materials, whereas the DI schools use DI for math and Core Knowledge for science and social studies. Our evaluation of these efforts was necessarily limited, with examination of these whole-school reform models being only one aspect of a multifaceted assessment. Despite these limitations, what we have heard and seen is quite provocative, and we urge BCPSS to undertake more indepth program evaluation.

Specifically, site visit data show that staff were generally quite positive about Achievement First. Staff spoke highly of the supports they were receiving, and believed it was advantageous that AF could be used with the new BCPSS curriculum. An additional indication of the appeal of this approach is that some schools that could not afford the supports have chosen to participate in the indirect model, and others have adapted the approach on their own. The one area of concern was that with so much attention on reading/language arts, other subjects, especially math, might not be getting enough attention.

Direct Instruction received more of a mixed review during the onsite visits. Criticisms centered on the curriculum itself, not on the administration of the programs and its supports, which appear to be well done. Staff recognized the positive effect that the DI program has had on students' reading levels, particularly at the lower grades, although some question its utility at the higher grade levels. Both new and veteran teachers were also positive about the support they received, particularly from the DI consultants and

trainers. They were concerned about students who leave a DI school to attend middle school or transfer to another elementary school, feeling that these students are not prepared for traditional instruction. Moreover, some parents feel they are unable to help their children with the homework using the DI method, despite the fact that workshops are provided to help parents learn how to use the method.

Additional criticisms from one DI school are illustrative:

- New teachers criticized DI for the way it "trains" students. Once the students are trained in the DI method, they are unable to respond to questions or situations presented differently. For example, using DI a teacher will ask "10 plus 10 equals what?" and the student will be able to respond correctly. However, if the same teacher said "Give me the sum of 10 plus 10," the student would be confused.

- Some of the new teachers felt that the DI program held them back in their teaching methods. However, the DI coordinator and master teacher pointed out that teachers can add to the DI curriculum, although they are not allowed to detract from it. They mentioned a problem is that some teachers do not know how to make successful adaptations to the program.

- The veteran staff mentioned that many parents were confused by the discrepancy between their children's MSPAP scores and progress as indicated on the DI report card—and by the potential repercussions of low MSPAP scores. The DI coordinator and master teacher said that one of the greatest needs at the school was an ability to develop MSPAP-like tests for use in the DI program.[34]

- The veteran teachers mentioned having difficulty fitting in the PBES requirements (e.g., getting examples of student writing for their portfolio) while maintaining the DI schedule.

- The master teacher indicated that some teachers complain about the amount of paperwork required under the DI system. However, he believes that this system actually demands less paperwork than the standard district curriculum.

Teachers were also critical of Core Knowledge, which they feel is too dense and does not allow the students to establish the proper foundations before exposing them to complex concepts. One 5th grade teacher mentioned having to teach a unit about society in feudal Japan before the students have an understanding of the concept of "society" or even "family." Another difficulty with Core Knowledge is the lack of instructional materials (although some are being developed). One 1st grade teacher spoke of having difficulty finding any material for that grade level on the topic of Mesopotamia, which is a 1st grade Core Knowledge topic. These topics also seem contrary to the current emphasis on providing "real world" topics. In addition, while the Maryland content standards show that aspects of these earlier cultures should be taught across all grade levels, they emphasize teaching world history through the context of the home, school, and community by the end of 3rd grade and in the context of Maryland and U.S. history through 5th grade. Alignment with the Maryland standards was also an issue raised by some of the teachers during the site visits.

In our survey, all principals were asked to evaluate the reform efforts on a number of dimensions. The responses of principals of AF and DI schools were compared to the responses of principals of regular schools. On most aspects of the reforms, principals of both Achievement First and Direct Instruction schools were more positive than principals of regular schools, but differed from one another (Table 5-34).

[34]Tests that are similar to the MSPAP exist as public release tasks.

Table 5-34.
Percentage of principals evaluating various characteristics of reform efforts as good/great extent

School/principal characteristic	Teachers are prepared in use of new textbooks and curriculum	New curriculum materials are meeting needs of students	Quarterly milestone assessments are useful in determining student progress	Quarterly milestone assessments are useful in helping teachers revise instructional strategies	Supports to assist teachers in including students with special needs in classes are adequate	New student promotion and retention policy is helpful	There has been improve-ment in support from the area office over the last 2 years	There has been improve-ment in support from the central office over the last 2 years
Total	73	60	56	57	47	50	77	41
School status								
Regular schools.....	75	57	52	55	37	44	75	39
AF/DI status								
AF	71	67	75	79	67	75	88	65
DI	88	88	67	60	76	65	88	35

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Differences in the responses of AF and DI principals parallel differences in strategies used in the two approaches. AF schools, which use the milestone tests that complement the curriculum being used in most of BCPSS, are more positive about these tests than principals of DI schools, which use their own type of milestones tests. On the other hand, DI principals are more positive about the DI curriculum materials than principals in AF schools, which use the BCPSS curriculum. Principals of AF schools are more positive than their DI colleagues about the support provided by the central office, probably because their supports come from outside groups and all of these efforts are coordinated through the area office. AF schools, on the other hand, receive some supports that are more centrally coordinated.

In the survey, principals were asked about teacher expectations and the availability of resources (Table 5-35). Generally, principals reported high expectations, with 77 percent of regular school principals agreeing that teachers at their school regularly challenge students with rigorous instruction and 88 percent saying that teachers at their school believe students can do the work. Responses from AF principals were similar to those from regular school principals, but DI principals were more positive about teacher expectations. On the other hand, AF principals were more likely than DI principals to report that they had sufficient material resources, and principals of both these reform efforts were more likely than principals of regular schools to give this response.

Table 5-35.
Percentage of principals agreeing with various teacher and school characteristics

School/principal characteristic	Teachers regularly challenge students with rigorous instruction	Teachers believe students can do the work	School has sufficient material resources
Total	75	89	71
School status			
Regular schools.....	77	88	66
AF/DI status			
AF	76	88	88
DI	82	100	76

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

On the survey, several types of reforms were singled out: Direct Instruction, Achievement First, High Schools that Work, New Schools Initiative, Success for All, and the Children's Literacy Initiative. Only respondents who indicated they participated in any one of these "special" efforts were asked to address

subsequent questions on their impact. Altogether, 134 principals indicated that they participated in at least one of these programs. Because schools checked multiple reform models, we cannot look at the models separately. Overall, the principals were quite positive about the impact of the reforms. At least three-fourths reported improvement in student learning, academic atmosphere, student and teacher motivation, and resources in the school (Table 5-36). Principals of AF and DI schools were more positive than principals of regular school about the improvement in resources as a result of all the reforms in which they participated. For all other impacts, responses of principals from DI schools were a little more positive than principals of regular schools and the principals of AF schools were a little less positive.

When asked about their satisfaction with the training their staff had received for the reform program, principals generally were satisfied with the training. About two-thirds agreed that enough time was allowed for the training, that all necessary topics were covered in the training, and that potential problems were anticipated (Table 5-37). Overall, 90 percent agreed that the training materials were a helpful resource. Principals of AF and DI schools were more positive than principals in regular schools about the training their staff had received in the various reform efforts.

Table 5-37.
Percentage of principals agreeing they were satisfied with various elements of the training their staff received for the reform program

School/principal characteristic	Enough time was allowed for training	All necessary topics were covered	Potential problems were anticipated	Training materials were a helpful resource
Total	67	73	70	90
School status				
Regular schools	63	66	64	91
AF/DI status				
AF	84	92	92	96
DI	76	94	88	100

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Table 5-36.
Percentage of principals agreeing with various statements indicating a positive impact of the reform effort on their school

School/principal characteristic	Academic atmosphere has improved	Teachers' motivation has improved	Students appear better motivated	School's resources have improved	Student learning has improved	Parental involvement has increased
Total	89	81	85	75	94	61
School status						
Regular schools	89	83	87	71	96	62
AF/DI status						
AF	88	76	84	83	88	58
DI	100	88	88	94	100	65

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Principals were also asked about the extent to which the reform efforts met the needs of various students in their school (Table 5-38). While about three-fourths thought that the reforms met the needs of general education students, they were less positive about how the reforms were meeting the needs of other subgroups of students. However, principals of AF and DI schools much more positive about student needs were being met through the reforms. Responses of AF and DI principals were similar, except for students with limited English proficiency (LEP). Altogether, 70 percent of the AF principals said that the reforms were meeting the needs of LEP students, but only 30 percent of the DI principals had this opinion. DI's use of highly structured instructional materials would appear to account for this difference.

Table 5-38.
Percentage of principals indicating that the reform efforts met the needs of different segments of their student population to a good/great extent

School/principal characteristic	General education students	Students with disabilities	Students with limited English pro-ficiency	Gifted students
Total	73	55	40	53
School status				
Regular schools.....	68	49	43	41
AF/DI status				
AF	92	76	70	79
DI	94	71	30	75

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Further Issues and Recommendations

This analysis has just scratched the surface of issues that need to be addressed with regard to the whole-school reform models. While the picture is generally positive and staff feel that the models in place, especially AF and to a somewhat lesser extent DI, provide a value-added approach, the findings do not support a strategy of continuing to do business as usual.

In contrast to the recommendation of the Baltimore Curriculum Project, we suggest that BCPSS will need to decide if it should continue operating a variety of models, if the current mix of models is optimal, or if some changes should be made. BCPSS should consider developing some criteria by which each of the model programs would be evaluated; alignment with the Maryland standards and the state and district testing programs should certainly be among them.

Another factor that should be given careful consideration is Baltimore's high student mobility rate. Teachers have reported that one benefit of having a districtwide curriculum is that it provides some consistency in the instructional program as students change schools. In that light, it is important to address the concern that students moving from DI schools to schools using other approaches will have difficulty. What is the actual experience of students who transfer from a DI school to one using another approach?

A number of other factors should be taken into consideration in an evaluation. What types of supports are needed to continue the program and what are the costs of the supports? The review of the support structure must be made in the context of the high teacher turnover. What supports are needed for the new cadre of teachers each year, and what are needed to sustain those who are already implementing the program? A related factor is the availability of a complete set of instructional materials. Also, the models should be reviewed to determine to what extent they are in alignment with the research literature on best practices regarding learning and cognition.

Further, the system should consider whether or not strategies they are now calling whole-school reform models really address whole-school reform. Some district staff believe these models are really alternative types of reading programs. Indeed, the extent of coverage of all content areas and the compatibility of approaches used in the various content areas should be addressed in an evaluation. However, whole-school reform encompasses more than just a curriculum and its

associated pedagogy. Factors such as relationships and collaborations among teachers, integration across content areas, and cooperative learning are all essential features of whole-school reform models (Wang, Haertel, and Walberg, 1998). These components do not appear to be a very visible part of the dialogue. Consideration of the adequacy and effectiveness of existing reforms should, we feel, address the issue of what is being reformed and whether that is enough.

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Other Initiatives

During the past 4 years, BCPSS has made concerted efforts to help prepare children for 1st grade and beyond. Driven by The Master Plan, the district has instituted and expanded prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, assessed children's progress, and provided professional development and materials to classroom teachers. BCPSS has increased the number of full-day kindergarten programs from 38 (before The Master Plan was adopted) to over 70 in the 2000–2001 school year. During their 4-year relationship with BCPSS, the Children's Learning Initiative (CLI) has provided professional development, instructional materials, and other forms of support for preschool programs in 80 percent of the elementary schools and 65 percent of the elementary/middle schools in the district.

Classroom observations indicate widespread use of various elements of the CLI program. For example, "word walls," well-stocked classroom libraries, and literacy activities were all evident during site visits conducted by the Westat team. However, attempts to implement CLI practices to increase parental participation in child literacy efforts have not met with great success. Based on preliminary results, it appears that implementation of CLI programs has improved children's achievement. This indicates that further expansion of the district's prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, and the continuation of its contract with CLI are appropriate.

Recommendations:

- *An expanded evaluation of the ready-to-learn initiatives should be conducted to identify the elements that are most promising.*
- *Full-day kindergarten and prekindergarten programs should be implemented in more schools.*
- *Prekindergarten and kindergarten children should be assessed periodically during the school year to measure individual progress and help identify children in need of special assistance. Assessments should include both objective measures and subjective evaluations.*
- *BCPSS and local schools should work with parent coordinators and parent groups to improve parental involvement in preparing children for 1st grade. Support services (for example, baby-sitting and transportation) might be necessary to improve parental participation in workshops or school-based events.*

Ready-to-Learn Initiatives

Introduction

During the past 4 years, BCPSS has made concerted efforts to prepare children for 1st grade and beyond. Key elements of the district's efforts include:

- Instituting and expanding prekindergarten and kindergarten programs at schools throughout the district;
- Assessing prekindergarten and kindergarten students' progress;
- Providing staff development and onsite coaching to prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers; and
- Acquiring books and other materials for prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers to use to promote literacy skills and reading ability.

In addition, the prekindergarten and kindergarten programs are expected to benefit from other schoolwide initiatives taking place throughout the district, including linking each school to the Internet and fostering parental involvement in their children's educational programs.

The district's efforts reflect feedback received from the public and the beliefs of the New Board of School Commissioners. Public feedback to a draft of the 1998 Master Plan included a focus on kindergarten programs. "To succeed in the primary grades, more attention must be given to school readiness, building on Head Start and other pre-school programs and reducing kindergarten class sizes and/or extending to full-day programs in all schools." One belief behind the Board's guiding framework is that "school readiness is a critical component of school success."

The measures that the district has taken in recent years have been driven by The Master Plan, which describes objectives and strategies that are directly related to ensuring that children are ready to learn by the time they enter the 1st grade.

- Objective 1—Increase student achievement prekindergarten through grade 12. The 1998 Master Plan states "…Research shows that students who do not read well by the end of 3rd grade are more likely to become dropouts…For grades prekindergarten through 8, BCPSS will gear its efforts to the Maryland Learning Outcomes…" To continue efforts to achieve this objective, the 2000–2001 Master Plan includes two strategies related to prekindergarten and kindergarten:
  - Strategy 1.1.1 calls for the establishment of standards-based prekindergarten through grade 12 curriculum that meets the needs of diverse learners. The 1998 Master Plan called for the phased implementation of districtwide kindergarten curricula:

1998–1999	Language arts and reading
1999–2000	Mathematics
2000–2001	Science
2001–2002	Social studies

  - Strategy 1.2.2 calls for the initiation of full-day prekindergarten and kindergarten programs at all schools where facilities permit.
  - Strategy 1.3.1 calls for the implementation of a kindergarten assessment.
- Objective 2—Provide students with teachers and principals who are qualified and competent. The 1998 Master Plan stated, "…There must be the challenge for the most promising young people to consider teaching as a career. The best teachers must be retained through improved recognition and reward. Training and supporting existing teachers, and quickly and fairly replacing those teachers who do not measure up, must also be part of the reform efforts…" Strategies

for achieving this objective have included the design and implementation of a teacher development program, a staff mentoring program, reduction in class sizes, and the Performance-Based Evaluation System.

These efforts are reflected in Strategies 1.1.1 and 2.2.1 of the 2000–2001 Master Plan Update. The 2000–2001 work plan calls for offering staff development to prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers on reading and mathematics during fall 2000 and on science in spring 2001. The plan also calls for providing ongoing support onsite through master teachers and instructional support teachers by the end of 2000.

- Objective 5 addresses the involvement of parents, families, communities, and businesses in school programs. The 1998 Master Plan stated "…Schools cannot do the job by themselves…BCPSS must reach out and partner with community institutions and business to promote constructive activities in preparing the youngest for school…" To achieve this objective, that plan included two strategies related to prekindergarten and kindergarten:

  – Strategy 5.1.1 stated that the BCPSS would establish "a coordinated, research-based program that will ensure maximum parental participation in six major areas…[including] parents as teachers-in-the-home…"

  – Strategy 5.1.2 called for extensive collaboration between the schools, communities, and families. "The BCPSS will…collaborate with other public and private service agencies in the creation of a comprehensive public-private plan for the delivery of early childhood programs. The collaboration will include partnerships with the Safe and Sound Campaign and the Family League of Baltimore City…develop inter-agency agreements with city government agencies, and partnerships with other public and private organizations, for co-location and delivery of family support services for prekindergarten and kindergarten students. Services provided as part of the regular school day will include such things as physical and emotional health care, social work services, literacy, employment, child development, and parent training, etc."

The 2000–2001 Master Plan Update does not include any language that specifically addresses parent and community involvement in early childhood programs.

Of course, the overall 2000–2001 Master Plan Update does include objectives and strategies related to prekindergarten and kindergarten programs. However, there are instances where these programs are not treated the same as programs for other grade levels. For example, the plan does not list any indicators of progress or measurable results related to increasing student achievement at the prekindergarten or kindergarten levels.

Certainly, district and school staff have been attentive to the aspects of the plan that might affect prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, and have made attempts to implement the stated strategies. However, findings from the site visits conducted by the Westat team indicate that the extent to which these strategies have been implemented varies by strategy and by school. In many cases, this variation is due to the unique needs of each school. For example, among the classrooms observed, class size ranged from 9 students in a prekindergarten class to 29 students in a kindergarten class.[35] Further, each school determines the amount of resources it is willing or able to devote to prekindergarten or kindergarten programs.

[35] An aide was assigned to the class with 29 students. However, she was often asked to provide coverage for other classes, thereby leaving the regular classroom teacher alone with the large class.

In the remainder of this section, we discuss the extent to which the key elements listed above have been implemented. We base some of this discussion on data that are available from BCPSS (e.g., number of programs operating during the 2000–2001 school year). In most instances, our discussion is based on findings from the site visits conducted by the Westat team in 13 schools operating these programs. Specifically, we discuss:

- The extent to which prekindergarten and kindergarten programs have been instituted and expanded throughout the district, and the assessment of prekindergarten and kindergarten student progress;
- Staff development and onsite coaching that has been provided to prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers;
- Books and other materials that have been obtained for prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers to use to promote literacy skills and reading ability;
- The number of schools with prekindergarten or kindergarten programs that have been linked to the Internet; and
- Efforts made by the district and schools to foster parental involvement in their children's prekindergarten and kindergarten programs.

Instituting and Expanding Programs and Assessing Students

The school district has operated kindergarten programs in its elementary schools for over a century. However, to help achieve higher performance standards, the district has sought to expand the number of kindergarten programs that run the entire day and to implement as many prekindergarten programs as possible.

Before The Master Plan was issued, there were prekindergarten programs in 110 schools and full-day kindergarten programs in 38 schools.[36] By the start of the 2000–2001 school year, BCPSS was operating prekindergarten programs in 111 schools, full-day kindergarten programs in 73 schools, and half-day kindergarten programs in 44 schools.[37] These numbers represent 83 percent and 88 percent of all schools in the district that include primary grades and nearly a 100 percent increase in the number of full-day kindergarten programs. Table 5-39 shows the number of schools operating each type of program.

Table 5-39.
Number of schools operating prekindergarten and kindergarten programs during the 2000–2001 school year, by type of program

Program type	Number of schools
Prekindergarten	111
Half day	101
Full day	10
Kindergarten	117
Half day	44
Full day	73

In the 2000–2001 school year, BCPSS along with the other school districts in Maryland implemented a testing regimen for all kindergarten students. The assessment included 28 Work Sampling System (WSS) performance indicators that represented seven domains:

- Social and personal development
- Language and literacy
- Mathematical thinking
- Scientific thinking
- Social studies
- The arts
- Physical development

[36]Information provided via voice mail by Dr. Carla Ford on July 5, 2001.

[37]Based on written documentation provided by Dr. Elizabeth Morgan.

Students were scored in each of these domains and placed into one of three categories:

1. Full Readiness—Students consistently demonstrate skills, behaviors, and abilities, that are needed to meet kindergarten expectations successfully.

2. Approaching Readiness—Students inconsistently demonstrate skills, behaviors, and abilities that are needed to meet kindergarten expectations successfully and require targeted instructional support in specific domains or specific performance indicators.

3. Developing Readiness—Students do not demonstrate skills, behaviors, and abilities that are needed to meet kindergarten expectations successfully and require considerable instructional support in several domains or many performance indicators.

A summary of the WSS method employed in Maryland can be found in *Children Entering School Ready to Learn: School Readiness Baseline Information Preliminary Report*.

The 2000–2001 results indicated the scope of problems with which BCPSS prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers must cope. At the same time, the data showed that the most severe problems encountered by BCPSS teachers are no worse than those faced by their counterparts throughout the state. In five of the seven domains, fewer BCPSS students scored in the Developing Readiness category than did students statewide. For example, in scientific thinking, 16 percent of the BCPSS students scored in the lowest category as did 20 percent of students statewide. In fact, the composite scores in this category (across all seven domains) were better among BCPSS students than among students statewide.

However, it must be noted that Full Readiness describes the group of children who consistently demonstrate skills, behaviors, and abilities needed to succeed in kindergarten. Whereas somewhat fewer BCPSS students than Maryland students fell in the lowest category for most domains, this pattern was strikingly different when the numbers of students demonstrating full readiness was examined. For example, while 20 percent of students statewide scored Full Readiness in scientific thinking, only 5 percent of BCPSS students achieved this score. Likewise, the number of Maryland students scoring in this category on the composite score was 40 percent, while the number of BCPSS students in this category was only 16 percent. Clearly, the BCPSS prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers have a relatively large number of students performing below the expected level and few students who can serve as role models for their peers.

To help teachers and students in this situation, a variety of support services are in place at the prekindergarten and kindergarten levels. As a general rule, BCPSS schools receive support through a contract that the district has with the Children's Learning Initiative (CLI). Other supports are provided through the Achievement First programs. Since CLI has been invited into so many of the schools, we focus the discussion on it.

The main thrust of CLI is directed at low-income families in urban schools. (See Exhibit 5-7 for a summary of the supports offered by CLI.) CLI and BCPSS began their relationship during the 1997–98 school year, when 14 Baltimore schools participated in a pilot test of the Initiative. BCPSS has since expanded the program each year: in 1998–99, the BCPSS hired CLI to provide services to schools throughout the district; in 2000–2001, 80 percent of the elementary school principals and 65 percent of the elementary/middle school principals reported using CLI. In 2000–2001, the program was also expanded to include K-2nd grade in five schools.

Exhibit 5-7.
Components of CLI

Professional Development

- Three-day Institute and comprehensive training manual for teachers and principals.
- Teacher coaching throughout the year in the teacher's own classroom.
- Teacher workshops to further develop skills learned and practiced.
- Workshops for classroom para-professionals to support teacher efforts.
- Meetings with principals to discuss methods for supporting teachers.
- Professional books for the teacher for continued professional development.
- Assessment materials to gauge student progress throughout the year.
- Analysis and a report on assessment results.

For the Classroom

- A carefully selected, quality collection of books (approximately 120 different titles).
- Literacy materials such as racks to display the books, book covers, a message board, and other classroom accessories.
- A collection of books, and the materials needed, for a Home Lending Library (approximately 80 different titles).
- A writing box of supplies for each child to use at school and take home at the end of the school year.
- A collection of independent reading (text-leveled) books (approximately 200 books).

Support for Parents and Students

- Workshops for parents to learn about reading aloud to their children and how to support the efforts of the teacher.
- A book sent home with each child.
- Books for parents to take home from the parent workshop.

Source: 1998-2000 CLI Biennial Report.

During 1999–2000, CLI asked 168 prekindergarten teachers to conduct a pre- and post-test with a sample of more than 1,500 students.[38] Testing included the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), the Alphabet Letter Recognition (ALR) test, and a modified version of the Concepts About Print (CAP) test. According to their evaluation,

- "As a group, the prekindergarten students reached the national norm of 100 on the PPVT post-test in May, having scored 89 on the October pre-test…It is important to note that it is uncommon for children of any background to increase their PPVT score, because the test determines a child's vocabulary knowledge with respect to her age."
- On a modified version of the CAP, "prekindergarten students scored 4 out of 16 [in October]; on the post-test in May, the average was 11."
- On the ALR, "Baltimore children scored an average of 14…in October and 40 on the post-test in May. The national Head Start goal for Head Start 4-5 year olds is 10 letters."

Perhaps the achievements of these students are somewhat related to the WSS finding that relatively few students scored in the lowest of the three categories in the language and literacy domain.

During our site visits, it was apparent that school staff recognize the positive effects of the prekindergarten and kindergarten programs and would welcome further expansion of the programs. Staff from two schools praised the programs, saying "These children can read!" We learned of one school that has recently expanded its prekindergarten from a half-day to a full-day program and experienced a dramatic increase in attendance as a result. The principal was excited about the possibilities that this change might bring in the coming years. Another school that had undergone a similar expansion indicated that doing so has made it more competitive with area nonpublic schools.

[38]Test results cited are taken from *Program Evaluation*, published by CLI.

Staff Development and Onsite Coaching for Teachers

Prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers are eligible to participate in all the staff development and onsite coaching programs that are conducted in the district. These include, for example, programs related to BCPSS procedures, Achievement First, and Direct Instruction. We address these programs in other sections of our report. In this section, we describe the staff development that has been provided through the district contract with CLI.

The Initiative offers staff development to prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers.[39] CLI has identified five training areas: 1) utilizing academic centers and small group instruction; 2) working with children's writing; 3) creating a classroom literacy environment; 4) implementing Message Time;[40] and 5) engaging students in effective read-alouds. The staff development program begins with a 3-day seminar for all new teachers and those who are new to the CLI. Staff development continues through school visits made throughout the year by CLI coaches.

During the 1997–98 pilot test, 61 teachers received training on CLI techniques and received CLI materials for use in their classrooms. In 1998–99, CLI provided training for additional prekindergarten teachers, and in the 1999–2000 school year, 168 teachers were trained. According to a CLI representative interviewed by Westat, new teachers are very receptive to sessions related to the use of classroom libraries, teaching techniques, and other elements of the CLI approach. These staff appreciate the program, especially because of the materials and coaching support they receive. However, she said that "soon-to-be retirees" are less willing to accept suggestions from coaches who are younger and less experienced than they are.

The Westat team conducted observations in four prekindergarten or kindergarten classrooms. It was evident that the teachers had established classroom environments in accordance with the principles advocated by CLI. Observers noted that there were uninterrupted literacy blocks, classroom space dedicated to literacy activities, examples of student writing posted on the classroom walls, labels affixed to items throughout the room, "word walls," and well-stocked classroom libraries with comfortable furniture where students could look at the books. These observations indicate that the teachers have implemented many of the strategies provided by CLI.

Books and Other Materials to Promote Literacy Skills and Reading Ability

The contract between BCPSS and CLI calls for the provision of literacy materials to prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers. Since 1998–99, CLI has provided teachers with the materials described in Exhibit 5-7.

Schools with Upgraded Technology Support

The district's technology goals include increasing access to and use of computers. This goal entails three types of activities: 1) school infrastructure (e.g., wiring) must be updated to accommodate access; 2) schools and classroom teachers must be provided the necessary computers, software, and other equipment; and 3) staff must receive training on how to use and integrate computer applications into their classrooms. We present an indepth discussion of the extent to which BCPSS

[39] CLI also offers staff development to 1st and 2nd grade teachers; however, it is unclear whether teachers at these grade levels would be able to receive CLI training under the terms of the existing contract between BCPSS and CLI.

[40] "Message Time is a copyrighted modeled writing process developed by Dr. Janice Stewart in conjunction with Children's Literacy Initiative. Done properly, Message Time fulfills three important instructional goals: 1) As modeled writing, it exposes children to important concepts about print and language use within a meaningful context. 2) Through the use of mini-lessons during the process, Message Time is a multi-leveled method that allows teachers to combine whole group work with invaluable opportunities for one-on-one instruction and scaffolding. 3) Because Message Time stresses that every child be given time and support to achieve success, it creates a risk-free environment while still being effective literacy instruction" (CLI Administrator's Handbook, p. 21).

has achieved this goal in the Information Technology section of Chapter 7. While we did not discuss the relationship between technology and ready-to-learn programs during our site visits, we can report on the overall status of technological readiness in schools that operate prekindergarten or kindergarten programs.

Status reports for the 2000–2001 school year reflect that the district has completed the wiring process in 25 schools and expects to complete it in 66 additional schools by July 1, 2001 (Table 5-40). While the district has made progress toward preparing schools to meet the technology goals, over half of the schools operating prekindergarten and kindergarten programs have not been wired.

Table 5-40.
Wiring status of schools operating prekindergarten and kindergarten programs during the 2000–2001 school year, by type of program

Program type	Number of schools wired	Number of schools to be wired by 7/1/2001	Number of remaining schools
Prekindergarten	18	37	56
Half day	17	34	50
Full day	1	3	6
Kindergarten	17	41	59
Half day	10	13	21
Full day	7	28	38

SOURCE: BCPSS status reports.

Lack of technological equipment and staff training prevents many of the schools that operate ready-to-learn programs from coming close to achieving the goal expressed in The Master Plan. Several of the schools that we visited had computers in the classrooms, but others had storage rooms filled with outdated and nonfunctional desktop computers. One school used to operate a computer lab with over 30 desktop computers; today the room is unused and the broken computers sit on unoccupied desks. Even in schools that have been wired, we heard reports of outdated or limited equipment and lack of training opportunities for staff to learn how to use the equipment or integrate it into their classroom lessons.

Efforts to Foster Parental Involvement

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing BCPSS is increasing the involvement of parents and families in the education of their children. While there is often a core of very committed and involved families, the majority of parents, at the majority of the schools we visited, remain uninvolved.

Since collaboration began with CLI, parent workshops have been held in 122 BCPSS schools. However, parental participation in the program has been disappointing; according to a CLI representative, on average, only eight parents from each school participate in the workshops. This reflects the information that principals, teachers, and parents provided during our visits—while the level of parental involvement is stronger when the children are in the early years of school, the involvement wanes as the children progress to the higher primary grades.

CLI finds that the primary factor in motivating participation is the level to which school principals and teachers publicize the events. Although parents are offered free books to motivate their participation in the workshops, this incentive seems to have little effect.

Recommendations

BCPSS has succeeded in expanding its efforts to reach children before they arrive for 1st grade. The efforts have addressed multiple areas including curricula, student assessment, staff development, and instructional materials. Evaluations of the CLI services have demonstrated improved student achievement. Based on this initial finding, we recommend the following :

- An expanded evaluation of the ready-to-learn initiatives should be conducted to identify the elements that are most promising.
- Full-day kindergarten and prekindergarten programs should be implemented in more schools.

- Prekindergarten and kindergarten children should be assessed periodically during the school year to measure individual progress and help identify children in need of special assistance.

- BCPSS and local schools should work with parent coordinators and parent groups to improve parental involvement in preparing children for 1st grade. Support services (for example, baby-sitting and transportation) might be necessary to improve parental participation in workshops or school-based events.

Class-Size Reduction

During the late 1990s, a growing number of national studies indicated the benefits of small class sizes (less than 20 students), particularly at the early elementary grades (K–3). In that context, the BCPSS Master Plan called for reductions in class sizes. Currently, teacher positions are allocated to schools on a formula basis: 1:22 for the lower elementary grades and 1:24 for the upper elementary grades, although there may be some exceptions.

The Westat team was provided only limited data from BCPSS regarding class size, and it was impossible to evaluate the extent to which class size has been reduced or to determine the current size of classes at the various grade levels. Our survey data suggest that the average class size across all elementary grades is approaching the size (below 20 students) that research suggests is needed for making a difference in student achievement. Further reductions in some classes have also been accomplished. For example, among schools participating in the Achievement First program, class size is often smaller during the literacy block, when teachers of music, art, physical education, and library work with reading groups.

Recommendations in this area are:

- *BCPSS should more closely monitor class size reduction and its impacts on teaching and learning.*
- *Mechanisms should be put in place for addressing class sizes that are found to be too large during the monitoring process.*
- *BCPSS should include kindergarten in its class-size reduction program.*
- *BCPSS should provide some training to teachers, especially new teachers, regarding ways to work with aides in the classroom.*

Introduction

We begin this section with a summary of recent research on class size and a brief overview of the federal Class Size Reduction Program. These provide context for BCPSS plans and activities, which are described next. Then we present data limitations regarding class size, our evaluation approach, evaluation results, and recommendations.

The research questions guiding this part of the study were as follows:

- What are the average class sizes in grades 1–3 and grades 4–5?
- What new strategies or practices accompany the reduction in class size? Do these reflect what is known about best practices?
- How are the impacts of these changes being monitored and assessed?
- What are the teacher-student ratios in middle and high school?
- Is sufficient space available for the number of classrooms needed when class size is reduced?
- Are there a sufficient number of qualified and certified teachers for these additional classes?

Context

During the late 1990s, a growing number of studies were indicating the benefits of small class sizes, particularly at the early elementary grades (K–3). A report summarizing the existing research was produced by Ivor Pritchard of the National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum and Assessment in 1998 and later

revised in 1999. The main conclusions from his report are summarized below:

1. A consensus of research indicates that class-size reduction in the early grades leads to higher student achievement. Researchers are more cautious about the question of the positive effects of class-size reduction in the 4th through 12th grades. The significant effects of class-size reduction on student achievement appear when class size is reduced to a point somewhere between 15 and 20 students, and continue to increase as class size approaches the situation of a one-to-one tutorial;

2. The research data from the relevant studies indicate that if class size is reduced from substantially more than 20 students per class to below 20 students, the related increases in student achievement moves the average student from the 50th percentile up to somewhere above the 60th percentile. For disadvantaged and minority students the effects are larger; and

3. Students, teachers, and parents report positive effects from the impact of class-size reductions on the quality of classroom activity.

Other points made in the report are:

- "School arrangements that reduce class size only for particular students or subjects may achieve greater results with lower costs, depending on how they are organized and what exactly makes the smaller class experience better" (p.10).

- "The question of class size is not simply a matter of less is more. The pattern of research evidence only favors class-size reduction if it is substantial and brings the class size below a certain threshold. Reducing class size from 30 to 25, for example, may well have no effect whatsoever " (p.9).

- "The focus on class-size reduction in the early grades also suggests that smaller classes represent a preventive, rather than a remedial, approach" (p.9).

- "School officials and policymakers also have to face the problem of the effect of class-size reduction on the supply of teachers. If the supply of teachers remains the same and class-size reduction increases the demand, then it would seem that class-size reduction policies will result in the hiring of less qualified teachers. Right now many states are having trouble finding qualified teachers to hire" (p.10).

However, reducing class size by itself does not automatically lead to increases in student achievement. Murnane (1996) looked at 16 elementary schools serving minority high-poverty populations that had low attendance rates and student test scores. All were given additional funds over a 5-year period. All schools hired additional teachers and reduced class size with the money. However, at the end of 5 years, only two schools showed improvements in attendance and student achievement. In addition to reducing class size, these two schools had changed the curriculum and the instructional program and established a focus on improving student achievement. In the other 14 schools, doing more of the same with smaller groups of children did not produce results.

In one of the studies reviewed by Pritchard, larger classes with instructional aides did not produce the same benefits as the smaller classes. In contrast, another study, which used both small classes and larger classes with teams of two teachers, showed increases in student achievement in both situations. Although Pritchard does not mention it specifically, it is possible that the training of the second person in the classroom (aide vs. teacher) is the factor that is producing the different results.

In 1998, Congress enacted the U.S. Department of Education's Class Size Reduction Program. Its

purpose was to help schools improve student achievement by reducing class size, particularly in the early grades (1–3) to no more than 18 children per class. In addition, the teachers hired for these classes were to be qualified. Congress continued the program under Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which started in the 2000–2001 school year and expanded the definition of early grades to include kindergarten. It also strengthened the teacher qualification requirements by requiring all teachers hired under the program to be fully certified to teach the grades and/or subjects to which they are assigned.

According to the guidance for the Class Size Reduction Program, (www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ClassSize/Guidance/A), the program targets the primary grades so that students would have small classes when they are learning to read, a skill which will help them in other subjects. Benefits of small classes are:

- Teachers will be able to provide more individualized attention;
- More time can be spent on instruction;
- More material can be covered effectively; and
- Students and parents can receive more detailed feedback on student progress.

Guidance for the federal program also states that only classroom teachers responsible for a child's primary classroom instruction should be counted in determining class size. Guidance counselors, librarians, or other school professionals who do not provide classroom instruction in the core curriculum are not to be included in the class size counts. Administrative or support personnel or teacher aides or paraprofessionals also are to be excluded from the counts.

BCPSS Plans and Activities

BCPSS has paid close attention to the research on class size and its potential. In BCPSS' Master Plan, class-size reduction was addressed in Objective 2, which focuses on the provision of qualified staff. In particular, Strategy 2.3.1 stated, "Reduce class sizes and provide teachers to provide a comprehensive educational program." The plan called for maintaining the low student-teacher ratios in grades 1–3, reducing class sizes in grades 4 and 5 in both RE and non-RE schools, and providing additional teachers in additional selected grades and subjects in RE secondary schools.

According to the 1999 BCPSS Proposal for Reconstitution-Eligible Schools, the average 1st grade class in the 1998–99 school year had 21 students and the average 2nd and 3rd grade classes had 22 students. To reduce class sizes in the 4th and 5th grades of RE schools, 91 teachers were provided. In addition, 24 master teachers were provided to support teachers in RE elementary schools. BCPSS also provided 30 additional middle school positions and 14 additional high school positions in RE schools. For the 1999–2000 school year, BCPSS planned to reduce class size in 4th and 5th grades in RE schools to 27 students; projections indicated that 81 teachers would be needed to accomplish that goal. According to the plan, reduced class size would result in more individual attention to students, assistance in writing activities, and meaningful feedback on student writing. Middle school would receive a reading teacher for every 400 students in the school, but at least 150 students had to be in the program for the school to receive such a position. Altogether, 28 reading teachers were provided. Each of the seven RE high schools received two additional teaching positions that were placed according to school needs.

In the 2000–2001 Master Plan Update, class-size reduction became a part of a new focus area, structural supports for improved student achievement, which was added to Objective 1. Specifically, Strategy 1.5.4 calls for reduced class sizes to provide a comprehensive instructional program. Concomitantly, sufficient teachers are to be provided. Two priority initiatives fall under this strategy:

- Continue targeted class-size reductions in grades 1–5; and

- Implement additional class-size reductions in grades 1–3 in reconstitution-eligible schools; expand this initiative to additional schools as funding permits.

According to the BCPSS Remedy Plan for FY 2003, the system has made great strides regarding the reduction of class size in grades 1–3 to a ratio of 18:1. BCPSS would like to maintain this ratio by hiring 190 teachers. In addition, it plans to expand these efforts to grades 4 and 5, where it will reduce class sizes from a ratio of 27:1 to 22:1 by hiring 126 teachers.

In Baltimore, teacher positions are allocated to schools on a formula basis: 1:22 for the lower elementary grades and 1:24 for the upper elementary grades. Obviously, under the formula, the class sizes are not below 20 students, which research suggests is necessary for making a difference. However, this simple calculation does not tell the whole story. In Achievement First schools during the 90- to 150-minute literacy block time, all students participate in language arts activities, that is, they are not pulled out for music, art, physical education, or library. Instead, teachers of these subject work with reading groups. When these staff members are factored in, average class size is reduced for at least the literacy block. Although guidance from the federal Class Size Reduction Program says that these types of teachers should not be included in class-size calculations, in BCPSS they are actually serving dual roles, a unique situation. In many other BCPSS classes, paraprofessionals work with some reading groups. Again, aides are not to be included in the class-size calculations.

Data Limitations Regarding Class Size

Our initial plans for studying class-size reduction assumed that BCPSS had reports, preferably trend data, on class size; in fact, we were told that a study have been done. However, the data that we have received from BCPSS regarding class size have been minimal. Neither the results of the study nor the quarterly reports on class size for grades 1–3 mentioned in The Master Plan were available.

Without data on class size from the start of the implementation of The Master Plan, we are unable to evaluate the extent to which class size has been reduced. Similarly, without the quarterly reports on class size, we are unable to determine the current size of classes at the various grade levels. It was beyond the scope of this multifaceted evaluation to collect the detailed information needed for such an analysis. Our analyses are thus limited to the data were able to collect through our surveys and site visits. We strongly urge BCPSS to begin to reinstitute close monitoring of the class-size reduction efforts.

Evaluation Approach

Our evaluation contained several sources of data on class size. On Westat's survey, we asked teachers to provide the number of students in their classes this year. Teachers who had more than one class were asked to give the average for all their classes. On other survey items, teachers were asked about their top two reasons for recommending and not recommending BCPSS as a place of employment; class size was among the choices listed. The site visits provided additional data. We asked about class size in interviews with teachers and principals. Also, we recorded the size of classes in each observation conducted and noted the number and types of adults in each class observed.

The evaluation looked at a variety of new strategies and practices that have accompanied class-size reduction in BCPSS. Two of the most critical are the establishment of a citywide curriculum framework and the implementation of whole-school reform models, especially Direct Instruction and Achievement First. Separate sections of this report discuss these reforms in depth; consequently, they are only referenced occasionally in this section.

Detailed information about the sufficiency of space for class-size reduction was not collected. During site visits, some staff commented on the limitations of making further reductions in class size within their own particular schools. However, the issue of class-size reduction goes beyond any one school and is linked to other

decisions that BCPSS must make, including closing schools, relocating students because of the closures, and increasing all-day kindergarten and other preschool services.

The issue of whether BCPSS has a sufficient number of qualified teachers for the additional classes resulting from class-size reduction is discussed in depth in the section of this report dealing with retention. Generally, it does not. If efforts to reduce class size must be carried out by increasing the number of provisionally certified teachers, the benefits of this investment are questionable.

Evaluation Results

Systemwide, on average, teachers report that they have 23.1 students in their classes. In elementary schools, where most of the efforts to reduce class size have been focused, the average number of students per class is 20.5 (Table 5-41). However, this average contains both the primary grades and the upper elementary grades, which we did not attempt to separate on our extensive survey involving many issues. In addition, responses from special education teachers are included in these averages. Overall, differences in class sizes between RE and non-RE schools were not statistically significant.

Table 5-41.
Average number of students in teachers' classes this year

School/teacher characteristic	Students
Total	23.1
Instructional level	
Elementary	20.5
Elementary/middle	22.2
Middle	26.7
High	26.2
Reconstitution eligibility status	
Eligible	22.5
Ineligible	23.8

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

The data show that the average class size across all elementary grades is approaching the size (below 20 students) that research suggests is needed for making a difference in student achievement. However, averages do not give a complete picture. In schools participating in the Achievement First program, class size is often less than 20 students during the literacy block.

Classroom observations conducted during the site visits supported the overall class size averages. However, we did see some classes that were considerably larger than average. Most lower elementary classes that we observed had less than 20 students, and when there were more students, generally the class had either two teachers or a teacher and an aide. (It should be noted, however, that in some cases the classroom that we observed had been selected for us, and in other cases absences reduced the observed class-size.) Most staff interviewed reported that the average class size in grades 1 through 3 was 18 students. One school reported a dramatic reduction in class size in the lower grades from an average of 35 students per class to about 18, with co-taught classes having around 28 students per room. However, some schools still have large classes (30 students) at the 4th and 5th grade levels. In some of these schools, it would be difficult to create additional classes because there is no more space. Another factor contributing to large classes at the 4th grade level is that some students have been retained under the student promotion policy.

Another grade that has large class sizes in some schools is kindergarten. One reason offered for this situation is that the class-size initiative does not affect kindergarten. However, the federal Class Size Reduction Program began including kindergarten in the 2000–2001 school year. In one school visited, the kindergarten class regularly has 29 students with 1 teacher, although only 20 students were present during the observation. Another kindergarten class was composed of 25 students, 1 teacher, and 1 aide. However, since substitute teachers are hard to find, the kindergarten paraprofessional generally fills in for any teacher who is absent, which occurs about 25 percent of the time. This aide should be assisting full time in the assigned classroom.

Classroom aides are used extensively in BCPSS, particularly at the elementary level. Staff perceive aides as a way to reduce class size. However, aides are not supposed to be included in class-size counts under the federal program. Although we did not explore the topic in any depth, we heard mixed reports about the quality of the aides and how they are used in the classroom. In some cases, they assist in providing instruction; in other cases, their role is perceived to be primarily behavior management. In one school visited, every class was supposed to have one assistant, especially for the literacy block. New teachers in this school reported that they do not plan with the assistants or review lesson plans with them. They suggested that the assistants could be used more effectively.

In our teacher survey, the average class size at the middle school level was 26.7 students and at the high school level, 26.2 students (Table 5-41). During our site visits, staff told about the range of class sizes within a school, with some classes having 35 students or more at the middle and high school levels. Class sizes can also fluctuate considerably during the year, particularly at the high school level. One high school visited mentioned that at the beginning of the year some classes are huge, with not all student able to fit into the classrooms. As students transfer to other schools or drop out, class size becomes less of an issue.

Recommendations

We have four recommendations for BCPSS regarding class size.

- We encourage BCPSS to follow through on monitoring class size including developing and implementing a plan for analyzing the impact of class-size reduction or teaching and learning .
- Mechanisms should be put in place for addressing class sizes that are found to be large during the monitoring process.
- Since the federal Class Size Reduction Program now includes kindergarten, we recommend that BCPSS pay particular attention to this critical grade to ensure that class sizes are small at this level.
- BCPSS should provide some training to teachers, especially new teachers, regarding ways to work with aides in the classroom.

References

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Middle School and High School Efforts

During the past 3 years, BCPSS has focused most school reform efforts on the elementary level since resources were limited. However, some actions were taken to address middle and high school reform: curriculum development and textbook purchasing were done for both the middle and high schools; two new central office positions were created, director of middle school improvement and director of high school improvement; and separate task forces were established for middle schools and high schools to recommend reforms.

Most of the reforms for the middle grades had not been implemented at the time of the evaluation. One exception was the placement of at least one reading teacher in each reconstitution-eligible middle school. High school reform efforts have focused especially on the zoned high schools. Initiatives implemented thus far consist of 9th grade interventions and strategies to aid the transition from middle school to high school. Initial steps have been taken toward establishing academies, but a great deal has yet to be done to build smaller learning communities.

Because reform activities for middle and high school grades have received far less attention than have those for elementary schools thus far, it is not surprising that principals at the upper school levels expressed significantly fewer positive opinions than elementary principals about the reform activities and the availability of resources. BCPSS is taking steps to address the concerns; the BCPSS Remedy Plan for FY 2003 contains extensive plans for middle and high school reforms.

Recommendation:

We strongly encourage BCPSS to direct much greater attention to reforms at the middle grades and high school levels and to put in place a plan to systematically monitor and evaluate their impacts.

Introduction

Middle and high school are not specifically mentioned in Senate Bill 795. Rather, they are part of the overarching requirement to "provide effective curriculum and instructional programs for the Baltimore City Public School System" (Section 4-309 (D) (3)). In the Initial Master Plan, secondary grades improvement was included under Objective 1, which focused on increasing student achievement prekindergarten through grade 12, through four strategies:

- Strategy 1.4.1: Develop and implement a systemwide middle grades improvement plan. This would include both middle schools and grades 6–8 in the elementary/middle schools.
- Strategy 1.4.2: Develop and implement a systemwide high school improvement plan.
- Strategy 1.4.3: Develop and implement strategies to promote student retention and successful transitions during school and after graduation.
- Strategy 1.4.4: Develop and implement alternative secondary learning communities. (This strategy is addressed in the section of this report dealing with secure, civil, and orderly environment, since the strategy was later moved to Objective 6.)

One central office change was the establishment of two new positions, director of middle school improvement and director of high school improvement, to look at student achievement by level. The curriculum office continued to have content area staff, as in the past, but there was some discussion that the school improvement offices should supervise the content area staff, particularly regarding the quarterly milestone assessments. However, the content area and school improvement staff were not merged.

According to the acting curriculum and instruction officer, initial curriculum reform activities focused primarily on the elementary level. Money and resources were not available to do everything, so less attention was put on middle and high school efforts. However, as mentioned in the section on the citywide curriculum framework, some curriculum development and textbook purchasing was done for both the middle and high school grades. Since BCPSS addressed the issues regarding the middle grades and high school separately, they are discussed separately in the next section of this report.

Approach Taken by BCPSS for the Middle Grades

BCPSS delayed considerably in developing reform initiatives targeted specifically at the middle grades. The main reason was that BCPSS did not have sufficient resources to do everything and chose to begin with the elementary grades, where success was more likely. A secondary reason for the delay was that BCPSS wanted to use the results of the Maryland Middle School Learning Years Task Force, which were supposed to be submitted in March 1999. Although the Task Force presented preliminary recommendations in April 1999 and a draft version of its report in July 1999, the final report was not completed until March 2000.

In the meantime, the BCPSS director for middle school improvement was appointed in March 1999. One support that was put in place immediately was the placement of at least one reading teacher in each reconstitution-eligible middle school. The provision of reading teachers has continued in subsequent years under The Master Plan. The reading teachers have received professional development in reading instructional strategies such as Soar to Success and Corrective Reading. According to the 2001–02 Master Plan Update, the Campaign Reading—Middle School Curriculum Framework will be revised.

In another action, BCPSS Middle Level Task Force was established and began working in fall 1999. The BCPSS task force met throughout the school year and produced a draft final report in July 2000 (see Exhibit 5-8 for recommendations of the task force). The report was presented to the new BCPSS CEO, who wanted it to be more specific and action driven. According to the 2001–02 Master Plan Update, the revised report was to be presented to the New Board of School Commissioners by September 30, 2001. (Westat does not have a copy of the revised report.) Thus, most of the reforms for the middle grades had not been implemented by the time of the evaluation. However, extensive plans for middle grade reform are proposed in the BCPSS Remedy Plan for FY 2003.

Exhibit 5-8.
Recommendations of the Middle Level Task Force

Instruction

- Increase academic expectations and course rigor;
- Ensure that curriculum, instruction, and assessments are aligned to national, state, and local standards;
- Develop middle grades reading curriculum and provide a reading teacher for every 150 middle grade students; and
- Provide accelerated interventions to students performing below grade level and challenging advanced programs for students performing above grade level.

Middle school configuration

- Implement two high-quality middle school designs, one of which expands K–8 configurations (to 5 new locations), and the other develops specialized, theme-based middle schools (in 10 selected schools);
- Implement a revised funding strategy for K–8 schools, and develop funding streams for instituting specialized middle schools; and
- Institute certain "best practices" of K–8 schools into six to eight schools, as identified by K–8 principals and supported by research.

Administration/management/safety

- Create school site-specific discipline plans aligned to BCPSS discipline policies and provide support for the implementation of the plans with resources and personnel;
- Provide training in emotional intelligence/ adolescent development for teachers; and
- Ensure all middle grades schools implement the outstanding middle school program.

Professional development

- Revise the schedule and build in 90 minutes per week for site-based professional development and a common team planning period every day;
- Reinstate the position of department head or content support teacher for all tested subject areas; and
- Provide ongoing site-based professional development that meets national, state, and local standards, and includes school administrators.

Approach Taken by BCPSS for High Schools

Reform efforts at the high school level focused especially on the zoned high schools, particularly since seven of the nine zoned high schools were identified by the state as low performing. Initially, the most pressing need in the high schools perceived by BCPSS was to address climate issues, which are discussed in the section of this report on establishing a safe, secure environment. According to the 1999 Proposal for RE Schools, the beginning of climate change had occurred by the end of the 1998–99 school year. Namely, RE high schools had experienced a decrease in the number of long-term suspensions and the dropout rate as well as a small increase in the attendance rate.

The High School Improvement Steering Committee was convened in October 1998. The director of high school improvement was the chair, and its membership represented a wide variety of stakeholder groups within BCPSS, as well as community, business, and higher education groups, but only one teacher was included. Since climate change had begun to occur, the Committee felt that it could direct its attention to instructional issues. The Committee's reform proposal, issued in June 1999, contained an action plan for 1999–2000.

The acting curriculum and instruction officer said that the Committee's report was a recommendation for the first year of implementing reforms at the high school level. The overarching goal is to build smaller learning communities. She said that all the high schools had identified the types of academies they would provide, and some schools had been divided into these learning communities. However, other academies existed in name only. Developing the academies would be done in the next phase of the reforms at the high school level. The Chief Executive Officer has subsequently announced that three high schools would be converted into academies by fall 2002, and three more high schools will be converted in each of the following years.

According to the acting curriculum and instruction officer, the main part of the high school reform that has been implemented is the 9th grade intervention. A major component of the intervention consists of a pilot project conducted jointly with Johns Hopkins University's (JHU) Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR). Participating schools receive the services of a support team consisting of a mathematics instruction facilitator, an English instructional facilitator, and a 9th grade achievement support facilitator. Participating students take three courses: strategic reading, transition to advanced mathematics, and freshman seminar. (The last course involves study and social skills and guidance about career pathways and graduation requirements.)

One strategy that BCPSS has implemented to aid in the transition from middle school to a zoned high school is the development of an academic profile of each incoming 9th grader. The profile contains test score and attendance data, mobility rate, and an indicator if the student is over age. High schools are to use this information to schedule students and provide additional supports when necessary. The profiles are supposed to be provided to the zoned high school principals each May.

As this report was going to print, BCPSS released a Blueprint for Baltimore's Neighborhood High Schools. It is summarized in Exhibit 5-9. The BCPSS Remedy Plan for FY 2003 contains extensive plans for high school reforms. Both the zoned high schools and the citywide schools are included in the proposed initiatives.

Exhibit 5-9.
The Blueprint for Baltimore's Neighborhood High Schools

Strong academic rigor

- Develop a culture of high expectations for all students, with a strong focus on reading, writing, mathematics, and life skills to meet the threshold needed to do college-level work, be effective citizens, and meet employer's expectations;
- Focus on a rigorous, relevant, standards-driven curriculum based on state standards; University of Maryland entrance requirements; career standards; and life skills, such as problem solving, resource management, and communication;
- Develop plans to ensure that every student will have access to advanced placement and similarly rigorous courses. Phase out general courses;
- Ensure that students and staff have access to appropriate technology; and
- Create a college and career center and provide extra academic and developmental support to enable students to achieve their goals.

Small supportive structures

- Create small schools and small learning communities where students and teachers are known to each other, where students and a team of teachers are together for core courses, where the physical facilities are of high quality, and, to the greatest extent possible, where classrooms share contiguous learning space. Support new, innovative designs for school reform based on sound theory, research, and practice that increase options for students to pursue their education in a variety of settings;
- Develop research-based transition strategies driven by best practices to lay a solid foundation for success in, and completion of, high school, with special emphasis on the transition into 9th grade and from 9th grade into 10th grade;
- Create a climate of respect and caring among administrators, teachers, and students that supports learning, safety, and personal growth, while ensuring that students have a role in decisionmaking; and
- Establish strong partnerships with researchers, parents, community organizations, employers, and colleges and universities to enrich, guide, and support reform efforts. Develop ways to create collective responsibility for student success that is shared across all educational stakeholders—students, families, teachers, staff, administrators, community members, and employers.

Effective, accountable instruction and leadership

- Ensure that professional development is aligned with core goals, supported by professional learning communities, and strengthened by the belief that all students can learn to high standards. At a minimum, professional development should address readiness for reform; effective instructional techniques to improve teaching and learning, especially in reading, writing, and mathematics; and use of data and student work to drive reforms and support continuous improvement;
- Develop strong leaders at the school level who communicate a clear focus on learning and high expectations for students;
- Create time for teachers to plan and work together in their disciplines and with their small learning community/school teams;
- Establish baseline data, benchmarks for improvement, and procedures for documenting and supporting continuous improvement; and
- Utilize technology as a tool to improve instruction, gain access to information, and provide better management.

Evaluation Approach

Initially, we had developed an ambitious set of research questions regarding middle and high school reforms. However, in interviews with senior BCPSS staff, we learned that most of the reform focus thus far had been on the elementary grades. As mentioned above, the reforms directed specifically at the middle grades have not really started except for the provision of reading teachers. At the high school level, the 9th grade interventions were the only reforms activities in place.

Consequently, we scaled back what would be accomplished in the evaluation. In the teacher and principal surveys, we asked about reforms that impacted the entire district, such as the new curriculum and textbooks and the student promotion and retention policy. (The topics of professional development, teacher quality, and secure, civil and orderly environment are discussed in other parts of this report.) The survey questions were asked of all respondents and analyzed separately by instructional level. Further information was gathered during onsite visits to five high schools (four zoned and one citywide) and five middle schools. During these visits, we were able to collect some data on the 9th grade interventions.

Findings

Since middle and high school grades have received far less attention than the elementary grades in the school reform efforts thus far, it is not surprising that middle and high school principals are much less positive than elementary principals about the reform activities and the availability of resources. When asked if they had sufficient material resources, 62 percent of the middle school principals and 56 percent of the high school principals agreed that they did. But these responses were not as positive as those of the elementary principals, 73 percent of whom said they had sufficient material resources (Table 5-42).

Table 5-42.
Percentage of principals agreeing that their schools have sufficient material resources

School/principal characteristic	Percent
Total	71
Instructional level	
Elementary	73
Elementary/middle	86
Middle	62
High	56

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Table 5-43.
Percentage of teachers agreeing that their schools have sufficient textbooks and supplies for students

School/teacher characteristic	I have sufficient textbooks for all my students	I have sufficient supplies and materials for all my students
Total	73	50
Instructional level		
Elementary	75	54
Elementary/middle	75	57
Middle	59	37
High	82	48

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Teachers were asked if they had sufficient textbooks and supplies and materials for all their students (Table 5-43). Responses indicate that:

- Middle school teachers were less likely than elementary teachers to have sufficient textbooks or supplies and materials; and
- High school teachers and elementary teachers gave similar responses regarding the sufficiency of textbooks.

Principals of middle and high schools were less likely than elementary principals to report that the following curriculum reform components were happening to a good or great extent (Table 5-44):

- Teachers are prepared in the use of the new textbooks and curriculum;
- New curriculum materials are meeting student needs;
- Quarterly milestone assessments are useful in determining student progress; and
- Quarterly milestone assessments are useful in helping teachers revise instructional strategies.

Principals of middle schools were less likely than elementary principals to say that the staff is competent and is able to meet student needs (Table 5-45). They were also less positive than their elementary colleagues about teacher expectations and abilities such as setting high expectations for students to learn, regularly challenging students with rigorous instruction, and believing the students can do the work). Indeed, high school teachers themselves were less positive than elementary teacher about teachers setting high expectations for students to learn and regularly challenging students with rigorous instruction (Table 5-46).

Table 5-44.
Percentage of principals evaluating various curriculum reform efforts as succeeding to a good/great extent

School/principal characteristic	Teachers prepared in use of new textbooks and curriculum	New curriculum materials meeting student needs	Quarterly milestone assessments useful in determining student progress	Quarterly milestone assessments useful in helping teachers revise instructional strategies
Total	73	60	56	57
Instructional level				
Elementary	80	68	70	68
Elementary/middle	75	62	32	37
Middle	62	38	29	43
High	42	33	50	50

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Table 5-45.
Percentage of principals agreeing with various statements about teacher competency

School/principal characteristic	Teachers set high expectations for students to learn	Teachers regularly challenge students with rigorous instruction	Teachers believe students can do the work	The staff is competent and able to meet student needs
Total	86	75	89	75
Instructional level				
Elementary	88	81	92	77
Elementary/middle	95	82	95	86
Middle	76	57	81	52
High	68	53	74	74

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Table 5-46.
Percentage of teachers agreeing with various statements about teachers' expectations

School/teacher characteristic	Teachers set high expectations for students to learn	Teachers regularly challenge students with rigorous instruction
Total	86	80
Instructional level		
Elementary	91	86
Elementary/middle	94	86
Middle	82	77
High	74	68

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Middle and high school principals were far more negative than elementary principals regarding the new student promotion and retention policy (Table 5-47). They were also more negative than elementary principals regarding the following supports:

- Adequacy of the supports to assist teachers in including students with special needs in classes;
- Improvement over the last 2 years in support from the area office; and
- Improvement over the last 2 years in support from the central office.

Middle and high school staff interviewed on site were generally very positive about the new curriculum and textbooks. They were very supportive of having a curriculum that was consistent across the district because of the large number of students who switch schools during the year. One concern about the materials was that they were written with the assumption that students had used the textbook series in previous years. However, this issue will diminish over time as the textbooks are, indeed, used over multiple years. Several teachers reported that the materials were written at too high a reading level. Since many students in the district are reading below grade level, this could be the source of the concern. Supports should be provided to teachers regarding how to work with these students.

In our visits to zoned high schools, we found that the academies were more developed than we had expected. However, staff indicated that they still had a long way to go. In some schools, efforts are underway to physically separate the academies so that students cannot wander throughout the school, but in some cases this will not be possible, at least not in the short term. For example, in one school all the science labs have been grouped together. Another issue regarding the academies is that schools do not have sufficient staff for all teachers to work in only one academy.

Table 5-47.
Percentage of principals evaluating various promotion and retention reform efforts as successful to a good/great extent

School/principal characteristic	Supports to assist teachers include students with special needs in classes are adequate	New student promotion and retention policy is helpful	Support from Area Office has improved over the last 2 years	Support from Central Office has improved over the last 2 years
Total	47	50	77	41
Instructional level				
Elementary	56	66	88	53
Elementary/middle	25	42	70	25
Middle	24	14	62	24
High	41	20	44	21

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

At one high school visited on site, the attendance rate has increased considerably and the dropout rate has decreased immensely. Staff attributed these changes to the academies where students get to choose the area in which to participate, leadership from the school, which has tried to make the students feel more important and involved in their school, and the presence of some citywide programs. At another high school, staff commented that the academies give students a specific career pathway, which helps to give them a better understanding of what they want out of their education. This, in turn, has increased their motivation to succeed. In one high school that employs the High Schools That Work program, teachers report that students are being required to do more critical thinking, which they attribute to the program.

One issue that can arise with the academy approach in a zoned high school is that some students may not be especially interested in any of the academies offered at the school. At least one of the high school principals has been addressing this situation by establishing partnerships with other high schools in order to place students who have other interests, such as auto mechanics.

In one high school, the general consensus among teachers was that the 9th grade academy is the only one that is functioning as it should. This school was using the CRESPAR High School Development model, which serves to help at-risk 9th graders by employing a team approach to instruction. Except for repeaters, all new 9th graders participate. However, teachers, who received only 2 days of training, did not feel adequately trained for this type of environment. The school has addressed this issue somewhat by sending team leaders to training for the next school year. Materials for the first semester were mainly remedial, but the regular curriculum was followed after that. One problem with the program was that students who were at higher levels lost interest.

Another program that impacts the 9th grade is the Futures program that tracks students who have been identified as being at risk of dropping out of school from 7th to 12th grade. The program is housed in six high schools. Participants are provided assistance in English and mathematics in the 9th grade. In addition, the 9th graders travel within the school as a cohort and have an advocate who works with them.

In one high school, staff reported that the academic profiles of incoming 9th graders were not received in a timely fashion. Although they are supposed to be done in May, they arrived at about the same time as the start of school. Consequently, staff did not have time to target students with potential problems and have services in place for them when they arrived at school. Teachers in this school also said that they would like more accurate and timely data. As one of them stated, “This is very important when you are trying to get out of RE and students need to pass the functional tests and the scores provided are saying that they didn’t pass when in fact they did.”

Taken together, the information from the site visits shows that BCPSS has made a few steps in reforming the middle and high school levels, but still has a long way to go.

Recommendation

We strongly encourage BCPSS to direct much greater attention to reforms at the middle grades and high school levels and to put in place a plan to systematically monitor and evaluate their impacts. Since new efforts are being developed, the timing is good for obtaining a thorough description of the changes that occur and their impacts on teaching, on learning, and on other indicators such as disciplinary actions and graduation rates.

Supports for Reconstitution-Eligible (RE) Schools

SB 795 required BCPSS to identify actions needed to improve the status of schools that are subject to a state reconstitution notice. As of January 2000, 80 BCPSS schools were reconstitution eligible (RE) and an additional 3 schools had been placed under state reconstitution. In January 2001, one of the RE schools was placed under state reconstitution and an additional seven schools were placed in RE status. At the same time, Pimlico Elementary School was officially removed from the state's list of local reconstitution schools. This removal was a major milestone as no school declared RE in BCPSS had previously been removed from the list.

The criteria for identifying schools as RE are scores on state tests, attendance rates, and, for high schools, dropout rates. BCPSS with support from MSDE staff has used a multifaceted approach for improving the performance of RE schools on these measures. Some of the changes have been at the central office level, resulting in changes to the entire system, not just the RE schools. Many other supports have come from the area administration offices, particularly in the case of two areas that have a high concentration of RE schools. (The newly named RE schools are part of the new CEO's District.) Finally, needs are addressed at the individual school level and each RE school is required to have a school improvement team (SIT), which is responsible for developing a school improvement plan (SIP).

Our survey data provide mixed results regarding the implementation of the various supports for RE schools. Most of the system's reform efforts in the early years have been directed at the elementary level. When asked to evaluate the reform efforts, principals of RE elementary schools were more positive about the reforms than the principals of RE middle and high schools on every aspect queried.

Plans put forth by BCPSS for RE schools place priority on hiring teachers for RE schools and filling the positions with certified teachers. However, at the present time, RE schools are less likely than non-RE schools to have fully certified teachers. In addition, RE schools tend to have less experienced teachers and principals.

The SIPs we reviewed showed a strong relationship to The Master Plan. SIT members reported using The Master Plan to develop their SIP and most school staff reported using their SIP (rather than The Master Plan) to give them direction.

Recommendations:

- *More attention must now be given to the middle and high school levels.*
- *Major efforts should be made to ensure that more of the teachers in RE schools should be fully certified and have some years of teaching experience.*
- *Alternative programs should be increased.*

Introduction

Reconstitution is a process used by the Maryland State Board of Education to intervene when schools are not meeting state standards or making progress toward meeting them. It occurs when a school has had a pattern of failure over a number of years. The process begins when a school is named as reconstitution eligible (RE).[41] When a school becomes RE, the state monitors it and provides additional help and resources to assist school and district staff in making changes. If these probationary measures fail, the school is reconstituted, meaning that a contract is made with an outside company or organization for the

[41]The term "reconstitutional-eligible" has been changed to "local reconstitution." We use RE throughout this report because that was the term used when our evaluation was initiated.

management of the school and the instructional program provided (Maryland State Department of Education, 2000).

The criteria for identifying schools as eligible for reconstitution are:

- It does not meet all the standards and is "below satisfactory and declining" in meeting appropriate standards; or
- It does not meet all the standards and is not making "substantial and sustained" improvement through the implementation of a school improvement plan.

For high schools, reconstitution eligibility is based on attendance and dropout rates and the composite results of functional tests at the end of 9th and 11th grades. For middle schools, eligibility is based on attendance rates, results of the functional tests (taken up through high school and reflected back to the appropriate middle school), and results of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program test in grade 8. Reconstitution eligibility for elementary schools is based on attendance rates and the results of the MSPAP tests in grades 3 and 5.

BCPSS Plans for Reconstitution-Eligible Schools

Section 4-309 (D)(15) of Senate Bill 795 required The Master Plan to identify actions needed to "improve the status of schools that are subject to a state reconstitution notice." At the time of the initial Master Plan (July 1998), 77 of 184 BCPSS schools were reconstitution eligible, and a "significant number" of additional schools were performing poorly. In the initial Master Plan, activities related specifically to RE schools focused on management and were contained under Objective 4. Details about the supports for the RE schools were described in a separate report, The 1998 Baltimore City Public School System Proposal for Reconstitution-Eligible Schools, which was excerpted in an appendix to The Master Plan. In addition, The Master Plan stated that the sections addressing student performance applied to all schools, including those that are reconstitution eligible.

The 1998 RE plan called for the following:

- Three new area offices were created, reducing the number of schools per area.
- One new area office, the Central Administration Area, included the 15 lowest performing RE schools and used a more prescriptive approach in curriculum, professional development, staffing, and budget.
- All of the schools using the Direct Instruction/Core Knowledge curriculum were put into another area. Eleven of the 17 schools in this area were RE.
- Each area office was given at least one person with expertise in school improvement planning to coordinate the development of effective school improvement plans for RE schools; the Central Administration Area was given two such individuals.
- The role of the curriculum specialist was redefined with a focus on assisting school improvement teams and the area school improvement coordinators in developing appropriate discipline and instructional strategies and related professional development.
- A budget analyst and secretarial support were added to the Office of Reconstitution-Eligible Schools.
- The Resource Management Team, consisting of senior BCPSS staff who would meet monthly to review the progress of RE schools, was reinstituted.

Since reading/language arts was the focus of improvement efforts at the elementary and middle school levels during the first year of The Master Plan, all RE elementary schools (except for Direct Instruction schools and those in the New Schools Initiative) were required to have a reading/language arts instructional support

teacher (IST), funded out of RE money. The functions of the ISTs included conducting demonstration lessons, co-teaching, peer coaching, assisting teachers with planning, and conducting grade-level team meetings. Mathematics/science elementary ISTs, funded through a grant from the National Science Foundation and other money, continued to serve both RE and non-RE schools.

In 1998, BCPSS conducted an internal review of the school improvement plans of all 77 RE schools. Schools identified four common areas that were inhibiting student progress—student attendance, student behavior, professional development, and instructional methodology. Aspects of instructional methodology that were specifically mentioned were that:

- Tasks that were not intellectually challenging or linked to state outcomes were used;
- Classwork had little connection to real-world situations;
- Cooperative learning received limited use and was often unstructured;
- Drill and practice activities were used extensively and there was little use of performance-based instruction;
- Students with disabilities and other needs did not always receive appropriate modifications;
- Teachers had difficulty assessing students' strengths and weaknesses in order to plan effective instruction; and
- Lesson plans lacked sufficient detail.

The plan for RE schools shows how each of these needs was being addressed in The Master Plan.

In the 1999 plan for RE schools, BCPSS identified three factors that were contributing to low-quality instruction: large and growing numbers of noncertified teachers; a widespread lack of understanding of effective, student-centered instructional approaches among new and experienced teachers; and a need for an improved instructional support and monitoring system. The plan presented strategies for addressing these needs and linked them to The Master Plan; many of them reflect systemic changes that impacted all schools:

- Implementation of the K–8 reading/language arts and mathematics curricula;
- Implementation of the new discipline code;
- Utilization of the Performance-Based Teacher Evaluation System; and
- Strategies for recruiting, retaining, and developing teachers and principals.

Other strategies were delineated specifically for RE schools:

- Class sizes were reduced in grades 4 and 5.
- For the Central Administration Area, in which all schools were RE, all schools implemented a whole-school reform approach. Sixteen selected Achievement First; the remaining three selected Success for All.
- All 2nd and 4th graders reading below level in the Central Administration Area were required to attend summer school and/or transition classes.
- At the middle school level, at least one reading teacher was placed in each RE school. At the high school level, 9th grade students were targeted for assistance because the achievement needs and dropout rate were greatest at this grade.
- Since seven of the nine zoned high schools were RE, all zoned high schools were restructured into smaller learning communities or academies to provide a smaller, more nurturing environment for students. Further development of the academies was planned.
- RE schools received additional supports regarding the implementation of the curriculum as described in the 1998 RE plan.

- The composition of the school improvement teams was expanded to include central office staff and members from the university/ research community.
- A revised format was developed for the school improvement plan.
- RE schools were made priorities in the hiring of teachers and the filling of positions with certified teachers.

As a part of the 1999 RE plan, new support structures instituted at the central office level included adding the positions of curricular and instruction officer, managing director for monitoring curricular and instructional improvement, and the directors of elementary, middle, and high school improvement.

In the 2000–2001 Update of The Master Plan, activities for improving the performance of RE schools were placed under Objective 1 to emphasize the importance of instruction and student achievement, while the management of RE schools remained under Objective 4. Three Objective 1 strategies contain initiatives targeted at RE schools:

For RE elementary schools:

- Strategy 1.5.4: Reduce class sizes (and provide sufficient teachers) to provide comprehensive instructional programs.

  Priority Initiative: Continue targeted class-size reductions in grades 1–5.

  Priority Initiative: Implement additional class-size reductions in grades 1–3 in reconstitution-eligible schools; expand this initiative to additional schools as funding permits.

For RE middle schools:

- Strategy 1.4.1: Develop and implement a systemwide middle grades improvement plan for students, including students with disabilities and other diverse learning needs.

  Priority Initiative: Continue to provide reading teachers in the middle grades.

For RE high schools:

- Strategy 1.4.2: Develop and implement a systemwide high school improvement plan for students, including students with disabilities and other diverse learning needs.

  Priority Initiative: Continue high school improvement efforts.

In addition, the 2000–001 Master Plan Update contains Strategy 1.5.1: Improve performance of reconstitution-eligible schools with two priority initiatives:

- Continue to integrate and align the reconstitution-eligible planning and systemic initiatives within The Master Plan; and
- Develop and implement need-based school improvement plans that improve the quality of instruction through research-based strategies and best practices.

As of January 2000, 80 BCPSS schools were RE and an additional 3 schools had been placed under state reconstitution. In January 2001, one of the RE schools was placed under state reconstitution and an additional seven schools were placed on RE status. At the same time, Pimlico Elementary School was officially removed from the state's list of local reconstitution schools. This removal was a major milestone as previously no school declared RE in BCPSS had been removed from the list.

Future Plans for Reconstitution-Eligible Schools

To address the needs of the schools named RE in 2001, BCPSS has created a new Chief Executive Officer's (CEO's) District. Three other RE schools that had shown little improvement will be included in it. Westport, identified for state reconstitution, will continue as a DI school in the

CEO's District. All other schools in the CEO's District will be using Achievement First, which contains mechanisms for addressing the six Master Plan objectives. In addition, all schools will participate in the pilot of the Math Works program. Other initiatives include a 50-minute extension of the school day for students and teachers; full-day kindergarten; tutoring for students not performing at grade level in reading and mathematics; school uniforms; increased amounts of art, music, and physical education instruction; and priority for technology upgrades. These schools are to be restaffed with priority for certified teachers and will be extensively monitored, including site visits by the CEO. It is expected that the reform activities in these schools will serve as models for the district.

Another change for the coming school year is the redesign of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Instead of being structured by instructional level, separate offices have been developed by content area: mathematics, science and health, English, social studies, reading, fine and performing arts, early childhood education, and English as a second language and modern and classical languages. For each of MSDE's high school assessment areas—social studies, English, science, and mathematics—additional curriculum specialist positions have been added. The plan also calls for the hiring of additional psychologists, mental health professionals, and counselors.

For the 2001–02 school year, BCPSS plans to continue having a full-time reading coach in each elementary school. School improvement coordinators will continue to be part of area office staff. Efforts to reduce class size in grades 1 through 5 will continue.

Relationship Between the BCPSS Approach for Addressing the Needs of RE Schools and the Evaluation Approach

As was described in the introduction to this section, the criteria for identifying schools as reconstitution eligible are scores on state tests, attendance rates, and, for high schools, dropout rates. These factors, then, are the areas that need to be addressed by the schools in order to be removed from RE status. BCPSS has used a multifaceted approach for improving the performance of RE schools on these measures. Some of the changes have been at the central office level and have impacted the entire system, not just the RE schools; many others have come from the area administration offices, particularly in those two areas that have a high concentration of RE schools. Finally, needs are addressed at the individual school level. Each RE school is required to have an SIT to develop a SIP that is data driven and consistent with The Master Plan.

Since many of the supports for RE schools come from many different places, we did not specifically mention the words "reconstitution eligible" in our survey questions. Instead, we asked about many of the supports that are being provided and looked separately at the responses of RE and non-RE schools in our analyses. In addition, since many of the reforms have been more heavily concentrated to date at the elementary level, we have done some comparisons of RE schools by instructional level.

Evaluation Results

Although The Master Plan calls for filling RE schools with certified teachers, at present, RE schools are less likely than non-RE schools to have fully certified teachers. In addition, as shown below, RE schools tend to have less experienced teachers and principals, and more teachers with provisional certification.

Certification status	Percent of teachers	
	RE	Non-Re
Provisional.....	31	22
Full certification	69	78

Our survey also showed that RE schools were more likely to have teachers who had been at the school for 2 years or less and were less likely to have teachers who had been at the school for more than 10 years. Their principals were more likely to have been principal at the school for 5

years or less compared to principals of non-RE schools (Table 5-48).

Table 5-48.
Tenure of BCPSS teachers and principals at RE and non-RE schools

Time at school	Percent of teachers and principals	
	RE	Non-Re
Teachers		
2 years or less	37	26
3-5 years	26	27
6-10 years	14	13
More than 10 years	24	33
Principals		
2 years or less	45	42
3-5 years	38	24
6-10 years	15	23
More than 10 years	3	12

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher and Principal Surveys, 2001.

Our data are similar to data from a certification study of a sample of schools under local reconstitution in three counties in Maryland, conducted during the 2000–2001 school year (see Grasmick, 2001). Results from 31 elementary and 15 middle RE schools in BCPSS show that the overall average of teachers holding a provisional certificate at the elementary level was 31 percent and at the middle school level, 40 percent. However, the MSDE data show that the percentage of teachers with provisional certificates within each individual school varies greatly across RE schools, a factor that we did not investigate in our evaluation.

Our survey data provide mixed results regarding the implementation of the various supports for RE schools. On our survey, two-thirds of the principals of RE schools agreed that the staff in their school were competent and able to meet the needs of the students. However, a much higher percentage of principals in non-RE schools gave this response (Table 5-49). At the same time, principals in RE schools were more likely to say that mentoring for new teachers has improved to a good or great extent over the last 2 years (Table 5-50) and that mentoring practices had been effective in attracting new school administrators (Table 5-51).

Table 5-49.
Percentage of principals agreeing that their schools have staff that are competent and able to meet the needs of the students

School/principal characteristic	Percent
Total	75
Reconstitution eligibility status	
Eligible	66
Ineligible	83

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Table 5-50.
Percentage of principals agreeing that mentoring for new teachers has improved to a good/great extent over the last 2 years

School/principal characteristic	Percent
Total	75
Reconstitution eligibility status	
Eligible	81
Ineligible	70

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Table 5-51.
Percentage of principals agreeing that mentoring practices have been effective for attracting new school administrators or teachers into BCPSS over the past 2 years

School/principal characteristic	Percent
Total	28
Reconstitution eligibility status	
Eligible	38
Ineligible	20

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Principals of RE schools were more likely than their colleagues to agree to a good or great extent that the new curriculum materials were meeting the needs of the students in their school, the quarterly milestone assessments of student achievement were useful in determining the progress of students, and support from the area office had improved over the last 2 years (Table 5-52). On the other hand, they were less likely than their colleagues to agree that they had the help they need in handling students who may be

disruptive or need alternative learning environments or that they had adequate supports from parents and the community (Table 5-53).

Table 5-52.
Percentage of principals evaluating the impact of various reform efforts as good/great extent

School/principal characteristic	New curriculum materials meet student needs	Quarterly milestone assessments useful in determining student progress	Support from Area Office has improved over the last 2 years
Total	60	56	77
Reconstitution eligibility status			
Eligible	64	57	81
Ineligible	56	56	73

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Table 5-53.
Percentage of principals agreeing that that their schools have the following support

School/principal characteristic	Help in handling students who are disruptive or need alternative learning environments	Adequate support from parents and the community
Total	43	55
Reconstitution eligibility status		
Eligible	32	50
Ineligible	51	60

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Among principals of schools that participated in at least one of the major reform efforts, those in RE schools were more likely than their colleagues to agree that as the result of the reform, students appear to be better motivated and that student learning has improved (Table 5-54). In addition, RE principals were more likely to say that the reform met the needs of general education students, students with disabilities, and gifted students (Table 5-55). They also were more likely to agree that in the training the staff received for the reform program, the training materials were a helpful resource and potential problems were anticipated (Table 5-56).

Table 5-54.
Percentage of principals agreeing that their schools' involvement in the reform effort has had positive impacts

School/principal characteristic	Students appear better motivated	Student learning has improved
Total	85	94
Reconstitution eligibility status		
Eligible	90	98
Ineligible	80	90

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Table 5-55.
Percentage of principals indicating that the reform program meets the needs of different segments of the student population to a good/great extent

School/principal characteristic	General education students	Students with disabilities	Gifted students
Total	73	55	53
Reconstitution eligibility status			
Eligible	79	61	58
Ineligible	67	51	49

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Table 5-56.
Percentage of principals agreeing that the training materials their staff received for the reform program were valuable

School/principal characteristic	Training materials were a helpful resource	Potential problems were anticipated
Total	90	70
Reconstitution eligibility status		
Eligible	97	77
Ineligible	84	64

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Most of the reform efforts to date have been directed at the elementary level. When asked to evaluate the reform efforts, principals of RE elementary and elementary/middle schools were more positive about the reforms than the principals of RE middle and high schools on every aspect queried (Table 5-57):

- Preparation of the teachers in the use of the new textbooks and curriculum;
- Extent to which the new curriculum materials are meeting the needs of students;
- Extent to which the quarterly milestone assessments of student achievement are useful in determining the progress of students;
- Extent to which the quarterly milestone assessments are useful in helping teachers revise their instructional strategies;
- Adequacy of the supports to assist classroom teachers in including students with special needs in the classes;
- Helpfulness of the new student promotion and retention policy;
- Improvement in support from the area office over the last 2 years; and
- Improvement in support from the central office over the last 2 years.

Responses of RE teachers on the survey also varied by instructional level. Teachers in RE elementary schools were more likely than teachers in RE high schools to say that their students' learning had been enhanced by their professional development activities in reading, writing, and mathematics (Table 5-58). Furthermore, teachers in RE elementary schools were more likely than teachers in RE high schools to agree that teachers at their school set high expectations for students to learn and that teachers at their school regularly challenge students with rigorous instruction (5-59).

Table 5-57.
Percentage of principals at reconstitution-eligible schools evaluating the impact of various reform efforts as good/great extent

School/principal characteristic	Teachers prepared in use of new textbooks and curriculum	New curriculum materials meet student needs	Quarterly milestone assessments useful in determining student progress	Quarterly milestone assessments useful in helping teachers revise instruc-tional strategies	Supports to assist teachers in including students with special needs in classes are adequate	New student promotion and retention policy is helpful	Support from area office has improved over the last 2 years	Support from central office has improved over the last 2 years
Instructional level								
Elementary	75	73	72	73	58	68	89	51
Elementary/middle	88	75	25	38	13	38	63	13
Middle	57	26	29	43	29	21	79	29
High	60	60	60	60	40	0	40	20

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Table 5-58.
Percentage of teachers at reconstitution-eligible schools indicating that their professional development activities through BCPSS have enhanced their students' learning much/very much

School/principal characteristic	Reading	Writing	Math
Instructional level			
Elementary	47	49	35
Elementary/middle	44	35	39
Middle	48	43	33
High	28	28	20

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Table 5-59.
Percentage of teachers at reconstitution-eligible schools indicating that they agree with the following statements

School/principal characteristic	Teachers set high expectations for students to learn	Teachers regularly challenge students with rigorous instruction
Instructional level		
Elementary	92	86
Elementary/middle	91	84
Middle	87	84
High	68	63

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Also, teachers in RE elementary schools were more likely than teachers in RE high schools to have received training from BCPSS on the use of the new reading curriculum or English textbook. Similarly, teachers in RE elementary schools were more likely than teachers in RE high school to receive BCPSS training in the use of the new mathematics textbooks (Table 5-60).

During the site visits, it was noted that teachers tended to equate all the reforms happening in their school with their RE status. They do not differentiate reforms that are coming from other sources from those that are the result of being RE. Similarly, many did not know specifically which teaching positions were being funded with RE money. Instead, school staff were apt to look holistically at the needs of the school and the resources available.

Table 5-60.
Percentage of teachers at reconstitution-eligible schools indicating that they received training from BCPSS in the use of new textbooks

School/principal characteristic	Reading curriculum or English textbooks	Mathematics textbooks
Instructional level		
Elementary	62	51
Elementary/Middle	61	51
Middle	36	31
High	27	28

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, 2001.

Teachers in RE schools are highly conscious of their school's status. Many expressed a real urgency to "get out of RE." At the same time, staff in schools that are close to graduating out of the program are concerned that once they lose their special resources, they may become RE again in a few years. It should also be noted that some schools that were not RE were concerned about the lack of supports for them. Other non-RE schools have seen the value of approaches such as Achievement First, and have implemented some facets of these programs on their own.

During the site visits, we saw that absenteeism and the dropout rate, which received particular attention at the high school level, seemed to be addressed in different ways at different schools. For example, one school participates in Spotlight on Schools, which provides a probation officer at the school to help prevent dropouts. Another school created a new position, dropout counselor, and the person who filled it has been targeting students who are most at risk, beginning with 9th grade special education students. Several schools refer potential dropout to their Twilight School, which operates late in the day, for students who are disruptive, students with jobs (some students are heads of households), and pregnant girls.

One school described the major efforts they are taking to reduce absences. Each week, each teacher provides a list of all absences and phone contacts made with parents. When a student is out for 3 days, the teacher sends a letter to the parents. When a student is absent for 10 days per quarter, the case is referred to a counselor, who has the parents come in. In some cases, the parents don't know that their children have been absent. The school's attendance monitor and a counselor made over 125 home visits during the 2000–2001 school year for chronic truants. As a last resort, the school reports the parents to a judge, and resulting judicial actions have put several parents in jail or on probation. However, the school tries to work with the family as much as possible before it gets to that point. This kind of intense monitoring has greatly increased the attendance at the school this past year.

The school improvement plans we reviewed showed a strong relationship to The Master Plan and SIT members interviewed said that they had used The Master Plan to develop the SIP, which provided many contextual details related to specific schools. Most school staff used the SIP rather than The Master Plan to give them direction. Schools must provide evidence of need in the SIPs; a key part of the evidence is data from the MSDE website showing the schools' test score and attendance information over several years' time. Then the school must present an action plan for addressing the needs. Schools are given some discretion in how some needs will be met, but RE schools generally have less discretion than other schools because of their status. The development of the SIP really forces the members of the school improvement team to take a more systemic look at the school. One teacher in an RE school said that "becoming RE gave us a focused mission." Staff in another RE school said that being RE has made them more accountable.

Monitoring

The monitoring of RE schools occurs in several ways. One important mechanism is the MSDE website data summary showing where the school stands on all the factors that go into determining if the school should be identified as RE. Another level of monitoring comes from the area and central offices, which also focus on the test score and attendance data. Also, schools that are identified as RE are monitored by state representatives who make site visits and conduct classroom observations. To the extent possible this monitoring is designed to be constructive rather than punitive. Finally, MSDE deploys technical assistance teams that work closely with all the RE schools and with their counterparts in BCPSS.

Recommendations

Based on the information we obtained in the evaluation, we have three main recommendations regarding reconstitution eligible schools:

- More attention must now be given to the middle and high school levels.
- Major efforts should be made to ensure that more of the teachers in RE schools be fully certified and have some years of teaching experience. Since these are the schools with the greatest needs, they should have highly qualified staff to help meet the needs.
- Alternative programs should be increased.

References

Grasmick, N.S. Memo to the Members of the State Board of Education regarding the update on schools under local reconstitution. 27 February 2001.

Maryland State Department of Education. (2000). Fact Sheet 5.

Special Education

Activities related to students with disabilities have resulted from a federal court case, Vaughn G., et al., v. Mayor and City Council, et al. When BCPSS developed the original Master Plan, the district was operating under the special education Long-Range Compliance Plan outlined by the court and referenced in SB 795. On May 4, 2000, this plan was replaced by disengagement standards that specified 15 outcomes and a requirement for reporting student achievement. This new document continues to address compliance issues, but also contains indicators that are more focused on the quality of services being provided. Activities and findings under the court order are summarized in this report. They show that BCPSS has made considerable progress in meeting special education requirements and federal criteria. Since the special education activities in BCPSS are under considerable scrutiny by the federal court, it was agreed that they would be addressed to only a modest degree in the Westat evaluation.

Senate Bill 795 required BCPSS to have a management information system with the capacity to track compliance with the provisions of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This system is known as SETS (Special Education Tracking System). We found that most principals perceived the SETS reports to be useful and that the reports had improved in quality and accuracy over the last 4 years. (Accuracy of the system is audited annually by MSDE.)

During the late 1990s, many activities associated with the management of special education were driven necessarily by compliance matters associated with the Vaughn G. lawsuit. This resulted in a separation special education planning activities from those done under The Master Plan and a separate data tracking system for special education.

During summer 2001, inclusion services were moved to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in order to provide additional support to general education teachers.

Recommendation:

We strongly encourage BCPSS to continue to focus on the disengagement outcomes, with particular emphasis on supports for inclusion.

Introduction

Senate Bill 795 required that The Master Plan identify actions necessary for incorporating the requirements of the long-term compliance plan and goals in the Vaughn G. case, which concerns the delivery of education services to students with disabilities (Section 4-309(D)(2)). In addition, the management information system for BCPSS was required to have the capacity to track compliance with the provisions of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Section 4-309(D)(5)).

Special education has been on a different track from the rest of The Master Plan. The reason is that activities related to students with disabilities have been part of a federal court case, *Vaughn G., et al.,* v. *Mayor and City Council, et al*. At the time that The Master Plan was written, BCPSS was operating under the Long-Range Compliance Plan referenced in the Senate Bill. However, on November 1, 1999, Judge Garbis ordered both parties in the case to reach an agreement on ultimate performance outcomes by April 30, 2000. On May 4, 2000, Judge Garbis approved 15 outcomes and a student achievement reporting requirement, shown in Exhibit 5-10. These outcomes and the reporting requirement replaced the Long-Range Compliance Plan. While the new outcomes continue to address compliance issues, they also contain indicators that are more focused on the quality of services being provided to students with disabilities.

Since the special education activities in BCPSS are under considerable scrutiny by the federal court, it had been decided that they would be addressed to only a modest degree in the Westat evaluation. In the next section of this report we summarize the activities and findings under the court order. We also briefly discuss the Special Education Tracking System (SETS) reports and inclusion at the management level. In a previous section of this report, on the citywide curriculum framework, we briefly considered issues at the school and classroom level, highlighting some problems identified.

Exhibit 5-10.
Disengagement outcomes and the student achievement reporting requirement approved as part of the Vaughn G. case

1) Student achievement reporting requirement: BCPSS will report annually on whether they have accomplished "significant progress towards reducing the disparity between the scores of special education students and regular education students on MFT, CTBS, and MSPAP. "Significant progress" means that the ratio, using 98/99 data as a baseline, between the scores of special education students and general education students is increased by at least ten percentage points for those measures as reported in the Maryland School Performance Report where the ratio is less than 90%. The state will monitor BCPSS' progress toward reducing the disparity on an annual basis.

2) Disengagement outcomes:

Outcome #3: Within three years BCPSS will increase the rate of school completion for students with disabilities from 50% to 57.2% as measured by exit data reported to MSDE.

Outcome #4: Within three years BCPSS will increase its graduation rate (students receiving diplomas) for students with disabilities from 32% to 41.6% as measured by exit data reported to MSDE.

Outcome #5: BCPSS will report the post-secondary employment and education data provided for the Maryland High School Graduate Follow-up Study. These data will be disaggregated to reflect the post-secondary experiences of former BCPSS students with disabilities. This outcome will not be actionable unless the data are not collected or reported to the plaintiffs and the public.

Outcome #6: Students with disabilities will participate in vocational programs at the same rate (system-wide) as they are represented in the total high school population (i.e., if 18% of the high school population are students with disabilities, then 18% of students enrolled in vocational programs should be students with disabilities).

Outcome #7: BCPSS will assure that all students suspended more than ten cumulative days, those suspended more than ten consecutive days, and those expelled were done so in accordance with IDEA. BCPSS will monitor and intervene where necessary in all such cases.

Outcome #8: Within three years 58.8% of students with disabilities will receive IEP required services in regular education and or combined programs (resource room).

Outcome #9: Within three years at least 80% of newly-identified students with disabilities will receive IEP required services in the school they would attend if they were not disabled.

Outcome #10: The BCPSS will sustain a system-wide average of 95% in conducting evaluation meetings within timelines required by state and federal law as tracked by SETS unless defendants can demonstrate that failure to reach this outcome is attributable to factors beyond their control (codes 1, B, C, E, G, H, I, L, N, Q, R, U, W). No school building shall drop below 85%. SY 97-98 SETS data will be used as the baseline.

Outcome #11: No more than 2% of students with disabilities will have interruptions in service in any school year as reported by OCA data.

Outcome #12: During the 2000-2001 school year, BCPSS will maintain an average rate of compliance of 95% in IEP implementation as tracked by SETS unless defendants can demonstrate that failure to reach this outcome is attributable to factors beyond their control (codes B, C, E, G, I, K, L, N, O, P). No school building shall drop below 85% compliance. Thereafter, BCPSS will sustain an average rate of compliance of 98% in IEP implementation as tracked by SETS with no school building dropping below 88%. SY 97-98 SETS data will be used as the baseline.

Outcome #13: BCPSS will ensure a minimum of 98% of the students with disabilities (16 and above) who are designated as "dropouts" will have an IEP Team review meeting.

Exhibit 5-10.
Disengagement outcomes and the student achievement reporting requirement approved as part of the Vaughn G. case (continued)

Outcome #14: BCPSS will adopt written procedures that give authority and independence to an entity to respond quickly (no later than 45 calendar days) to investigate and resolve parent complaints brought under IDEA.

Outcome #15: For the OSEMC standards addressing IEP progress reports, BCPSS will maintain a 95% rate of compliance.

Outcome #16: BCPSS will achieve a 96% accuracy rate in the SETS computer data system as measured by MSDE annual audits of a statistically representative sample of student files. The MSDE annual audit shall compare the paper student file to the SETS computer data record, reviewing the accuracy rate for the following fifteen (15) variables on an individual variable and aggregate basis:

1. student name
2. IEP development rate
3. date of birth
4. LRE code
5. nature code (nature of service, except for transportation and assistive technology service)
6. direct service
7. directive time unit
8. school number
9. social security number or alternatively, student identification number
10. gender
11. race
12. last evaluation or re-evaluation date
13. extended school year
14. assistive technology device
15. transportation

Additionally, the MSDE shall perform a supplemental SETS accuracy audit of those files in the sample for students fourteen (14) years of age or older, reviewing the two (2) variables of projected date of student exit and category of exit.

BCPSS shall demonstrate a 96% SETS accuracy rate in both sets of the above referenced audits conducted in the 2001-2002 school year.

Outcome #18: Decrease by ten percentage points over two years the rate of noncompliance for specified OSEMC IEP content standards which had a rate of noncompliance greater than 20% in SY 98/99, specifically Standards 700, 860, 924, 930, 1000, 1030, 911, and 916.

Monitoring Progress Toward Court-Approved Measurable Outcomes

Under the Long-Range Compliance Plan (LRCP), BCPSS had to respond to a series of capacity and measurable outcomes. BCPSS provided summary statements of the degree to which each outcome had been met, with data to back up the statements. Then, the Special Master reviewed the BCPSS documentation regarding each outcome and issued findings on each. The last set of these statements and findings was completed in November 2000. Appendix I contains a summary of the November 2000 materials. For each outcome, BCPSS' data and summary statement are presented followed by the Special Master's finding.

As a part of the May 4, 2000, order, BCPSS is required to file an Annual Implementation Plan for each of the subsequent 3 years. These plans must show the activities that BCPSS is conducting toward meeting the approved 15 outcomes and student achievement reporting requirements, which are also known as the disengagement standards. On January 31, 2001, BCPSS submitted a mid-year status report summarizing progress on the specific action steps for the SY 2000–2001 Annual Implementation Plan. In September 2001, BCPSS prepared a report summarizing the status of self-reported compliance with the measurable benchmarks of the SY 2000–2001. This report is summarized in a PowerPoint presentation made by Gayle Amos before the BCPSS New Board of School Commissioners on September 25, 2001. (The presentation is included as Appendix J.) The report submitted by BCPSS shows that the district has made considerable progress in meeting special education requirements and federal compliance criteria. As was done under the LRCP, the Special Master will review the report and issue separate findings.

As mentioned above, the BCPSS management information system used to track special education compliance is known as SETS. Overall, 84 percent of the principals consider the SETS reports to be useful to a good or great degree (Table 5-61). Some variations were found by school and principal characteristics, such as:

- Middle school principals were the most likely to consider SETS useful, and the high school principals were least likely.
- Principals in alternative and citywide schools were far less likely to find the SETS reports to be useful than were principals of other types of school.
- Principals who had been in their positions for less than 5 years were more likely to consider the reports to be useful than were principals who had been in their positions for more than 5 years.

Table 5-61.
Percentage of principals indicating that SETS reports are useful to a good/great degree

School/principal characteristic	Percent
Total	84
Instructional level	
Elementary	88
Elementary/middle	76
Middle	90
High	68
School status	
Regular schools	89
AF/DI schools	82
Alternative schools	43
Special education schools	86
Citywide schools	63

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

About two-thirds of all principals said that SETS reports had improved in quality and accuracy over the last 4 years, and an additional one-fourth said that the reports had improved to a moderate degree (Table 5-62). While less than 10 percent of all principals reported little or no improvement in the SETS reports, more than 25 percent in special education schools and in alternative schools said there was little or no improvement, and almost 40 percent of principals in citywide schools gave this response.

Table 5-62.
Percentage of principals indicating the extent to which they perceive an improvement in quality and accuracy of SETS reports over the last 4 years

School/principal characteristic	None	A little	Mod-erate	Sub-stantial
Total	3	5	27	66
Instructional level				
Elementary	0	2	24	73
Elementary/ middle	0	6	44	50
Middle	0	11	22	67
High	17	6	28	50
School status				
Regular schools	0	4	31	64
AF/DI schools	0	0	22	78
Alternative schools	14	14	29	43
Special education schools	14	14	0	71
Citywide schools	25	13	25	38

NOTE: Percents may not add to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

We conducted a review of SETS and found that it generally contained the data elements that are needed to track compliance with special education requirements.[42] A demonstration of the system showed that it was straightforward to use. It was beyond the scope of our evaluation to address the accuracy rate of the data in SETS. But data accuracy is one of the disengagement standards. It requires BCPSS to achieve a 96 percent accuracy rate in the SETS computer data system as measured by MSDE annual audits of a statistically representative sample of student files. The MSDE audit must compare the paper student file to the SETS computer data record for 15 variables.

Integration of Regular and Special Education at the Management Level

During the late 1990s, much of the management of special education was necessarily driven by compliance matters associated with the Vaughn G. lawsuit. Compliance issues resulted in many activities related to special education being done separately from the rest of BCPSS. For example, in a response to one of the interim evaluation recommendations, BCPSS replied, "The legal posture of the Vaughn G. lawsuit prevents the integration of special education into the context of The Master Plan objectives because the BCPSS is currently being held to the legal obligations of a document entitled the Long-Range Compliance Plan." Thus, some of the mechanisms for responding to the court order have prevented some issues to be addressed in a more systemic way. The main areas in which separation has occurred are planning activities under The Master Plan, which are on a different schedule from the special education reporting process, and data tracking.

Under the current court order, compliance issues continue to be addressed, but some of the outcomes that BCPSS is working to meet have more of a focus on the quality of services. As BCPSS moves toward disengagement from the court order over the next 2 years, it should take a serious look at how services can be integrated at all levels. For example, some of the issues regarding inclusion and the curriculum discussed previously might need to be addressed at the central office level.

We find it encouraging that the new Chief Academic Officer has experience in managing the special education program in a large city school system. In our interview with her, she spoke of the implementation of inclusion at all levels, including the management level. She said that there must be one system with one set of standards. However, differentiated instruction must be provided and accommodations for students, not just those with the special education label. She spoke of working closely with the special education and student support services offices.

One organizational change occurred during the summer of 2001. Inclusion Services, which had been a part of the Office of Special Education and Student Support Services, were moved to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. The

[42] As this report is going to print, the Special Master and BCPSS are in the process of negotiating the calculation and understanding of what is and is not a dropout, which is related to Outcome #13.

change was made to provide support to regular teachers who need more skills to work with students with disabilities in the regular classroom. During the 2001–02 school year, BCPSS will be working to ensure that general education teachers have training in working with students with diverse needs and in implementing IEPs.

Recommendation

We strongly encourage BCPSS to continue to focus on the disengagement outcomes, with particular emphasis on supports for inclusion.

Parental Involvement

Data collected from a variety of sources indicate a mixed picture of success in the area of parental involvement. It appears that the district has made diligent efforts to encourage and help the parents to be involved in their children's education. Schools have expanded programs such as PTA/PTO meetings, workshops on parenting, workshops on how to help students with school work, and health/mental health programs However, a little less than a quarter of the schools reported having experienced a considerable increase in parental involvement over the past 2 years.

While some parent groups feel that the schools are not doing enough and do not provide a welcoming environment for parents, the large majority of those in our survey reported that the Baltimore City public schools were actively trying to involve them in their children's education.

The extent of parental participation was also assessed differently by the different respondent groups. While data from our site visits indicated that lack of parental involvement was a significant concern among teachers and principals, responses from the parent survey indicated a reasonable level of parental involvement in school programs or activities. Surprisingly high numbers indicated that they participated in PTA/PTO meetings, volunteered at their children's schools, or had individual contact with their children's teachers and other school staff.

Overall, nearly three-quarters of the parents were pleased with their children's schools, and 47 percent of the parents were satisfied or very satisfied with the efforts made by the BCPSS to improve their children's learning.

In interpreting these results, it is important to remember that response rates to the survey were modest, and those who chose to report may also be parents who choose to be more involved.

We recommend that schools improve and increase their outreach activities to intensify parent involvement in the schools. A key strategy is to increase the number of parent liaisons and enhance their interactions with school-based counterparts. Additional attention should also be given to the role and work of the Parent and Community Advisory Committee. In addition, schools need to make parents members of teams working diligently to improve the achievement of students.

Parental involvement has long been recognized as important, even key, to students' academic success. Parental involvement takes many forms, from volunteering at school functions, to attending PTA meetings, to participating in workshops, to serving on decision-making committees such as school improvement teams. Parental involvement need not occur at school, but can take place in the home. A number of efforts, nationwide, have stressed the value of parents and their children being engaged together in learning, be it reviewing homework or working jointly on learning activities.

BCPSS, like many urban systems, has had a low parental involvement.[43] In this chapter, we look at efforts to involve parents and the results they have produced.

SB 795 and Parental Involvement

SB 795 recognized the importance of parental involvement from several perspectives:

- A parent and community advisory board was required with specific requirements for membership. This parent and community advisory board was charged with ensuring parental involvement in the development and implementation of the education policies and procedures of the school system (4-308).

[43] A "parent" may be a true parent, a grandparent, a guardian, or in some cases, an adult friend.

- The New Board of School Commissioners and the CEO were directed to consult with the advisory board on a regular basis (4-308).
- Parental participation was also required to support educational programs for students served through an Alternative Learning Center (4-307).

In this section, we look at efforts to reach out to parents that have taken place since the establishment of SB 795, and the challenges that continue to exist.

Research Questions and Methodology

The evaluation effort was guided by the following research questions:

- What programs were developed to increase parental involvement?
- What were the differences in the level of parent participation in different types of schools?
- What was the level of awareness of The Master Plan among the parents?
- What was the involvement of businesses, community organizations, and service agencies?
- How were homeless students and their families served?
- What was the level of parental satisfaction with the schools' outreach efforts?
- What was the level of parental satisfaction with the Baltimore City public schools?

To answer these questions, data were collected from a variety of sources using different methodologies such as surveys of parents, teachers, and principals; site visits to selected schools; focus groups; and personal interviews of parent liaisons/representatives, community leaders, and key personnel of the BCPSS. A key strategy for reaching parents was a survey of parents selected to be representative of the system. As stated earlier, the response rate to this survey was quite modest, and many difficulties were encountered in attempting to reach an adult at the home phone number we received from the BCPSS database. Exhibit 5-11 shows the disposition of attempts to reach a sample of 3,000 "parents," 775 of whom were ultimately contacted. Codes 2 (not a parent/guardian of children in BCPSS) and 30 (nonworking number) were surprisingly large. Given the number of calls we had to make to reach a target sample of 775 parents, we felt that the data from the survey should not be assumed to be truly representative of the population.

Exhibit 5-11.
BCPSS parent survey: Sample report by last disposition

Disposition code	Description	Cases
1	Client not at home	19
2	No parent/guardian of children in BCPSS	591
3	Client moved	4
4	Complete	775
6	Unspecified call back	10
7	Refused to participate	17
8	Specified call back	18
10	Intermediate refusal	3
11	Mid-terminate	18
21	No answer	270
22	Busy	16
23	Answering machine	320
24	Disconnected	145
25	Business	91
27	Fax/Modem	39
28	Language problem	16
30	Non-working number	648
	Total attempted	3,000
	Total sample	3,000

Evaluation Findings

Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were employed in analyzing data collected from the different sources. The key findings are reported in the following sections.

BCPSS-Developed Programs for Increasing Parental Involvement

In response to The Master Plan requirement, BCPSS has made diligent efforts to encourage and help the parents to be involved in their children's education. These efforts have included activities to involve parents in the schools' decision-making process, such as PTA/PTO meetings and school improvement teams; programs teaching parents how to help their children, such as workshops on parenting, helping students with school work, and health/mental health counseling; and programs helping parents to improve their own socioeconomic status, such as job training/placement programs and educational programs (e.g., GED).

The survey of school principals indicated that in the past 2 years, a majority of public schools in Baltimore City have implemented or substantially expanded the following programs:

- PTA/PTO meetings (71 percent),
- Workshops on parenting (61 percent),
- Workshops on how to help students with school work (75 percent), and
- Health/mental health programs (62 percent).

In addition, nearly one-fifth of the Baltimore City public schools have implemented or substantially expanded job training/replacement programs (17 percent) and educational programs (19 percent) for the parents. However, only a quarter (23 percent) of the schools reported having experienced a considerable increase in parental involvement over the past 2 years.

Parental Involvement in Children's Education

Lack of parental involvement was a common theme heard during our site visits. Further the survey data indicate that overall only 10 percent of teachers feel that parental involvement has increased to a good or great extent over the last 2 years.

With a few outstanding exceptions, respondents from all school levels cited lack of parental involvement as a significant issue during our site visits.

> Veteran teachers strongly stated that parental involvement and student's behavioral problems have been worse during the last 5-year period. They attributed this to parents who are young with poorer social skills. That is, parents are not mature enough to teach their children about appropriate behavior. In addition, the area was rezoned and the school is getting a different population of student. More students are homeless and living with foster families. Also, with welfare reform, parents have had to get jobs, so it has been hard to get them to school, although some grandparents are filling this role.

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> Some indications of the lack of involvement, provided to us by the principal and the assistant principals, is that only 10 percent of parents pick up their child's report card. In addition, there is no active PTO or PTA, and virtually no one shows up at Back to School Night. And recently, when the school sent out letters to the parents of 36 students, warning them that their child is in danger of failing 8th grade, only 2 or 3 responded.

A number of sites shared with us their sense of frustration in trying to bring the parents more actively into the school and their children's academic life.

> Everyone we spoke with began by mentioning parental involvement. Although the school has a parent liaison actively seeking ways to bring parents in to the school, they have not been successful yet. One veteran teacher said, "The parent liaison has tried a lot of different methods to bring parents in, offering food, line dances, workshops, food pantry. They will come for the one event and you never see them again." The principal also remarked that parent involvement is a big challenge. "We write and write and ask them to come in and they never come."
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> Another commonly cited problem is the lack of parent involvement. The principal estimated that only about 20 percent of parents actually get involved in their child's education on a regular basis. Some indications of the lack of involvement are the lack of parents who serve as volunteers (everyone agreed that it is the same, small group of parents who do all of the volunteer work) and the fact that when report cards or student papers are signed by the parents as required, they are simply signed and returned with no dialogue.

A few more encouraging comments were also noted. For example, at a school in which parental involvement was cited as a significant problem, we also heard that interactions with parents were an area of strength.

> At the same time, the principal said that a major strength of the school is the positive interaction with parents and a sense of working together. Perhaps these two seemingly different perceptions can be reconciled by the fact that the school has a small core of very involved parents.

Overall, schools were sympathetic to the challenges facing parents, grandparents, and guardians of their students, but felt that lack of parental involvement was a major barrier to students' learning. Many expressed the need to continue to find new ways to facilitate and encourage parents to become more engaged in the school.

In contrast, parent self-report, based on the results of a sample survey of 775 parents,[44] provides a picture of greater engagement. In terms of parental involvement in decision making, two-thirds (67 percent) of the parents have been involved in the schools' PTA/PTO meetings, and around one-tenth (12 percent) have served on the School Improvement Teams (Table F-1). While there is no statistically significant difference between reconstitution-eligible and ineligible schools in parental participation in PTA/PTO meetings, reconstitution-eligible schools tend to have less parental involvement in the STI (9 percent) than schools not eligible for reconstitution (14 percent).[45]

With regard to programs geared toward parental help of their children, slightly over a quarter of the parents reported being involved in workshops for parents on parenting (27 percent) and on how to help students with their schoolwork (27 percent), and slightly over one-tenth (13 percent) of the parents participated in health/mental health programs. Considering that not all schools offered these programs, if accurate, these self-reported rates of participation are encouraging. Some differences were also found by school type and type of workshop (Table 5-63).

In terms of individual contact between parents and the school staff, 96 percent of parents have talked with teachers about their children, and over two-thirds (70 percent) have also talked to other school staff about their children.

A substantial number of parents also report engaging in volunteer activities. As shown in Table 5-64, nearly half (41 percent) of the parents responding to our survey have volunteered at their children's schools during the past school year. Among them, a large majority (78 percent)

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[44] It is important to keep in mind that the response rate for the parent survey was very modest (27 percent). Those who chose to respond to us are probably not totally representative of the parent/ guardian population.

[45] This is only a simple correlation which should not be interpreted as a causal relationship. The differences was also relatively small.

Table 5-63.
Percentage of parents involved in various activities

School characteristic	Workshops on parenting	Job training/ placement programs	Workshops on how to help students with schoolwork	Serving on SIT
Total	27.3	9.8	26.6	11.8
Type of school				
Regular elementary	27.8	11.7	32.4	15.1
Regular middle and high	21.4	6.6	18.7	8.2
AF/DI	39.6	16.0	35.0	14.7
Alternative	30.9	12.2	23.3	6.2
Special education	25.0	7.0	19.3	15.8
Citywide	24.4	3.8	26.7	12.9
Reconstitution eligibility status				
Eligible	—	—	—	9.3
Ineligible	—	—	—	14.1
SPI performance[1]				
Low scores	—	—	—	9.6
Medium scores	—	—	—	7.7
High scores	—	—	—	17.7

— No significant differences among groups.

[1]Please refer to the sampling plan for the teachers survey (Appendix D) for detailed definition of the SPI classification.

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Parent Survey, 2001.

Table 5-64.
Percentage of parents who volunteered for various activities during this school year

School characteristic	Volunteer activity			
	Volunteered at child's school	Helping in classroom	Organizing PTA or school events	Chaperoning student events/field trips
Total	40.7	75.2	36.3	77.1
Type of school				
Regular elementary	50.3	78.2	31.6	90.1
Regular middle and high	31.1	70.4	37.7	68.0
AF/DI	52.0	85.1	34.0	76.1
Alternative	42.6	64.4	42.9	68.0
Special education	31.5	77.8	33.3	77.8
Citywide	27.0	42.9	66.7	52.4
Reconstitution eligibility status				
Eligible	—	—	30.0	—
Ineligible	—	—	42.1	—
Change in SPI over 3 years				
No change or decline in scores	36.0	—	—	—
Increase of 1 to 5 points	43.5	—	—	—
Increase of 6 to 10 points	38.5	—	—	—
Increase over 10 points	42.6	—	—	—

— No statistical differences among groups.

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Parent Survey, 2001.

have volunteered to chaperon student events or field trips, three-quarters (75 percent) have helped in their children's classrooms, over one-third have volunteered in organizing PTA or school events (36 percent) or talking to students about their careers or hobbies, and nearly a quarter have volunteered in doing clerical/administrative duties (23 percent) or serving on an advisory committee (21 percent). Data also show a few differences among types of schools. For example, AF/DI schools (52 percent) and regular elementary schools (50 percent) tend to have more parents involved in volunteer activities than regular middle and high schools (31 percent), special education centers (32 percent), and citywide schools (27 percent). Moreover, AF/DI schools had the highest level of parental involvement in helping in their children's classrooms (85 percent). This could be an indication of some effective outreach efforts at the AF/DI schools since the rate of parent participation in workshops on parenting was also the highest among parents of AF/DI school students (40 percent).

Awareness of Master Plan and School Standards

The parent survey results revealed that less than half (42 percent) of the parents with children in the BCPSS were aware of the efforts to improve the Baltimore City public schools. No statistically significant differences were found between the different types of schools. This number seems quite low given the fact that survey respondents were in all likelihood more knowledgeable than the general population. However, three-quarters (75 percent) of the parents reported that they knew the standards their children must meet to move to the next grade in the school (Table 5-65). Parents of citywide school students had the highest level of awareness of school standards (91 percent), whereas parents of students in special education centers had the lowest (55 percent). Meanwhile, parents of AF/DI school students seemed more aware of the school standards (79 percent) than those of students in regular elementary schools (68 percent).

Table 5-65.
Percentage of parents aware of the standards for their children to move to the next grade

School characteristic	Aware
Total	74.9
Type of school	
Regular elementary	68.1
Regular middle and high	75.0
AF/DI	78.9
Alternative	72.0
Special education	54.6
Citywide	91.0
SPI performance	
Low scores	70.3
Medium scores	72.3
High scores	81.0

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Parent Survey, 2001.

All of the business contacts and community leaders we interviewed were familiar with or involved in writing The Master Plan.

Parental Satisfaction With the Schools' Outreach Efforts

As shown in Table 5-66, a large majority (85 percent) of the parents felt that the Baltimore City public schools were actively trying to involve them in their children's education. A similar majority (80 percent) felt strongly that they were welcome at their children's schools. Over two-thirds (69 percent) of the parents believed that their concerns or issues were well taken care of when they called the schools, and 71 percent felt that coming to the schools for conferences, meetings, or special events had helped in their children's school behavior and learning.

Parents of students in special education centers held the most positive opinion about their schools' outreach efforts. Nearly all of them (98 percent) believed that their children's schools had been actively trying to involve them in their children's education, 95 percent felt welcome at

Table 5-66.
Percentage of parents satisfied with various outreach efforts

School characteristic	School actively tried to involve parents	Felt welcome at child's school	When call, issues/ concerns were taken care of	Going to school for conference and events helped in child's school behavior and learning
	Yes	Yes, to a great extent	Yes, to a great extent	Yes, a lot
Total	84.7	79.5	68.7	71.4
Type of school				
Regular elementary	84.8	86.1	71.7	74.0
Regular middle and high	80.5	71.7	61.5	64.8
AF/DI	89.6	82.4	72.8	79.2
Alternative	87.2	91.7	72.3	68.6
Special Education	98.1	94.7	82.5	66.7
Citywide	90.4	82.0	81.8	77.7

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Parent Survey, 2001.

their children's schools, and 83 percent believed that their concerns or issues were taken care of when they called the schools. With regard to the effectiveness of their involvement, parents of students in AF/DI schools (79 percent) and citywide schools (78 percent) were more positive than parents of students in regular middle and high schools (65 percent) and special education centers (67 percent).

Parental Satisfaction With Schools

The majority of the parents held positive opinions about the Baltimore City public schools, as shown by their responses to specific survey items (Table 5-67):

- My child's school is kept clean (85 percent).
- My child's teacher(s) helps my child to learn (83 percent).
- The principal of child's school is an excellent leader (83 percent; not shown in table).
- My child's school has clear and high expectations for student learning (81 percent).
- My child's school has clear and high expectations for student behavior.
- My child is safe at school (74 percent)
- My child's school is in good repair (72 percent).

However, only slightly over half (56 percent) of the parents agreed that their children's schools had enough books and supplies.

Overall, nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of the parents were pleased with their children's schools, and 80 percent were, to a varying degree, satisfied with the efforts made by the BCPSS to improve their children's learning (including very satisfied, satisfied, and somewhat satisfied).

Some differences between groups follow:

- Parents of regular middle and high school students were the least positive about their schools.
- Parents of reconstitution-eligible schools felt more strongly that their child's school has clear and high expectations for student behavior but were generally less pleased with their children's schools than those of students in schools that are not reconstitution eligible.
- With the exception of the area of school safety, parents at AF/DI schools generally were more satisfied than those at other elementary or elementary middle schools,

Table 5-67.
Percentage of parents satisfied with various aspects of their children's schools

School characteristic	My child's school has clear and high expecta-tions for student behavior	My child's school has clear and high expecta-tions for student learning	My child's teacher(s) helps my child to learn	My child's school has enough books and supplies	My child is safe at school	My child's school is in good repair	My child's school is kept clean	I am pleased with my child's school
Total	79.7	80.7	82.6	55.5	74.3	72.1	85.1	71.9
Type of school								
Regular elementary	80.4	76.3	85.0	56.1	83.3	75.0	—	71.1
Regular middle and high	74.3	78.5	75.5	49.7	61.4	65.4	—	65.7
AF/DI	84.3	84.0	89.1	62.2	82.7	81.8	—	78.4
Alternative	87.1	91.6	94.0	57.3	81.2	87.8	—	82.9
Special education	73.6	87.7	91.2	72.3	84.9	83.0	—	82.2
Citywide	90.2	94.0	89.0	63.8	81.3	64.3	—	84.1
Reconstitution eligibility status								
Eligible	76.3	—	—	—	69.7	—	—	68.3
Ineligible	83.0	—	—	—	78.7	—	—	75.3
SPI performance								
Low scores	75.6	75.9	81.6	55.9	68.0	—	84.7	66.9
Medium scores	75.6	76.9	78.1	49.5	67.7	—	78.6	64.5
High scores	86.1	86.6	86.8	60.7	84.0	—	91.2	81.5

— No significant differences among groups.

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Parent Survey, 2001.

although not all differences were statistically significant.

- Parents of students in schools with high level of SPI performance were more pleased with their children's schools than parents of students in lower scoring schools.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

In general, parents report that time is the major barrier to involvement in school. Schedule conflict was the most common reason for not being able to attend school functions/programs (52 percent), followed by a general lack of time (34 percent) (Table 5-68). Other barriers were mentioned very infrequently by the respondents overall. Parents of students in the special education centers (16 percent) are more likely to be prevented from participating in school activities due to lack of transportation than parents from other groups.

Our interviews and focus group discussions suggested that parents strongly feel that schools could be more supportive and welcoming. They mentioned several factors that impeded parental involvement.

- Schools are late in sending out information, which makes it difficult for the parents to get involved.
- Principals block parent access to decision-making. Principals do not encourage parents to participate in such activities as the SITs.
- There is lack of training on how to function as part of an SIT.
- The schools do not have the structure to support PTAs.

Table 5-68.
Percentage of parents prevented from being involved in their children's education, by various factors

Factor	Percent
Not enough time	33.8
Nothing to contribute	4.1
Not knowing how	12.1
No child care	6.7
Feeling disrespected	6.2
Not able to attend functions	51.4
Language/cultural differences	2.1
Lack of transportation	5.8

NOTE: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Parent Survey, 2001.

- Workshops (when offered) are system-oriented with language and processes that are not understandable to parents.
- Systems vary from school to school, resulting in inconsistent processes and poor communications.

Many of the parent and community representatives offered recommendations on increasing parental involvement in the schools. These included:

- Increasing the support by the BCPSS for the Office of Parent Involvement (OPI) and the Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB);
- Encouraging collaboration between the schools and parents;
- Conducting workshops for parents and school staff (at the same time, in the same place) so that learning is uniform;
- Implementing consistent processes and communication across the Baltimore City public schools (so that forms, letters, etc., have the same formats and the processes don't change from school to school);
- Having an organized parent committee in each school;
- Maintaining community partnerships; and
- Educating parents so they can, in turn, be part of their children's education.

Involvement of Businesses, Community Organizations, and Service Agencies with Parents and Schools

Businesses, community organizations, and service agencies support the BCPSS parents in a variety of ways. The most common types of involvement in the city's public school education were in the following forms:

- Encouraging community members and parents to take leadership roles in the schools (e.g., serving on SITs), and training parents to better serve on the SITs;
- Helping the schools to disseminate information to parents in a timely manner;
- Facilitating networking activities among parents, schools and social service agencies;
- Capacity building with emphasis on training parents how to be involved in their children's academic lives;
- Conducting workshops to address the varying needs of parents; and
- Providing networks of advocates whose goal is to improve the educational services received by students with disabilities in the school system. These advocates—parents experienced in the school system—help inexperienced parents.

Interviews with selected business contacts revealed that business involvement in the schools was mostly in terms of investing money and manpower into the community. For example, the Abell Foundation provides scholarships to high school students to enable them to attend college, and the Fund for Educational Excellence

contracts with the schools on a fee-for-service basis to provide volunteers and grants for literacy programs.

Employees of Provident Bank volunteer to read to school children, and the bank funds programs that provide a range of services including housing, computer classes, workshops on parenting skills, health services, and job development programs.

The Maryland Business Round Table (MBRT) comprises 120 companies that provide services to school staff and parents of school children. Services include sponsoring guest speakers, teaching data analysis skills, and hosting a web-site with a page for parents—Parents Count—that offers suggestions on how they can be involved in their children's education.

Representatives of the Baltimore Education Network (BEN) reported that they encourage community members and parents to take leadership roles in the schools. School improvement teams were mentioned as vehicles that could facilitate parent involvement. BEN's focus is on information dissemination, networking, and capacity building (with emphasis on training parents how to be involved in their children's academic lives). BEN promotes joint training sessions where parents and school representatives are present and work in the interests of the students. BEN made it a priority to inform parents of the school reforms efforts outlined within The Master Plan.

The Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB) and the Executive PTA Board also aim to empower parents and increase their involvement in the schools. PTA members informed us that certain schools, not all, offer workshops to parents with the aim of teaching than how to help their children achieve academically and to lobby the school systems and lobby the legislators. PTA members believe that parents who understand and are involved in the legislative process are better advocates for their children.

Services to Homeless Students and Their Families

Services to homeless students and their families existed prior to the implementation of The Master Plan, but they were expanded as a result of the plan. An interview with the Homeless Program Coordinator and Master revealed that the Homeless Program had two main components of service to students: the Helping Hands and summer camps.

The Helping Hands program provides certified teachers who go to homeless shelters to tutor students in the evenings during the school year. The summer camps offer services to two age groups of children when school is not in session: New Horizons I is for children ages 5 to 11; New Horizons II is for children ages 12 to 17. The camps focus on academic achievement in the morning and recreational activities in the afternoon. Open houses are held for parents to see what their children are doing during the summer camps, and a parent resource center exists at the Rutland Avenue homeless shelter.

The Homeless Program also offers services to parents of homeless children. Parents are trained by social workers from various organizations on several topics, including improving parenting skills, increasing awareness regarding youth mental health issues, and enhancing stress management and general coping skills. Training sessions are held during the day and night and parents are given tokens to travel to the sessions.

The Homeless Program enters into community partnerships to assure that other services beyond those that are school-related are provided to the homeless students and their families. Parents are provided an opportunity to obtain their GEDs and gain work experience through the Even Start project. Families are also helped to transition from the shelters to homes. Project Fresh Start is a collaborative effort among landlords to provide rent-free lodging for a year to families moving out of homeless shelters.

The major issues faced by the Homeless Program are as follows:

- Due to lack of data and poor record keeping, the new database that tracks homeless children reflects fewer homeless children than they believe actually exist.
- Transportation of children from shelters to the schools and camps is an issue since shelters only allow children and families to stay for 30 days. Schools face problems trying to keep track of where the children are living.
- Promotion of the services to the parents.
- Retention of children in the camps (children are separated from parents and placed in different shelters depending on their age and sex).

The program encourages parents of homeless students to serve on summer camp steering committees sponsored by the Homeless Program. These committees are vehicles for parents to participate in the design and direction of services provided by the Homeless Program.

Relationship Between Parental Involvement and School Performance

It has been a general consensus that parental involvement should have a positive impact on the academic achievement of the students. This assumption has, to some extent, been supported by the study results. Our results confirm that such a relationship also exists in BCPSS. However, causality is unclear. The survey of parents indicated that the proportion of parents having served on the school improvement team was significantly higher in schools with high SPI performance (18 percent) than in schools with medium or low SPI performance (8 percent and 10 percent, respectively). In addition, the survey of principals also revealed a correlation between reported increase in parental involvement and school SPI performance. Schools with a high or medium level SPI performance were more likely to report a significant increase of parental involvement over the past 2 years (26 percent and 24 percent, respectively) than schools with a low level SPI performance (14 percent). However, no statistically significant relationships were found between SPI performance and parental involvement in specific activities/ programs except SIT.

Issues Requiring Further Consideration and Recommendations

- While schools have tried to involve parents and a small segment of parents have taken advantage of the schools' efforts, considerably more needs to be done. We strongly recommend an intensive effort to strengthen outreach efforts through the Office of Parent Involvement, the area offices, and the schools themselves. A key strategy is first and foremost to reach a system-wide definition of parent involvement. From our interviews, we realized that it means different things to different people. Parent involvement includes such a wide range of activities as volunteering at the school, serving or attending PTA/PTO meetings, participating in workshops, assisting in the classroom and being involved in the decision-making bodies such as the SITs. Second, it is important for the principals to believe that parent involvement is important and to accept and encourage the broader definition. Principals must encourage parent involvement and must be encouraged themselves to involve parents. Third, the parent liaisons must have well-defined job descriptions that are formalized. These liaisons should be doing "parent liaison" work rather than being engaged in administrative duties.
- On a practical level, we recommend that the school system strengthen the role of the staff associates who are located in the area offices. We understand that these associates work directly with the parent liaisons at each school. The staff associates can train liaisons on how to approach and deal with parents. The parent liaisons can work directly with the schools as a whole, the teachers, and the parents, and directly provide support services.

We recommend that the parent liaisons identify a parent or two from each school to work with them on developing strategies particularly suited to their school environment and school needs. The parent liaison would train these volunteers on how to interact with the school. These volunteers could be selected with the help of the PTA/PTO.

With the schools, the liaisons could encourage the school to be more welcoming to the parents, to invite them to visit the classroom, have someone in the front office who is trained to deal with parents and alleviate the concerns about coming to the school, and perhaps arrange to have a lounge for the parents to use while they are on school grounds. The liaisons could help the teachers to better communicate with the parents. For example, the liaisons, working with parent volunteers, could organize notices to be sent home with the children or encourage the teachers to call every parent at least once during the semester to discuss his/her child's situation, whether good or bad. The liaisons could also work to provide other support services directly so that parents can overcome some of the obstacles keeping them from coming to school. In particular, the parent liaisons can find ways to provide child care during school events, as well as arrange for transportation tokens so parents can get to the school. This will facilitate parent attendance of parent-teacher conferences, workshops, PTA meetings, visits to the classroom, field trip chaperoning, etc.

Finally, with support from the staff associates at the OPI, the liaisons can arrange to conduct workshops to help the parents be more involved in the schools and help their children succeed. Clearly, notification should be sent out in ample time for the parents to make arrangements to attend. This is already taking place but needs to be more formalized and expanded. In addition, the liaisons could create an avenue, such as forums, for the parents to voice their concerns.

In connection with this recommendation, we further encourage the school system to support the Office of Parent Involvement (OPI) and the PCAB so their role is more visible and parents know that there is a group to provide them with help and advocate on their behalf.

- A considerable proportion of parents were kept from being involved in their children's education because of scheduling and time. The schools can plan programs and other activities to be short and efficient. Parents should be given enough advance notice for them to make arrangements. Perhaps the parent volunteers could assist by calling all the parents in that school. Support services such as child care and transportation should be provided. Meanwhile, more seminars or training materials should be developed to teach parents how to be involved in their child's education. More communication channels (e.g., newsletters, fliers) should be established with the parents to keep them informed of what is going on in the school and what help is needed from them.

- Only less than half (42 percent) of the parents with children in the BCPSS were aware of the efforts to improve the Baltimore City public schools. This level of awareness is relatively low considering that the city's school reform efforts have been effect for 5 years. There should be a continuous campaign of these efforts through various channels and at different levels.

- Parents of AF/DI schools generally seemed more engaged and involved than students of other elementary or middle schools. Practices in these school should be examined to see if they are using strategies that might be beneficial elsewhere.

Safety and Discipline

BCPSS has initiated a number of reforms aimed at creating the kinds of conditions in schools that enable teachers to teach and students to learn. The district has instituted a new code of conduct that has been disseminated to principals, teachers, students, and parents. School records indicate that while arrests, expulsions, and other serious infractions of the code of conduct have declined since 1998, both short- and long-term suspensions have increased. Although principals and teachers indicated that enforcement of the new code of conduct has helped to reduce disruptive behavior and improve school climate, more of them attribute most positive changes to other actions taken at the schools.

The district opened its first Alternative Learning Center opened in 1999 to provide educational, social, and treatment services to middle school students in the Southeastern region. Since that time, alternative classrooms have been set up in 14 high schools, 6 middle schools, and 8 elementary schools, and additional programs for disruptive elementary students are in the planning stage. Seven of the alternative programs for students in grades 9–12 were designed to address the district's very serious dropout problem. These twilight and flex programs offer late day and evening hours and a technology-based career component for high school students who have already dropped out of school and 8th grade students considered at risk of becoming dropouts. While these efforts have helped to alleviate some of the district's most pressing problems, the need for alternative placements and programs far exceeds the number of available slots. In particular, there is a need for more and better alternatives to suspension and more appropriate placements for students of elementary school age. The district and individual schools have taken other steps to create safer environments that are more conductive to learning. A 3-year plan was developed for reducing drugs and violence in schools and action steps are now being undertaken.

On balance, BCPSS has made considerable progress in achieving Objective 6 in terms of both programs and initiatives implemented and targets met on key indicators of safety.

Introduction

Objective 6 focuses on strategies for creating safe school environments that are free of violence, drugs, and other forms of disruptive behavior. Crime continues to be an increasingly important dimension of the school safety issue. According to a recent report prepared by the Office of Alternative Schools and Programs, crime in BCPSS schools had escalated in frequency and severity during the last decade. During the last 4 years, juvenile arrests for murder, robbery, vehicle theft, and weapons offenses have increased faster in the City of Baltimore than adult arrests for the same crimes, according to a recent evaluation report prepared by the Office of Alternative School and Programs.[46] Teachers and administrators in the district are keenly aware of the heavy toll that crime and other serious disruptions take on their ability to teach and students' ability to concentrate on learning. Objective 6 of The Master Plan—provide secure, civil, and orderly learning environments—directly addresses these concerns. Recognizing that certain corrective actions are better taken at the district level, while others must addressed in individual schools, the 1998–99 Master Plan identified strategies of both types for achieving Objective 6.

At the system level:

- Strategy 6.1.1: Develop and implement a systemwide code of conduct and discipline plan.
- Strategy 6.12: Implement drug and violence prevention and intervention programs and activities.

And at the school level:

- Strategy 6.2.1: Develop and implement alternative placements and programs.
- Strategy 6.1.1: Continue implementation of school climate/safety committees.

The 2002 Master Plan continues the focus on preventing drug use and violence, developing

[46]Baltimore City Public Schools, Office of Alternative Schools and programs, *Evaluation Report: Twilight and Flex School Programs. May 1999-September 30, 2000.* November 2000.

alternative placements and programs, and developing school safety committees. The creation of a code of conduct and discipline plan is considered completed. A new strategy—Develop and implement a critical incident plan for BCPSS—has been added since 1998–99.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into discussions about the following issues:

- Key questions and sources of information pertaining to issues of safety and discipline;
- Student code of conduct and discipline plan;
- Violence and drug abuse prevention and intervention efforts;
- Alternative programs and placements implemented in response to The Master Plan;
- School climate/safety committees; and
- Objective 6 outcomes.

Key Questions and Sources of Data

In discussing the activities and strategies through which Objective 6 was implemented, we draw on several sources of information: members of the Work Group for Objective 6 who had planning and oversight responsibilities; discussions with teachers, principals, and others during our site visits; and responses of parents, teachers, and principals to mail surveys conducted by Westat. Specific questions include the following:

Systemwide initiatives

- Has the systemwide code of conduct and discipline been implemented?
- Have disciplinary requirements for students with disabilities been effectively communicated? Are they being followed by central and school staff?
- How has school climate been affected?
- Has the incidence of disruptions improved since implementation of the new code?
- Have the drug and violence prevention and intervention programs been implemented?

School-based initiatives

- Have alternative programs and placements been implemented?
- How are students with disabilities treated with regard to these programs?
- What are the numbers of students being served, wait time for enrollment, grade levels, average length of stay, criteria to get in, and criteria to get out?
- Has the incidence of behavioral infractions decreased since implementation of those programs?
- How has school climate been affected by the development of alternative placements and programs?

Systemwide Initiatives

Code of Conduct and Student Discipline Code

The Objective 6 Work Group began revising the existing discipline code in 1998–99, and the code was adopted by the New Board of School Commissioners in March 1999. The code incorporated several important new features, three of which are especially critical. First, the code articulates a zero tolerance stance. Second, it addresses situations in which an infraction is related to a student's disability. And third, the new code identifies the various behavioral infractions warranting disciplinary action, defines different levels of severity of various offenses, and spells out the range of disciplinary options that can be exercised for each kind of offense.

Exhibit 5-12.
Infractions by level of violation: BCPSS Student Discipline Code

Level I violations:

- Possession, use or distribution of tobacco on school property
- Disruptive behavior
- Verbal harassment
- Damaging property
- Insubordination
- Dress code violations
- Cheating/copying the work of another
- Cutting class, truancy, tardiness

Level II Violations:.

- Fighting
- Possession of electronic devices (e.g., beepers, cellular phones)
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual misconduct
- Verbal abuse, ethnic slurs, vulgar statements or gestures, including the distribution of obscene material
- Misbehavior on bus or school transportation
- Disorderly conduct
- Gambling

Level III:

- Assault on school staff
- Possession of drugs/alcohol
- Possession of weapons and explosives
- Arson
- False fire alarm or bomb threat
- Vandalizing, damaging, defacing or destroying school property
- Violent behaviors/assaults, vicious fighting
- Extortion, coercion, blackmail and robbery
- Trespassing

Exhibit 5-12 displays the infractions by level of violation. The district also adopted codes of conduct—one for older students and one for elementary school children—that broadly present the kinds of behavior expected of students (Exhibits 5-13 and 5-14).

Exhibit 5-13.
BCPSS Code of Conduct for middle and senior high school students

IN THE BCPSS, ALL PERSONS ACCEPT PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR A STANDARD CODE OF CONDUCT. AS AN INDIVIDUAL:

1) I respect myself and others and treat others kindly through the demonstration of positive verbal and nonverbal communication and positive behaviors.
2) I am responsible for my behavior and its consequences.
3) I come to school on time, focused, and prepared to learn.
4) I demonstrate behaviors to promote a safe and civil learning environment.
5) I will present myself in an appropriate and orderly fashion at all times and in all settings. *I will demonstrate personal honor and integrity at all times.*

Exhibit 5-14.
BCPSS Code of Conduct for elementary school students

1) We will respect ourselves and others and be kind to one another.
2) It is up to me to be good. When I do good things, good things may result. (I remember to stop and think before I act.)
3) I come to school on time, ready to learn.
4) I will choose peace instead of fighting or arguing. I will be a peaceful person and help to make my school safe.
5) I will be honest and do what I know is right.
6) I respect the things that belong to others and to my school. (I will not take things that don't belong to me.)

Knowledge and opinions about the discipline code, its enforcement, and its effects were varied. Several principals and teachers made statements about safety and discipline during interviews and in the open comments area at the end of the surveys. Some illustrative examples, grouped by topic, follow.

Several teachers and principals felt that their schools did not have serious discipline problems . They tended to attribute any difficulties encountered to characteristics of the students, including the following statements:

- "The school is a dumping ground for kids who get transferred from other schools due to behavioral problems."
- "Forty to 50 percent of the students in the school had one or more suspensions in a school year."
- "Many of the students are on parole or recently released from jail."
- "Many of the students responsible for serious problems are special education students and district policy prevents them from being sent home after fights or other serious infractions of rules."

Some teachers and principals interviewed made positive statements about zero tolerance, commenting "it empowered teachers," "got parents' attention," and "gave staff leverage to require order." But few teachers or principals attributed improved discipline to the code. Most saw improved discipline as the result of other measures taken by the school:

- Maintaining regular police presence;
- Allocating funds for crisis counselors, addiction specialists, social workers, etc.;
- Maintaining locked facilities;
- Having teachers or others escort students to class;
- Hiring physically imposing hall monitors to supervise class changes;
- Requiring school uniforms; and
- Removing benches that served as platforms for drug sales.

Some teachers painted a negative view of how the policy is administered. Teachers reported that "zero" tolerance exists on paper, but the code is not enforced or is enforced selectively. Some reported that principals and district administrators did not deal with discipline problems effectively. In part, this perception may have resulted from the revised code giving principals latitude in meting out disciplinary action. Some principals consider it necessary to discipline selectively to deal with individual problems of students. One principal carried this approach to an extreme. When a student was found in possession of a weapon, his/her parents verified that the weapon was necessary for the student's protection between home and school. The principal responded by permitting the student to bring a weapon to school, but required that the weapon be turned into the office upon arrival, to be picked up at the end of the school day.

Another dominant theme expressed by teachers and principals was the need for more clinical support to deal with issues underlying behavioral problems. Teachers (and one principal) also saw a need for more support and training on classroom management of behavioral problems.

Other issues raised concerned administrative policies related to safety and discipline. Several principals noted that the code calls for suspensions and expulsions following commission of serious offenses, but central administration counts such actions "against their records," making it difficult to get out of RE status. This is actually not the district's official policy. However, attendance rates, which may be impacted by large numbers of suspensions, are a factor in determining RE status.

Several other issues were raised regarding enforcement of disciplinary policies, some at the

school level and others at the district level. For example, the practice of transferring students when more serious discipline may be required results in problem students creating disruptions in the receiving schools and not receiving appropriate services. Another enforcement problem arises when students who chronically disrupt are returned from the office to classroom because the main office chooses not to deal with them or, according to some principals, because the facility is too small to set up alternative classrooms onsite.

Drug and Violence Prevention and Intervention Programs

The Master Plan for 1998–99 and subsequent updates call for development and implementation of a systemwide plan for reducing drug use and violence in schools. In the past year, 1,100 students were referred to the Baltimore Student Assistance programs, which provide addiction counselors in 30 secondary schools. In addiction to these direct service-related activities, a variety of education and training ventures were supported, including the following:

- Workshops were held for high school students to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to take leadership roles in reducing violence and drug abuse in their schools. Following the workshops, students returned to their schools to implement action plans they developed during the training.
- "Just say no" clubs continued to engage elementary school students in activities that promote drug-free lifestyles and alternatives to risky behavior.
- School staff participated in professional development programs in the areas of violence and drug abuse prevention.

In addition to these activities, instructional materials for drug abuse and violence prevention have been purchased for BCPSS Family Learning Centers and School, Family, and Community Partnership Centers. The Master Plan for 2001–02 calls for the district to develop additional curricula in drug and violence prevention and begin implementation of prevention activities and services.

School-Based Initiatives

Alternative Learning Center (School #488)

In accordance with Section 4-319 of the Code of Maryland, Baltimore City Public School System, the Baltimore City Alternative Learning Center (ALC) was opened in April 1999 to serve students in grades 6–9 who have committed Level III offenses. Students referred to ALC should show potential for making a satisfactory adjustment and should have expressed a willingness to change. A screening and risk assessment are conducted to determine the potential risk the student poses and to assure that the placement is justified. Priority is given to students who pose the most serious threat to the safety of others. When a student is referred to ALC, the director interviews the student and a parent and guardian. If that student is accepted for enrollment, the director meets with the parent or guardian to set up an individualized treatment plan and obtain the parents' commitment to support their child and the efforts of the ALC. However, enrollment is not contingent on receiving this commitment, and the parent cannot refuse referral to the ALC.[47]

The ALC program combines instruction and counseling in a single, comprehensive program. Designed to serve maximum of 100 students, ALC enrolled 72 students, mostly African American males, in spring 2001. Approximately 10 percent of students have IEPs. All of these special education students exhibit behavioral rather than physical problems. ALC represents a second chance for students who have committed offenses for which an adult would be arrested and jailed. Prior to its opening, these students would have been home schooled or, according to the

[47]Sally Maxton, Alternative Learning Center program description, January 1999

staff, more likely be living in a facility for juvenile delinquents.

ALC staff comprise the principal and an assistant principal, 10 instructional staff, 3 crisis counselors, and 2 case managers, master teachers, and a social worker. Staff functions are clear. Teaching staff focus on instructional practice; support staff focus on students' behavioral problems; case managers take responsibility for the full life of 16–18 students and run the focus groups. Crisis counselors deal with student problems on an individual basis. The social worker works exclusively with special education students who have IEPs. All ALC staff have met the same formal qualifications as other principals and teachers in the district. Most ALC staff, however, have completed coursework in criminology and have extensive experience working with children already in the juvenile justice system, for example, as teachers or counselors at a locked facility for juveniles.

Given the nature of the offenses that bring students to ALC, other precautionary measures are taken to protect the safety of students and staff and create an atmosphere conducive to learning. All students are scanned for weapons and undergo a complete body search before entering the building. In addition, crisis counselors monitor students in the hallways and are available to assist teachers if problems occur in the classroom. Another safeguard is a crisis room, where students are taken for violating the rules or disrupting the class in other ways. Students can remain in the crisis room from 15 minutes to 2 days, depending on the situation and the student's subsequent behavior in the crisis room. Students in the crisis room are forced to recognize and be accountable for their misbehavior. To return to class, they are required to make a written apology to the teacher and class, discuss the situation that got them removed from class, and describe how that situation will be handled next time.

Students at ALC remain for 12–18 months and are expected to gain 1.5 years of academic growth during that time. The instructional program for ALC students is no different from that of students in other schools. And students are held to the same standards as their counterparts in other schools. The differentiating factor is that instructional and behavioral development work hand in hand. Student focus groups are held every morning and every evening, with five or six students led by a counselor or case manager. In the morning session, the group reviews the previous day's events—what kind of incidents happened during the day, who was involved, what the student did, what went wrong and why, and how the student would handle similar cases in the future. At the end of the session, each student sets goals for her/himself. In the afternoon session, students evaluate the extent to which they met goals and expectations. Afternoons also include individual treatment sessions at which each student works with a counselor on his or her personal problems.

Students also are expected to grow in self-esteem, self-control, and self-management skills during their stay. Positive behavioral change is reinforced through a system that rewards positive achievements by awarding points and penalizes infractions and misbehavior by subtracting points. The system covers several key areas of behavior including problem solving, anger management, and impulsive behavior/decisionmaking. Exhibit 5-15 describes the behavioral system.

To return to a regular school, the ALC student must have accumulated 2,721 points, must reach the 75 percent achievement level in all classes, and must achieve a 95 percent rate of attendance. They also must receive recommendations from their homeroom teachers and case managers. Students are not permitted to return to the school from which they were expelled. Before leaving ALC, the student must write an apology to the old school and goals for the new school. Staff at the receiving school will meet at the ALC to smooth the transition. ALC continues monitoring the student for 6 months to see how well or poorly he/she is adjusting to the new environment. So far, 13 students have made the transition to other schools, and all but 2 have succeeded there. Students not responding well are not automatically returned to ALC. In fact, parents must ask that the student be allowed to return to the center.

Exhibit 5-15.
Behavioral point system used at the Alternative Learning Center, School #488

Areas of behavior	Positive criteria	Negative criteria
Power thrust	Realistic self-image; treats others as equals; pride in being a responsible person; open to disagreements; and good supports	Inflated self-image; feels superior; false pride; unrealistic expectations; must win always even in trivial things
Inability to emphasize	Remorseful; acknowledges others' feelings; interested in others; active participant; positive role model; polite and patient; and respects others' space	Harms others to get own desires met; withdrawal isolates; uncaring attitude; negatively influences others; attitude of ownership; and rude/impatient
Victim stance	Truthful; admits wrongdoing; copes with trouble that arise with strength; accepts consequences and learns from them; responds to challenges with a strong effort	Refuses to "own" behavior; minimize; denies; lies; feels sorry for self; seeks rescue to avoid consequences; says "I can't" when challenged
Impulsive	Responsible decision-making; thinking before acting; patient; can withstand frustration; pays attention; knows when to play/work, and excited by legal risks	Irresponsible decision making; failure to plan ahead; impatient; needs must be met immediately; short attention span; too much horseplay; and hooked on criminal excitement
Fails to accept obligation	Respectful; complies promptly with requests; works hard; work is complete and on time; works well with others; does what is needed w/o direction/supervision	Resists authority; refuses; argues; procrastinates; shows lack of effort; uncooperative; can't work with others; lack of self-discipline; and undependable
Anger	Express conflicts directly and appropriately; is personally responsible for anger; considered position of others; uses calming thoughts; responsibly manages anger and deal with stress	Non-verbal triggers, glaring; sulking controlled by "should" triggers; controlled by "blamer" triggers; and controlled or verbally attacks other
Problem solving	Recognizes that a problem exists; states the problem and states alternatives; plans and selects the best alternative; and takes appropriate action in problem solving	Ignores/denies that a problem exits; make assumptions and jumps to conclusions; uses unrealistic planning; and takes no action or irresponsible action to solve problems

Staff at ALC have been pleased with the outcomes attained by students. They point to two critical challenges that must be met to achieve better outcomes for students in need of special placements: first, the difficulty of getting parents involved in students' lives; second an inability to accommodate students in need due to the large numbers and the lack of space both inside schools and in alternative settings.

Since opening the original ALC, a second center has been established to serve a similar population of students in the Western region.

Flex and Twilight Programs

At present there are seven twilight and flex schools in BCPSS zoned high schools. The schools serve two populations: students who have already dropped out of school and are encouraged to return, and students considered at risk of dropping out because they have failed two or more grade levels. Twilight and flex programs emphasize remedial education and counseling and include a career technology component. Individual schools are monitored by site and are required to make reports on attendance and graduation rates to the district on a regular basis. As part of an evaluation report on twilight and flex schools, Westat received reports submitted to the Office of Alternative Schools and Programs.[48] However, the data provided by the vendor to BCPSS were not complete, and few reports provided information on outcomes or progress toward goals. Attachment A to this section provides thumbnail descriptions of the programs and includes information on funding levels and sources .

Other Alternative Programs

In addition to the 2 ALCs for middle school students and the 7 twilight/flex programs described above, 22 additional programs have been developed or are under development to provide appropriate educational placements for disruptive and at-risk students in BCPSS. Attachment A to this section of the chapter provides an overview of these programs. As shown, the district also operates alternative classrooms and programs for elementary school students, and a diagnostic center is available to assess elementary students who may require special services.

These programs for elementary students meet an especially acute need. Elementary school principals have reported that expulsion is often the only alternative for protecting children from other children whose behavior poses a serious safety threat. In September 1999, the Chief Administrative Officer for BCPSS appointed an Alternative Elementary School Task Force that studied the problem. The Task Force recommended that three or four regional centers be developed for seriously disruptive children and that every school reserve space to set up onsite alternative classrooms for such students.[49] Classrooms have been established in several sites with funds from the Safe Schools, Healthy Students grant. A grant was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education to fund three Alternative Centers for disruptive elementary students; one, the Upton Elementary Alternative Center, has already opened.

Site visit interviews indicate that staff remain somewhat skeptical about the adequacy of the alternative placement program. While they appreciate the effort that has been made to provide alternatives to the regular school environment, they feel that the process for placing students is slow and burdensome. We heard concerns voiced about the time needed to remove a student from a dysfunctional or dangerous situation and place the student in the needed alternative setting. We cannot say whether this problem is really a result of the process in place or stems from the shortage of alternative placement options.

[48]Baltimore City Public Schools, Office of Alternative Schools and Programs, *Evaluation Report: Twilight and Flex School Programs. May 1999-September 30, 2000.* November 2000.

[49]Sally Maxton, Status Report: Alternative Schools and Programs, June 14 1999

School Safety Committees

By March 2000, school climate/safety committees had been organized in all district schools. Membership in most schools now includes representation by school staff, parents, and police, as well as members of neighborhood, service, and faith-based communities. Site visit interviews indicated that that the committees play an active role in schools. School administrators have made special outreach efforts to faith-based organizations, hosting a breakfast meeting attended by 40 principals and representatives from 24 faith-based groups. At the breakfast, faith community representatives were encouraged to become involved in the school system's work in Baltimore Rising: Inspired Partners Initiative. They also were invited to serve on their respective school safety/climate committees. Although federal funding for the Bush Administration's faith-based initiatives is slated to go directly to the religious organizations, partnerships with these organizations can provide additional resources for activities that promote school safety.

The district has developed a critical incident plan that outlines comprehensive responses to events such as shootings, hostage situations, bomb scares, and violent assaults. School safety committees took responsibility for disseminating the plan and will now be providing critical incident reports to the BCPSS School Police Department annually. In the coming year, the committees will be trained in the area of violence prevention so that they can be more effective advocates for safety programs and activities.

A new Code of Conduct was put into effect in the third quarter of the 2000–2001 school year. Surveys indicated that 77 percent of principals but only 37 percent of teachers received training related to use and enforcement of the Code of Conduct (Table 5-69). Information from interviews with program staff, and respondents at site visits confirmed the view that most school staff knew about the code and its coverage. However, while 70 percent of principals also believed students to be familiar with the policy, only 33 percent of teachers agreed. It is worth noting that far fewer of the principals at alternative schools and special education schools believed their students to be familiar with the code (Table 5-70), 43 and 50 percent, respectively, compared to 70 percent overall. This finding is interesting in view of information obtained from the principal of school #488, the only alternative school to which a site visit was made. Staff of ALC review the code with students and parents during the admission process. Moreover, in the view of staff, students quickly internalize the code of conduct and discipline governing behavior in classrooms and the hallway. After some time in the program, ALC students adopt a behavioral norm that reinforces the code and good conduct. Students police themselves and are quick to intervene when they see other students violating the code. In addition, reminders of appropriate behavior are posted prominently in the halls and in classrooms.

Table 5-69.
Percentage of principals and teachers reporting they received training on the new Code of Conduct

School characteristic	Principals	Teachers
Total	77	37
Instructional level		
Elementary	76	39
Elementary/middle	71	45
Middle	86	38
High	72	24
School status		
Regular schools	78	36
AF/DI schools	80	40
Alternative schools	71	35
Special education schools	71	51
Citywide schools	57	25
AF/DI status		
AF	83	42
DI	75	38
Reconstitution eligibility status		
Eligible	79	36
Ineligible	75	37

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher and Principal Surveys, 2001.

Table 5-70.
Percentage of principals and teachers reporting that students are familiar with the new Code of Conduct

School characteristic	Principals	Teachers
Total	70	33
Instructional level		
Elementary	71	37
Elementary/middle	76	34
Middle	71	28
High	58	28
School status		
Regular schools	72	31
AF/DI schools	76	39
Alternative schools	43	25
Special education schools	50	34
Citywide schools	63	31
AF/DI status		
AF	71	37
DI	82	41
Reconstitution eligibility status		
Eligible	73	34
Ineligible	68	31

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher and Principal Surveys, 2001.

Table 5-71.
Percentage of principals and teachers agreeing that their schools are safe, drug-free environments

School characteristic	Principals	Teachers
Total	96	77
Instructional level		
Elementary	97	82
Elementary/middle	95	87
Middle	90	70
High	100	67
School status		
Regular schools	95	74
AF/DI schools	98	85
Alternative schools	100	66
Special education schools	100	94
Citywide schools	100	86
AF/DI status		
AF	100	85
DI	94	86
Reconstitution eligibility status		
Eligible	94	73
Ineligible	98	81

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal and Teacher Surveys, 2001.

Objective 6 Outcomes

School Climate

The survey requested information on two aspects of school climate, safety of their environment, and respect shown by students. Virtually all principals and over three-quarters of the teachers judged their schools to be safe and drug-free (Table 5-71). The greater majority of principals (71–100 percent) also considered students respectful—to them, to one another, to teachers, and to parents and visitors as well. Except for teachers at special education and citywide schools, who tended to share this view, fewer teachers judged students to treat others with respect (Table 5-72).

Infractions of the Discipline Code

The 1998–99 Master Plan established arrests, assaults, other crimes, and total criminal infractions as indicators for monitoring changes in safety and discipline. A 5 percent decrease was sought in each case. According to Baltimore School Police Department reports, reductions far surpassed that level even after the first year. The number of arrests and assaults decreased by more than half, and total incidents reported were reduced by close to two-thirds (Table 5-73). Although no specific targets were set for reducing drug and alcohol use, police reports reflect a 59 percent reduction in drug use from 132 incidents in 1997–98 to 83 in 1999–200.[50] Separate data alcohol use are not available from the Baltimore school police.

[50]Baltimore School Police Statistical Summary of Incidents for school years 1995–96 through 2000–2001.

Table 5-72.
Percentage of principals and teachers agreeing that students show respect to others in the school environment

School characteristic	To other students		To teachers		To school administration		To parents and other visitors	
	Principals	Teachers	Principals	Teachers	Principals	Teachers	Principals	Teachers
Total	79	37	86	45	93	52	93	52
Instructional level								
Elementary	78	36	88	45	95	54	95	54
Elementary/middle	86	41	91	52	100	55	100	55
Middle	71	28	71	32	76	40	76	40
High	74	42	84	47	89	52	89	52
School status								
Regular schools	76	33	85	40	91	48	91	48
AF/DI schools	83	37	88	47	98	53	98	53
Alternative schools	71	47	71	44	86	48	86	48
Special education schools	86	71	86	75	86	79	86	79
Citywide schools	88	63	100	69	100	71	100	71
AF/DI status								
AF	88	35	92	44	100	53	100	53
DI	76	42	82	52	94	52	94	52
Reconstitution eligibility status								
Eligible	78	30	84	35	90	43	90	43
Ineligible	79	45	88	54	95	60	95	60

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal and Teacher Surveys, 2001.

Table 5-73.
Summary of serious incidents in BCPSS, by type of offense and years

Type of incident	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Percent increase/decrease	
						1996–98	1999–2000
Arrests	2,279	1,560	2,276	1,858	928	-0.1	-50.1
Assaults	855	859	986	865	632	7.7	-26.9
Total crime	2,489	2,450	2,779	2,575	2,160	5.8	-16.1

SOURCE: Baltimore School Police Statistical Summary of Incidents for 1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999.

In addition to examining statistics related to discipline, we included survey questions to determine principals' and teachers' perceptions of how the discipline code impacted selected infractions in their schools. Table 5-74, which presents their responses, shows that less than half of the principals and less than 40 per cent of the teachers reported that the new code of conduct resulted in large or very large reductions in drug and alcohol use, fights and assaults, or other disruptive behavior. Principals and teachers also were asked how the new code of conduct affected rates of suspension, expulsion, and other disciplinary actions. Table 5-75 shows that only 43 percent of principals and 38 percent of teachers believed the code reduced the need to take such actions. These perceived rates are consistent with data reported earlier, which suggested that school staff more often regard local measures as the effective agents in reducing disruptive behaviors.

Table 5-74.
Percentage of principals and teachers reporting large or very large reduction in selected infractions resulting from new code of conduct

School characteristic	Drug and alcohol use		Fights and assaults		Other disruptive behavior	
	Principals	Teachers	Principals	Teachers	Principals	Teachers
Total	42	36	48	40	46	34
Instructional level						
Elementary	42	32	48	36	48	33
Elementary/middle	50	27	42	34	42	26
Middle	43	48	52	47	52	37
High	42	35	53	44	37	39
School status						
Regular schools	46	36	49	39	45	32
AF/DI schools	41	35	49	39	53	38
Alternative schools	--	38	29	46	29	45
Special education schools	20	36	40	40	40	39
Citywide schools	50	31	50	42	50	42
AF/DI status						
AF	41	40	59	41	59	43
DI	40	26	35	36	44	30
Reconstitution eligibility status						
Eligible	46	34	52	37	51	32
Ineligible	39	37	44	42	42	37

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal and Teacher Surveys, 2001.

Table 5-75.
Percent of principals and teachers reporting large or very large reductions in suspensions/expulsions and other disciplinary actions

School/principal characteristic	Suspensions and expulsions		Other disciplinary actions	
	Principals	Teachers	Principals	Teachers
Total	43	38	40	35
Instructional level				
Elementary	46	38	43	34
Elementary/middle	37	29	33	29
Middle	43	47	50	44
High	47	38	33	35
School status				
Regular schools	43	38	41	34
AF/DI schools	50	40	46	40
Alternative schools	29	38	14	28
Special education schools	20	29	--	24
Citywide schools	38	38	29	35
AF/DI status				
AF	61	44	57	43
DI	35	34	31	36
Reconstitution eligibility status				
Eligible	46	36	43	35
Ineligible	41	40	37	34

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal and Teacher Surveys, 2001.

Suspensions and Expulsions[51]

The 1998–99 Master Plan also set targets for suspensions and expulsions. In the years immediately following implementation, suspensions increased initially, which may have resulted from the stricter, zero-tolerance discipline policy being enforced. From 1999 to 2000, the short-term suspensions had increased by 18 percent and the number of students suspended, by 14 percent. Long-term suspensions also have increased by 26 percent. In contrast, the number of expulsions has decreased by 7 percent (calculated from data in Table 5-76). During the 1999–2000 school year, 644 special education students were suspended for more than 10 days or expelled, 124 accumulated multiple short-term suspensions of 10 days or more, and a total of 726 were removed from school by a Hearing Officer or for drug or weapon offenses.[52]

Table 5-76.
Number of BCPSS students suspended and expelled: 1998–2001

Type of removal	1999	2000	2001	Annual change 1998–2001
Short-term suspension				
Number of incidents ...	11,954	16,151	16,256	2,151
Number of students.....	9,050	11,551	11,675	1,313
Long-term suspension				
Number of incidents ...	2,278	3,177	3,466	594
Number of students.....	*	*	*	
Expulsion				
Number of incidents ...	1,031	862	879	-76
Number of students.....	*	*	*	

SOURCE: Personal communication, Stephen Ruffini, Baltimore City Public School System, Division of Special Education and Student Support Services, Office of Consent Decree Evaluation and Data Management. Suspension/Expulsion Data, October 11, 2001.

[51]Comparisons of total suspensions with earlier years are not possible because of changed reporting guidelines.

[52]Reports of children with disabilities subject to unilateral removal for drug or weapon offenses; removal based on hearing determination regarding likely injury of long-term suspension/expulsion. Maryland State Department of Education. Division of Special Education/Early childhood Intervention services, school year 1999-2000.

Summary and Recommendations

Our review shows that BCPSS has taken a number of important steps toward creating a safe, secure learning environment and providing alternative schools or classrooms for students who are too disruptive to participate in the regular school or classroom. Whether it is the new policy and code of conduct that is having an impact or a general change in school culture that has led to changes, there is a general feeling that the schools are a safe place. However, teachers and principals need additional help or strategies for dealing with disruptive students. Schoolwide programs that train staff in behavior management strategies may provide effective approaches to further improving school climate.

Significant progress has been made in reducing expulsions, but suspensions continue to increase. However, it is clear that a significant need still exists to provide more alternatives for students who, for a variety of reasons, need special attention and supports. Processes for getting these student into assistance also warrant some additional examination to see if they can be streamlined and still safe guard student rights.

Attachment A

New BCPSS Alternative Schools and Programs in Place in the 2000–2001 School Year*

Program	Capacity	Ages	Grades	Comments
Middle Schools				
1. Alternative Learning Center # 488 Southeast Learning Academy 1601 E. Pratt St. (Lombard Middle School	100	12-15	6-9th	Funded by BCPSS for 100 expelled students. Includes summer school, after-school program, arts and music component, full core curriculum, cognitive behavioral treatment, and multi-family therapy.
2. Alternative Learning Center #488 West West Baltimore Middle School 201 North Bend Road	100	12-16	6-10th	Funded by BCPSS for 100 expelled students from West and Northwest Baltimore. Community supports. Pending approval of #488 budget by Budget Office.
3. Garrison Middle #42 3910 Barrington Road	20	11-14	6-8th	The Safe Schools, Healthy Students grant supports an alternative school suspension centers.
4. Dunbar Middle #133 500 N. Caroline Street	20	11-14	6-8th	The Safe Schools, Healthy Students grant supports an alternative suspension center.
5. Project Pride West Francis M. Wood H.S. #178 100 N. Calhoun St.	20	14-17	Transition to 9th grade for eighth (8th) graders	Remedial education (full core curriculum) for 8th graders who have failed two or more grades. Wrap-around services, parent visits and, tutoring provided by Choice Middle School Program at the Shriver Center (UMBC). Funded by SAFE grant.
6. Project Pride East Fairmount Harford H.S. #456 2555 Gwynns Falls Pkwy-	40	14-17	Transition to 9th grade for eighth (8th) graders	Remedial education (full core curriculum) for 8th graders who have failed two or more grades. Teacher, aide, and supplies funded by $75,000 grant from Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention.

*Some of these programs had been in operation prior to 1999, but had been put on hold due to lack of funding.

New BCPSS Alternative Schools and Programs in Place in the 2000–2001 School Year

Program	Capacity	Ages	Grades	Comments
Middle Schools (continued)				
7. Baltimore Orioles Academy Harlem Park Middle School #78 1500 Harlem Ave.	45	12-15	6-8th	Provides middle school dropout prevention program for disruptive students at Harlem Park with a middle school career rotation and transition to Career Tech High Schools. Program partners include Communities in Schools and the Baltimore Orioles, who provide team incentives for students. Funding includes $200,000 MSDE Goals 2000, $180,000-Youth Opportunities grant, $50,000 Orioles (TBA), $50,000 COSTCO (TBA), $30,000 Abell Foundation for Construction. Start up Sept. 2000
Total middle students served = 305				
High Schools				
Twilight Flex Schools				Safe Schools, Healthy Students grant cut reduces program from $497,000 to $111,000 this year. Those programs are funded through 9/30/00 including the following:
8. Lake Clifton H.S./ Alternatives Unlimited #40 2801 St. Lo Drive $119,354	200	14-18	9-12th	Provides remediation for basic skill deficiencies, social skills, dropout prevention, and career counseling. Projects 1 year increase in reading and math skills.
9. Southwestern H.S./ Communities in Schools #412 200 Font Hill Ave. $76,207	75	14-18	9-12th	Provides remediation for basic skill deficiencies, social skills, dropout prevention, and career counseling. Projects 1 year increase in reading and math skills.
10. Northwestern H.S./ Communities in Schools #401 6900 Park Heights Ave. $68,550	90	14-18	9-12th	Dropout prevention services address academic deficiencies and social skills development with goals to improve self-esteem, increase parent involvement and to increase graduation rate for at-risk students.

New BCPSS Alternative Schools and Programs in Place in the 2000–2001 School Year

Program	Capacity	Ages	Grades	Comments
High Schools (continued)				
11. Patterson H.S. (Woodbourne partner withdrew) #405 100 Kane Street $96,775	60	14-18	9-12th	Funds summer school remediation, experiential learning, peer support groups, family-based services, community service learning, academic remediation.
12. Douglas H.S. Baltimore City Community College and STRIVE #450 2301 Gwynns Falls Pkwy $60,083	150	14-18	9-12th	Dropout prevention services include development of individualized career plans, academic assessments and career profiles, computer literacy causes. STRIVE's Employment Training Program, job referrals, BCCC's college orientation, Pre-GED instruction, and dual registration for students seeking postsecondary education.
13. Southern H.S./ Alternatives Unlimited #70 1100 Covington St. $76,207	60	14-16	9th	Helps 9th graders who are academically deficient or have been suspended to develop study, discipline, social, and academic skills to successfully transition to 10th grade.
Total H.S. students served 735				

New BCPSS Alternative Schools and Programs in Place in the 2000–2001 School Year

Program	Capacity	Ages	Grades	Comments
Elementary Schools				
14. Diagnostic Center Moravia Park Elementary #105 6201 Frankford Ave.	18 (by fall)	5-11	K-5	Provides 6 weeks diagnostic assessment for referred students with behavioral and emotional problems. Waiting list exceeds 100 students (Special Ed.).
15. Special Ed Alternatives to Expulsion with Upton School located at Johnston Square #16 1101 Valley St.	30	5-11	K-5	Funded by MSDE at $75,000. Upton School will provide a teacher, SSHS will support an aide and Special Ed will provide a social worker, will provide full curriculum and cognitive behavioral treatment program with supportive counseling for parents.
Safe Schools, Healthy Students Alternative Classrooms Mid City Area Northwest Area				The Safe Schools, Healthy Students grant supports 10 elementary alternative classrooms this year. Office of Alternative Schools & Programs' staff are working with Mindy Schumann to design specialized training for alternative classroom staff.
16. Thomas G. Hayes #102 601 N. Central Ave. MC	20	5-11	K-5	
17. Madison Square #26 1401 E. Biddle St. MC	20	5-11	K-5	
18. Johnston Square #16 Northwest Area 1101 Valley Street MC	20	5-11	K-5	
19. Windsor Hills #87 4001 Alto Rd. NW	20	5-11	K-5	
20. Callaway #251 3701 Greenspring Ave. NW	20	5-11	K-5	
21. Calvin Rodwell #256 3501 Frederick Ave. NW	20	5-11	K-5	
22. Upton Elementary Alternative Learning Center				
23-24. Elementary Two Alternative Centers(TBA)		5-11	K-5	The Office of Alternative Schools & Programs (ASAP) submitted a grant to USDE to fund three Alternative Learning Centers at $750,000 per year. The centers would each serve five to six neighborhood schools. Transportation would be provided door to door by a neighborhood school bus.
Served total elementary students served: 148 expelled students +138 suspended students				

*TBA: grant pending or school to be assigned.

6. Findings on Human Resources

Since Maryland SB 795, BCPSS has implemented in good faith, and genuinely advanced on, a broad, multi-pronged front to enhance the quality, stability, and effectiveness of its workforce in the schools. Four prongs of this complex effort are addressed in this part of the evaluation.

First, personnel recruiting efforts have been intensified and enhanced, led by the Director of Human Resources for BCPSS. For example, BCPSS has developed and gained substantial funding for additional attractive avenues to teacher certification through partnerships with local universities and colleges (e.g., Project Site Support). BCPSS now has staff dedicated to recruiting and advertising only, has produced informative teacher candidate materials, and is in the process of developing and bringing online a database intended to rationalize and streamline the process of evaluating the credentials of applicants and existing teachers. The district has won stronger incentive, salary, and overall compensation packages for new teachers and principals that likely will attract additional applicants.

Second, BCPSS has taken numerous steps to stem the high outflow of early career teachers from the district in recent years. For example, a number of new-teacher mentor programs with committed staffs have been implemented, as well as improved over time, as a result of ongoing third-party evaluations. In addition, BCPSS has developed and implemented through its professional development arm, a New Teachers Summer Institute that strongly facilitates the induction of new teachers in the district. Although too early to see much in the way of sustained improvement in teacher retention from these efforts, there are some indications that they are working in the intended direction. For example, the number of new teachers needed in recent years has declined and shows promise of continuing in that direction.

Third, BCPSS has recognized the need to strengthen both the quantity (variety) and quality of the professional development opportunities it provides teachers and school administrators. BCPSS has made progress in this direction through the reorganization of its professional development operation and expansion of programs and offerings. Districtwide participation in professional development is very high, and participants assign the offerings moderately high marks for organization, clarity, relevance, and the like. Professional development offerings now cover a wide range of topics, including issues in special education, and BCPSS teachers have availed themselves of the full range—much of which focuses on classroom practice.

Fourth, in the area of personnel evaluation for improvement and quality assurance, BCPSS has designed and implemented a Performance-Based Evaluation System for its teachers and principals that is now in use for the majority of the schools' workforce. The training of qualified school personnel to use the new system is close to being complete, additional procedures are being developed for specialist groups in the schools, and the system's main instrument has undergone state-led audit and improvement.

Even with these considerable efforts, and the progress made post-SB 795, very significant challenges remain for BCPSS in all four areas examined, and in the human resources arena overall.

For example, despite enhanced recruitment, retention, and mentoring efforts, the turnover in BCPSS' workforce remains comparatively high, particularly for teachers, at somewhat over 15 percent. Perhaps most challenging is that the proportion of the teaching workforce that holds provisional credentials has ballooned from about 14 percent 5 years ago, to over 24 percent currently, even though the annual numbers of newly hired teachers has decreased. This figure is the highest among Maryland counties (only Prince Georges comes close), and well beyond state total (about 8 percent). Thus, recruiting and retaining quality teachers in the BCPSS workforce remains a significant challenge that is not helped by a lack of central office consultation with principals and teachers.

Challenges also remain in BCPSS professional development. Teachers do not reflect that professional development is valued beyond attendance requirements: close to half of the teachers surveyed for this evaluation reported that they participate only because it is a requirement of employment in the district—not a ringing endorsement by consumers of the perceived usefulness of what is being offered. Many suggest that the district's offerings could be

made more relevant to their working situations, and that this could be achieved through consultation with teachers and/or principals.

Similarly, although the new Performance-Based Evaluation System for teachers is now in place, with eligible evaluators trained, the system exists and operates absent widespread and needed support or ownership from either teachers or principals, and without much evidence that it contributes to the improvement of the teaching workforce. In fact, the views of many teachers and administrators regarding the evaluation system's centerpiece portfolio seem to be that it is simply one more hurdle to jump over, and largely disconnected from what they actually do in their classrooms.

Taking the view that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, there are also some cross-cutting challenges for BCPSS in this arena—themes that run common to all four areas:

1. *Improved coordination, articulation, and communication about the many efforts that fall inside the purview of Human Resources are needed. Moreover, to achieve better coordination, and possibly more effective implementation of change efforts, less may be more. In particular, teachers hard-pressed by their daily duties need to perceive less administrative burden rather than more, as well as clear, consistent messages about how various improvement efforts fit together to achieve a desired purpose. This coordination and communication is currently lacking for BCPSS.*

2. *For teachers and school administrators to support, and eventually own, a change effort, they need to be consulted as professionals who understand their craft and know their context—they need substantive input in the process. At present, this does not seem part of the BCPSS culture.*

This section of Westat's evaluation of the BCPSS reform effort describes the findings on selected human resource issues within the district. Briefly, the evaluation team was charged with discovering the effects—intended and unintended—and appraising the effectiveness of efforts to improve the quality, stability, and effectiveness of the BCPSS school workforce (teachers and principals) as a result of SB 795. Four areas of the broad human resource effort are addressed:

1. Recruitment practices for teachers and principals
2. Mentoring and other retention strategies for new teachers and principals
3. Professional development activities for teachers and principals
4. Performance-based evaluation for teachers and principals

We begin by restating the key questions that were asked of this evaluation, and the methods and sources of data used to address them. Then, for each of the four areas of the Human Resources improvement effort listed above, we a) describe briefly specific district improvement efforts (objectives, strategies) put in place by The Master Plan for the district; b) discuss the effects and the effectiveness of improvement efforts within key areas; and c) summarize what has been found for each Human Resource area, note issues that are yet to be resolved, and provide the district with recommendations for future actions and improvements.

Questions and Methods

Key Questions

As directed by the BCPSS and MSDE, through the Joint Oversight Committee (JOC) for this evaluation, the "final evaluation" of reforms in the governance and management of Baltimore's public schools is to address:

1. Whether or not BCPSS has improved management in the system during the 4 years since SB 795 was enacted, as evidenced by its performance (Human Resources) management, including organization and staffing of the BCPSS central office and area offices, integration of the special education

function within the organizational structure, staff hiring and assignment—particularly new teacher recruitment, and performance-based evaluation systems for teachers, principals, and administrators.

2. Whether or not BCPSS' current management tools are being used effectively, as evidenced by the implementation of Master Plan Objective 2, *Provide Qualified and Competent Teachers and Principals*—that is, effective teacher and principal recruitment practices, teacher mentoring and other retention strategies for new teachers and principals, ongoing professional development, including school-based professional development, and performance-based evaluation systems for both teachers and principals.

Exhibit 6-1 presents the four areas of focus within the human resources arena.

Exhibit 6-1.
Areas of focus

Focus area
I. Description and discussion of implemented recruitment practices for teachers and principals as contrasted with pre-SB 795 activities.
II. Description and discussion of mentoring and other retention strategies for new teachers and principals as contrasted with pre-SB 795 strategies.
III. Description and discussion of professional development activities as contrasted with pre-SB 795 activities.
IV. Description and discussion of the performance-based evaluation systems as contrasted with pre-SB 795 principal and teacher evaluation practices.

Methods

Consistent with the other parts of this reform effort evaluation, this section of the evaluation approached the examination and appraisal of changes in BCPSS Human Resources policy and practice using a mixed-method approach. Four main methods of data-gathering were used: one quantitative (survey), and three qualitative (document review, key informant interview, and focus group interview). Each of these data collection methods have been detailed previously elsewhere in this report. The focus group interviews were especially helpful in gaining insight into the experience of BCPSS teachers, mentors, and school administrators. As will be seen, we have included many direct quotes from focus group participants in this section as their words provide an important perspective.

Findings on the Recruitment of Teachers and Principals

BCPSS has moved forward in its campaign to recruit more and better teachers and principals through enhancements in funding and in the efforts of the Department of Human Resources. As delineated in The Master Plan, BCPSS has formed partnerships with local universities, enabled recruitment specialist personnel, held employment fairs, and created increasingly competitive incentive and salary packages. On the whole, these efforts have attracted a fair number of candidates and new hires, but not enough, and not enough with appropriate credentials to fill the ever-present need.

Although recruiting efforts have grown, BCPSS faces the challenge of filling vacancies with a quality teacher workforce. Officials must continue to address the problems of high numbers of provisionally licensed teachers, reports of poor placement fit and support, and lack of BCPSS teacher and principal input into the recruiting process. Many principals and teachers feel the system is not functioning to the best advantages in regards to recruiting more and better teachers, a challenge they feel has produced a "Catch-22" situation: incentives like university training and housing are reportedly encouraging short-timers who take the opportunity to gain a college degree, teacher training, teacher certification, and good starting salaries, and then leave BCPSS after 2 or 3 years in the system.

Introduction and Background

This section summarizes the progress of BCPSS in recruiting new and qualified teachers and principals. The Master Plan strategies established in the area of recruitment include:

- Strategy 2.1.2: Compete more effectively for new teachers and provide sufficient teachers to deliver comprehensive educational programs as outlined in the Strategic Plan to Recruit, Certify, and Retain Qualified Teachers.
- Strategy 2.1.3: Provide competitive teacher salaries.
- Strategy 2.1.4: Develop a structured system for teacher input regarding reform initiatives.

To further the development of The Master Plan strategies, two task forces worked to formulate recommendations toward improved recruiting as described in the BCPSS Chief Academic Officer's Strategic Plan to Recruit, Certify, and Retain Qualified Teachers (hereafter Plan to Recruit). These recommendations include:

- Increased incentives for new hires
- More effective marketing tools
- Enhanced relationships with institutions of higher education

These plans have been incorporated in The Master Plan 2000–2001 Update. The Plan to Recruit notes,

> Achieving and maintaining quality instruction in 183 schools, especially in the 83 reconstitution-eligible schools, is a top priority of the Baltimore City Public School System. One major avenue for attaining quality instruction is through the recruitment, certification, and retention of excellent teachers….However, in the extremely competitive market for teachers in Maryland, this region, and the nation, attracting fully certified teachers to a high-need urban area remains a challenge.

Three significant strategies under The Master Plan and the Plan to Recruit have been pursued and completed:

- BCPSS advocated and received substantial funding for implementing new teacher and principal compensation packages.[53] BCPSS recognizes that competitive pay is critical for improving the system's appeal to qualified candidates. The following salary changes were drawn up in collaboration with the Baltimore Teachers Union.
  - Teachers: Once ranked 24th out of 24 Maryland school systems, BCPSS' teacher compensation and schedule package now ranks 3rd, greatly improving the city's competitiveness with nearby districts. Human Resources reported restructuring the teacher compensation package at a cost of $23 million, including (effective 2000–2001) an across-the-board 4 percent raise for teachers, an entry-level teacher salary increase of 11.5 percent, and a reduction of pay scale steps (scheduled increments) from 28 to 21.
  - Principals: As BCPSS' principal pay scale packages have in past years been some of the lowest in the state, an adjusted pay scale for principals was approved,[54] bringing the scale rank from 20th of 24 state systems to 2nd, and to the 55th percentile nationally according to staff

[53] Russo's Status Report 1, 2000–2001, Implementation Benchmark 2.1.3.1, reports Human Resources received $200,000 of $2 million from the General Assembly, and through the Office of Grants, the Department of Eligibility, Recruitment and Retention received $153,510. (The City Board of School Commissioners slated $33.04 million to support the priority initiatives under the broad Objective 2.) See BCPSS website, www.bcps.k12.md.us/mPlan2000.html, "Introduction to The Master Plan."

[54] New principal pay scale increases will cost approximately $1.2 million.

interviewed in the Office of Human Resources.

- In a joint effort, BCPSS and Adler Publishing have developed materials targeted toward candidates. Brightening the system's image, these materials carry the theme, "Big City, Big Opportunities, Big Rewards." Recruitment materials and supplies for recruiters were also developed and are in use. Additionally, the BCPSS web presence continues to be enhanced and updated.

- BCPSS has established formalized partnerships with local colleges and universities that provide certification and master's degree cohort programs for teachers and administrators.

In August 1999, the BCPSS Personnel Department was reorganized to become the Department of Human Resources. A new director, team, and five offices, including a revised and enhanced Office of Teacher Certification, were added. Further, enhanced funding to the new Department of Human Resources has enabled more staff time dedicated to targeting, soliciting, and following up potential candidates. Recruiting specialists are in place. Recruiting of teacher and principal candidates has been conducted in several states, as well as internationally. Additionally, principals and area executive officers have managed booths and interviewed candidates in several employment fairs. The Office of Teacher Certification has increased its staff from one specialist whose time was split between BCPSS and MSDE and two clerical support persons to two professionals and four persons to better serve the needs of over 8,000 certificated BCPSS employees.

The system has been operating with a limited application database unable to adequately meet high volume demand of 21st century information needs. However, the development and expansion of a much-needed database is near completion, with data entry scheduled to end in late summer 2001. This task has been especially time-consuming, in part because the newly organized office staff has not yet received the training to be able to audit candidates' credentials. Applicant files are being reviewed and evaluated at MSDE. After training, BCPSS Office of Teacher Certification staff will be operating what they expect to be an audit district in which they will be authorized to assess the qualifications of provisionally licensed teachers onsite, thereby reducing handling time and flow of paperwork.

The Office of Recruitment and Staffing in Human Resources reports the recruiting processes used during the 2000–2001 school year will likely be revised for the next year's efforts. A summer 2001 analysis of the experiences of a group of Baltimore's first- and second-year teachers will inform operations, as will information gathered from teachers who leave the system.

Points of Inquiry and Sources of Evidence

Three key points of inquiry guide the evaluation on recruitment practices since the implementation of the BCPSS Master Plan. These points of inquiry are:

- Incentives used to recruit teachers
- Results in terms of quality of new staff, including
  - Steps taken to reduce the number of provisional teachers
  - Numbers of teachers currently teaching in areas for which they lack credentials
- Level of input of teachers and principals into the process of recruitment

The evaluation draws on information gathered from BCPSS documents and stakeholder sources to address the perceived effectiveness of these changes. Stakeholder groups consulted and collection methods used to address changes in recruitment practices in the system and points of inquiry include:

- Interviews with key BCPSS Human Resources and MSDE personnel

- Confidential survey to principals and teachers: "How is BCPSS Doing?"
- Focus groups with 9 principals and 20 teachers working in the system

Incentives

For the 1998–99 school year, coordination efforts among Baltimore City, Municipal Employees Credit Union, and BCPSS representatives resulted in monetary housing and relocation incentives for candidates. Ongoing since then, the incentive package has continued to expand (Exhibit 6-2). In addition, BCPSS has made progress in attracting new hires and becoming competitive with other school systems in the state. Under the auspices of the New School Board of Commissioners, BCPSS will likely add to the types and sources of incentives for new teachers as funding and partnerships make possible. The Department of Human Resources also believes it must offer candidates special incentives above an entry-level compensation package; for example, extra incentives should be in place for special education career paths, a high need area in BCPSS.

Exhibit 6-2.
BCPSS new hire incentives

1. Forgivable loans for housing costs (Baltimore City Targeted Home Ownership Program)
2. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) subsidy for acquiring homes at 50 percent of cost
3. Required new teacher development course given during the first year of teaching
4. Tuition reimbursements
5. Alternative certification career paths for noneducation majors (i.e., Resident Teacher Program, Teach for America, Project Site Support)
6. Teacher compensation schedule
7. Pre-employment summer training and orientation for new teachers, including a $125 per diem stipend
8. Bonuses of $2,000 from the state to veteran teachers in reconstitution-eligible schools

Unfortunately, the consensus of the early-career BCPSS teachers who participated in the focus group interviews was that the incentives and promises offered them to take employment in Baltimore City were inadequate once they began their positions in the system. In other words, incentives on paper did not always translate into incentives in fact. References were made to lack of communication from BCPSS headquarters and slow turn-around from Human Resources regarding certification issues. On the site level, teachers complained of unrealized promises made by principals who hired them, lack of resources, and general lack of support.

Quality of New Staff

In the Baltimore system, a uniquely high number of working teachers lack teacher credentials and licensure (see Table 6-1). Nonetheless, and consistent with standards for effective teaching across the nation, it is evident that MSDE and BCPSS education officials do not see this as acceptable and their perception of the quality of new teacher hires is tied, at least in good part, to training and certification:

> BCPSS recognizes the critical need to recruit and retain certified staff in all of its schools. Certification is a clear and major indicator of the quality of instruction. Of the 1,002 new teachers hired in the system during the 1998–1999 school year, only 32 percent held certification. In reconstitution-eligible schools, the need is even more critical. Currently, 26 percent of the system's teachers are noncertified; more than 30 percent of the teachers in reconstitution-eligible schools are noncertified.[55]

[55] From Section 1, Master Plan Update 2000–2001. Available online at www.bcps.k12.md.us/mPlan2000/sec1main.html

Table 6-1.
Numbers of provisionally certified teachers in BCPSS compared to other selected Maryland school systems

School system	December 2000			April 2001		
	Number of teachers	Number of provisional teachers	Percent of provisional teachers	Number of teachers	Number of provisional teachers	Percent of provisional teachers
Baltimore City	5,948	1,353	22.7	6,096	1,474	24.2
Baltimore County	6,786	307	4.5	6,989	270	3.9
Prince George's County	7,682	1,353	17.6	7,755	1,430	18.4
Montgomery County	8,532	384	4.5	8,919	363	4.1
State total	52,018	3,987	7.7	53,501	4,409	8.2

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, *Number and Percent of Maryland Teachers Issued a Provisional Certificate, 2000–2001*, 2001.

Steps Taken to Reduce the Number of Provisional Teachers

The number of teachers and especially new hires with provisional licenses was, at the time of SB 795, and continues to be, an issue. In response, steps have been taken to reduce this historically high number of provisionally certified teachers, including establishing a new limit on number of years a teacher can carry a provisional certification without becoming fully certified, increasing partnerships with local universities that provide coursework and support toward certification, and allocating enhanced funding for these efforts. MSDE applied a lifetime cap of four provisional license renewals per teacher. The message to teachers is clear: move forward with a professional development plan toward certification. Moreover, in addition to the MSDE and BCPSS view that teacher quality is associated with appropriate certification, there is the hard reality that federal class-size reduction dollars are currently tied to a 2 percent threshold on the number of provisionally certified teachers working in a district. Continually exceeding that threshold could result in some loss of federal funding for BCPSS.

The BCPSS program to re-employ retired teachers is another step to alleviate the need to hire provisionally certified teachers. An incentive for retired teachers to come back to work is that they are not subject to income limitations, that is, they may receive both retirement income and their teacher's salary. An alternative to attract veteran teachers to challenging schools is a $2,000 incentive from the state that BCPSS has promoted. To date, BCPSS has not pursued the re-employment of retired teachers for classroom teaching positions extensively. Human Resources reports that BCPSS focuses on targeting retirees for mentoring and recruitment activities.

The system has long had alternative routes for teacher-candidates to obtain certification. Yet another progressive and practical step is the partnerships BCPSS has formed with Towson, Morgan State, and Coppin State Universities to use their expertise in bringing BCPSS staff forward in professional development and certification. BCPSS officials previously had no definite knowledge of what coursework and other requirements its teachers who were not fully certified needed, so the arrangement with the higher education institutions also fills that gap. These partnerships improve the professional opportunities for BCPSS school staff, lessen the burden on BCPSS to provide courses that address certification requirements, and free the staff to enhance their information collection and certification roles.

School principal turnover has not been a problem in BCPSS, despite (until this year) having one of the lowest pay packages in the state. Nonetheless, the Department of Human Resources has conducted both out-of-county as well as within-state recruitment efforts to attract quality principals. Experienced principals coming into the system from out of the city are not as common as "home grown" principals, i.e., staff moving through the ranks within the system to

become BCPSS principals. This practice is reported to be encouraged, and a process exists for BCPSS teachers and candidates who wish to become principals. Teachers can apply for an administrative job and work to meet the requirements. Once done, they are placed on an eligibility list and later interviewed by an Area Executive Officer or the Chief Executive Officer. Toward this end, another opportunity for teachers and administrators as a result of BCPSS' partnering with local universities is the Aspiring Leaders Program that leads to Maryland State Administrator I Certification.

Although the system has not experienced challenging principal shortages, among system officials and teachers quality is perceived to have been compromised, a concern in some schools with tougher environments. A bachelor's degree and a teacher certification are the minimum requirements for eligibility for a principal position. Human Resources states the education requirement will in the near future be a master's degree at minimum. A new qualifying exam and requirements for becoming a school administrator in BCPSS were implemented in April 2001.

As part of the principal survey for this evaluation, each respondent was asked whether or not he or she felt BCPSS had facilitated adequate training for the effective execution of his/her current duties and responsibilities as a school leader (see Table 6-2 for selected results).

- Half the principals with 2 years or less experience felt BCPSS has prepared them from "not at all" to a moderate extent.
- Thirty percent of principals whose tenure was 3 to 5 years felt BCPSS has not at all or moderately prepared them, while 70 percent reported BCPSS has helped them become prepared.
- Thirty-one percent of BCPSS principals in the position for 2 years or less reported to have taken the School Leaders Licensure Assessment, where upwards of 80 percent of principals in the system for more than 3 years had not taken and passed this qualifying exam.

Table 6-2.
Percentage of principals who feel BCPSS has arranged for them to be adequately trained for their duties

Tenure	Not at all to moderate extent	Good to great extent
Total	45	55
Less than 1 year	0	100
2 years or less	50	50
3-5 years	30	70
More than 10 years	56	44

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

As implied in the above bulleted items, many early career BCPSS principals may feel only partially prepared for their duties. At the same time, it is important to note that it is unknown if the principals whose responses are noted above are new to BCPSS or new to the position of principal.

Numbers of Teachers Currently Teaching in Areas for Which They Lack Credentials or Feel Inadequately Prepared

Another quandary of BCPSS has been the number of teachers (fully certified and provisionally licensed) teaching in subject areas for which they were not trained. As shown in Table 6-3, 24 percent of the sample surveyed report they are not professionally certified in all the areas in which they are teaching. Furthermore:

- The largest percentages of certified teachers are in schools with higher SPI scores, and in schools where SPI has increased over 10 points.
- The largest percentage of teachers who are not certified in areas in which they are teaching have been in the system less than 2 years.
- The largest percentage of teachers who are certified in areas in which they are teaching have been in the system more than 5 years.

- The highest percentages of teachers teaching in areas for which they are not certified (28 percent) occur in special education and alternative schools.

Table 6-3.
Percentage of teachers teaching in area(s) for which they are professionally certified

School/teacher characteristic	Certified in all areas
Total	76
Instructional level	
Elementary	83
Elementary/middle	80
Other	72
High	71
Middle	67
School status	
Regular schools	76
AF/DI schools	80
Citywide schools	75
Special education	72
Alternative schools	72
School size	
Less than 400	76
400-599	82
600 or more	74
Reconstitution eligible status	
Eligible	73
Ineligible	80
SPI performance	
Missing data	73
Low scores	73
Medium scores	73
High scores	83
Change in SPI performance over 3 years	
Not available	79
No change/decline	73
Increase 1-5 points	80
Increase 6-10 points	71
Increase over 10 points	81
Length of tenure	
2 years or less	60
3-5 years	74
More than 6 years	92

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Teachers were further probed to respond if they felt adequately prepared in the areas in which they were teaching. Fourteen percent of all responding teachers did not feel adequately prepared (Table 6-4). Furthermore:

- The largest percentage of teachers who felt inadequately prepared (36 percent) had been teaching in BCPSS for 2 years or less.
- A larger percentage of teachers at the elementary/middle school level felt they were not prepared than teachers at the high school level.
- A larger percentage of teachers at regular and AF/DI schools felt less prepared than those at special education and alternative schools.
- The areas in which this most frequently occurs are mathematics, special education, reading, sciences, language arts, social studies, elementary education, and writing.

Table 6-4.
Percentage of teachers who feel prepared in the area they are teaching, by school type and length of tenure

School/teacher characteristic	Not adequately prepared	Feel prepared
Total	14	86
Instructional level		
Elementary	17	83
Elementary/middle	20	80
Other	7	93
High	11	89
Middle	7	93
School status		
Regular schools	13	87
AF/DI schools	19	81
Citywide schools	9	91
Special education	7	93
Alternative schools	6	94
Length of tenure		
Less than 1 year	15	85
2 years or less	21	79
3-5 years	13	87
More than 6 years	9	91

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Teacher and Principal Perceptions on the Quality of New Staff

Views from BCPSS principals regarding the quality of hires for teaching positions came in two

disparate ways. First, when asked about the process of recruitment in BCPSS, principals participating in the focus groups felt the quality of candidates BCPSS hired was poor. Principal comments point largely to lack of new hires' commitment to the profession. Yet, principals were satisfied with teachers they hired on their own, through word of mouth or prudent selection. Converse to the complaints about candidate quality, several principals participating in the focus group reported that whether or not their beginning teachers had provisional or full licenses did not make a difference in terms of teacher quality. In fact, a few principals suggested their provisionally licensed staff often worked harder to be effective than did teachers with full certification.

> *Some of my best teachers are provisional. Teaching is truly a profession that you learn on the job. It doesn't matter if everybody is certified…my best two teachers are provisionally licensed teachers. They are working hard to become certified. At the same time, saying that a teaching degree makes a real teacher is wrong. I have a couple I would like to bust out of there. It's quality I want.*

****

> *Some of my provisionals are my best. They know they have to work harder. [Their] degree is not always in education. The problem that I see is that the people in charge of planning are people who really don't know what these teachers actually need.*

****

> *Talking about the difference between provisional teachers and certified teachers—there is not a big difference between the majority of my staff. We have a big percentage of provisionals in the building, and they do a fantastic job. They have the energy; they are open-minded; they are risk takers. The certifieds are more structured in that the children have to sit still, but the provisional teachers are better risk takers, and I found that their test scores are better, also, than in the certified classrooms.*

BCPSS teachers provided mixed evaluations. Teachers with 2 or more years experience complained of the "quality" of noncertified or provisionally licensed new hires, but those comments were limited to feelings about not receiving the same benefits, and to the belief that noncertified teachers do not have as much business being in the classroom as they. Veteran teachers seem open to new hires—regardless of their teacher certification or licensure status—as long as they are committed and work hard. Veteran teachers, too, would like to see some monetary incentives for themselves, which they feel would reward their loyalty and commitment to a system they feel does not care about them. In addition, teachers and principals participating in focus groups also perceived that candidates and new hires to BCPSS are using up the recently funded and implemented incentives and resources, then moving on after a short tenure in the system.

Although not much is known regarding teachers' view of recruiting and hiring new principals, several teachers who attended the focus group sessions were less than enthusiastic about the overall quality of BCPSS principals (with exceptions), reporting that in their experiences, principals' salaries are high while their support for teachers and their job efficiency are low. As noted earlier, almost half the principals responding to the survey said they do not feel BCPSS had facilitated their being adequately trained for their jobs. Having made that point, we must note that we have no direct measure of these principals' effectiveness.

Input of School Personnel in Recruitment

In an urban district as large and notably challenging as BCPSS, school staffs are an important source of knowledge about the types of staffing needed, the wants of individual schools, and the experiences of new teachers. One

important line of inquiry in this regard is the level of teacher and principal input regarding recruitment and hiring of school professionals that the system allows.

BCPSS can improve in this area. The New Board of School Commissioners agreed to and began monthly open forum meetings in September through May 2000. As of September 2000, conducting focus group meetings with teachers was still under discussion.

This Master Plan initiative appears to have been somewhat under-prioritized in the past in the face of even greater needs. However, The Master Plan Update 2001 revisits the original strategy:

- Strategy 2.1.4: Develop a structured system of teacher input regarding reform initiatives including, but not limited to, focus groups of teachers from elementary, middle, and high school level.

  Priority initiative: Plan and implement teacher input meetings with the New Board of School Commissioners and joint labor management meetings with first year teachers.

  Priority initiative: Conduct focus group meetings with, for example, 1st, 5th, 10th, 20th, or 25th year (and beyond) year teachers annually. Involve appropriate participants in planning and topic selection for focus groups.

Principals attending the focus groups said they had been invited to attend policy meetings, but felt the experience to be unsatisfactory. Thirty-seven percent of principals responding to the survey reported having little or no input into recruiting of teachers, while 61 percent reported they have moderate to good input. When it comes to recruiting administrators, on the other hand, only 37 percent of principals reported feeling they have a participatory say.

Anecdotally, principals reported their involvement with the system's teacher recruiting practices to be limited to interviewing BCPSS-selected candidates at job fairs and onsite. Nearly 90 percent of teachers report having no or very little input into any areas of BCPSS. According to the survey, only 13 percent of teachers feel they have a moderate to good say in this area, whereas 87 percent reported having no or very little input toward recruiting strategies, along with having little say toward mentoring, retention, or professional development activities in the system. In fact, complaints about having little influence and about the lack of communication from BCPSS headquarters were pervasive throughout the focus group sessions. Further, it is not simply a lack of input into policies and procedures that teachers and principals perceive, but also understanding and keeping up with mandated changes. Teachers and principals seem to perceive that that policy is handed to them to implement, and then it is often changed in favor of the next great idea.

> *Passed down policy. They make the policy up here, then we get a letter or whatever, and we go to a meeting and they say, "This is the way it is." If you have input or if you ask questions, they don't have answers because they haven't looked into it. They have not looked into the fine-tuning of it. They make decisions about policy during the same meeting the issues are brought up, and there's no time to think it through.*
>
> ***
>
> *Even if we're heard, that's where it stops.*
>
> ***
>
> *I would say that before implementing policy that would affect the principals and teachers, as well as the students, that there should be more communication between the policymakers and those of us who have to implement the policy.*

Conclusions and Recommendations on Recruitment

As noted early on in this section, recruitment practices and policies in place since the implementation of The Master Plan have

functioned at a strategic scale for 3 years at most. Positive developments that have had direct or indirect effect on BCPSS recruitment of quality school personnel are as follows:

- Greatly enhanced funding for Human Resources operations;
- Enhanced incentive and compensation packages for new teachers and principals;
- New and enhanced partnerships with universities, focused on helping the large number of provisionally credentialed teachers gain full certification;
- Restructuring of the Human Resources operation; and
- Enhanced outreach to candidates.

This evaluation found that the most noteworthy challenges for BCPSS in its recruitment practices are twofold. First, the push to fill open positions in the schools has resulted in the unintended effect of ballooning the proportion of provisionally certified teachers. It is our recommendation that BCPSS carefully consider this issue and propose an articulated strategy to the New Board in a timely fashion. Second, more and better collaboration with teachers and principals around recruitment would lead to trust and ownership in the system. If it is possible to organize such input, the experience and knowledge of existing staff could help inform which candidates best fit the needs of the schools and the broader Baltimore system. Beyond recruitment issues, collaboration between staff in headquarters and the schools would help mitigate discord among those who are held accountable for the learning of all students.

This evaluation recognizes good faith intentions behind policy mandates and finds improvements in the area of human resources. Again, time and the evolution of processes will lead to a smoother recruitment operation and greater effects. However, it is critical that staff in BCPSS receive the support and professional development specific to their needs to improve staff retention. As discussed in sections following, a large portion of BCPSS staff seem dissatisfied with the lack of support from central office and in their jobs. A lack of resources and understanding of policy, such as the Performance-Based Evaluation System process, add to staff frustration. Until these issues are improved, effective teaching and leadership is compromised, and people will likely continue to leave the system. Changes in recruitment since SB 795 and the City-State Partnership have filled vacancies and influenced improved compensation packages for all teachers and principals. Yet the longer term intention in signing on quality school staff should be to keep them.

> *I feel there is a need for Baltimore City to look at other systems and find out how they do their communication from top to bottom. They need to look at schools that are doing it well, and they are not.*
>
> ***
>
> *I still believe from my past years of experience that they have the mentality of control. One of the things that hurt them with control management is the computer, and teachers having them. So they made sure you don't have them in school.*
>
> ***
>
> *We, in the classroom, are short changing ourselves when we don't get involved in what's happening in the other part of the world, in a sense. You do it in communities, you do it in organizations, because these are the fabrics that help build a school, and that's what we need: a support system. But there is no support that's going to work too well if there's no communication. A communicative, collaborative, support system—an environment that says, "you are a professional." That's what I see lacking in Baltimore City.*
>
> ***
>
> *When I came into the system, I wasn't going to take crap, believe me…it was me*

against them, and it is still happening to this day.

***

Teamwork [between headquarters and teachers]. With collaboration, I think BCPSS would succeed.

Findings on the Retention of Teachers and Principals, and New-Teacher Mentoring

Summary

Teachers value mentoring as a means of support, and they feel there is a need for more mentors, perhaps even to the extent of providing a mentor for each new teacher regardless of the type of school he/she is in. They do not feel that current mentoring programs are as good as they could be, citing lack of consistency and coordination of efforts as problems. Mentor teachers believe that they are making a difference and support the need for more mentors.

Principals are not satisfied with their current compensation package. They also see the current mentoring programs as only partially effective but would nevertheless welcome more mentors in their schools. Principals and teachers alike feel that they do not have enough input into the decision making process regarding mentoring and retention efforts. They feel that the decision-making process has historically been top-down and remains so.

Improved salaries and incentives for new teachers, an expanded mentoring program with a full-time coordinator, and the Mentor Academy are recognized as signs of progress. It is too early, however, to ascertain whether these efforts will result in retaining quality teachers. Concerns remain among teachers and principals as to whether BCPSS is a training ground from which other Maryland districts will continue to draw experienced teachers by offering higher salaries and better working conditions.

BCPSS teachers continue to harbor negative feelings toward the district administration over issues such as lack of support, lack of communication, coordination of services, and lack of opportunity for input. These feelings indicate a need for identifying and addressing more specific underlying issues that could grow into major problems over time. There is also an undertone of resentment among at least some of the more senior teachers toward the salary scale, based on the perception that salaries for experienced teachers are not in line with the higher salaries and incentives offered new teachers. This perception persists even though revisions to the salary scale, addressing all levels of experience and preparation, have made BCPSS teacher salaries more competitive with other Maryland districts.

Introduction

By many accounts, BCPSS has been plagued by teacher attrition problems, especially among early career teachers. Stories abound regarding teachers leaving the district for higher pay and better conditions in other nearby districts. Since the advent of The Master Plan, however, BCPSS has been working aggressively to correct this problem, as discussed in the previous section. Early indications are that some of these efforts are beginning to pay off in a reduced need for new teachers, but much remains to be done. As Metis Associates (The Master Plan Interim Evaluation contractor) noted:

- BCPSS has made meaningful progress in improving management, including reorganizing the human resources function and overhauling the management information systems.
- BCPSS has made meaningful progress in implementing instructional initiatives at the elementary grade levels, recruitment and retention initiatives, and professional development initiatives (Metis Associates, 2000).

Prior to The Master Plan, as many as 40 percent of teachers left the school system by the end of their third year of teaching, and about 60 percent left by the end of their fifth year (BCPSS, 1999). In direct response to this problem, the district strengthened its teacher support system with a mentoring program, described and examined later in this section. The mentoring program is being evaluated over a 3-year period by an external evaluator working in collaboration with both external and internal evaluation teams.

Our attempts to obtain detailed data on teacher attrition rates prior to and since the creation of The Master Plan have met with limited success. Repeated requests to the Department of Human Resources for such data have yielded data for only two years, 1999–2000 and 2000–2001. These data reveal that of the 1,225 teachers hired by BCPSS between August 28, 2000, and April 12, 2001, 134 or 11 percent left during the same period (BCPSS, 2001). For the 2-year period from August 1999 through April 1, 2001, 331 first- and second-year teachers left the system. Reasons for leaving were varied. Of those who left, 90 (27 percent) left due to dissatisfaction with teaching or their teaching assignment; 25 (7.5 percent) declined their assignment; another 9 (2.7 percent) failed to satisfy agreed-upon pre-employment conditions; and yet another 9 left to accept other teaching jobs (BCPSS, 2001). In the aggregate then, 133 first- and second-year teachers—44 percent of those who left—did so for reasons related to job satisfaction.

Changes in Retention Practices Since SB 795

This section of the report focuses on specific efforts related to the objectives to improve retention of teachers and administrators, including changes in teacher compensation, and other incentives to stay in the district, and mentoring and support of new teachers. We also explore potential causal factors contributing to the retention problem. In the process, we examine data from teacher and principal surveys, teacher and principal focus group interviews, new-teacher mentor focus groups, individual interviews with central office staff, documents and reports from BCPSS, as well as other studies. The specific strategies relevant to teacher and principal retention include:

- Strategy 2.1.3: Provide Competitive Teacher Salaries.
- Strategy 2.2.1: Initiate the New Teachers Professional Development Mentoring Program.

Teacher Compensation and Other Incentives

Since the inception of The Master Plan, BCPSS has revised its teacher salary scale to make it more competitive with surrounding districts. The number of steps in the salary scale has been reduced from 28 to 21, and the beginning level was increased by 11.5 percent. A 4 percent across-the-board salary increase was awarded to all teachers effective July 1, 1999, and another 3 percent across-the-board increase was approved to become effective on July 1, 2000. According to Theodore Thornton, salary increases for some teachers were as high as 21 percent for 2000–2001. In July 1999, BCPSS instituted an orientation plan for new teachers that provided up to $125 per day in bonuses and stipends for a period of up to 25 days for orientation training.

A new teacher compensation scale designed to achieve parity with neighboring counties was established in 2000. Funding of the new scale was accomplished through the allocation of $200,000 of a $2 million supplemental appropriation from the General Assembly. The Department of Eligibility, Recruitment and Retention also received $135,510 in additional grant money through the Office of Grants. The new salary system became effective July 1, 2000.

Mentoring and Support of New Teachers

District mentoring efforts began in 1999 with the REACT program (Retired Educators Advocating Change Today), an outgrowth of a task force on teacher retention established by Dr. Elizabeth Morgan, then Chief Academic Officer for the

system. Initial funding came from a SAFE grant. The Blum mentoring program, funded by a grant from the Blum Foundation, also began in SY 1999. Since then, a variety of grants, including the Teacher Recruitment and Certification Grant, the Teacher Mentoring Program Grant, the Class-size Reduction Grant (Title-VI), the Blum Foundation Mentoring Program Grant, Remedy Plan Funds, and the SAFE Grant have provided support totaling more than $4.5 million in FY 2000. In SY 2000, mentoring programs served 500 first-year and 300 second-year teachers in 32 high need schools (BCPSS, 2000).

According to the BCPSS Department of Professional Development, mentoring programs in BCPSS share a common mission, that is, to increase student achievement by retaining qualified teachers. All the programs also have the same goals:

- To integrate new educators into the social system of the school, the district, and the community;
- To build on previous preparation, knowledge, skills, and experience in order to increase instructional competence;
- To provide instructional and interpersonal support that encourages new educators to analyze and reflect upon their teaching, and to build a foundation for the continued study of teaching; and
- To provide professional development and support for new-teacher mentors.

Exhibit 6-3.
Mentoring program characteristics summary chart

Program	Characteristics
Blum	• Full-time (12-month) mentors • Each mentor serves up to 12 mentees in one school • Serves 9 schools • Mentors work as a team and meet weekly for professional development
REACT	• Part-time retired educators • Each mentor works with mentees 12-15 hours a week • On average, 1 mentor serves 2 mentees • Two or more mentors per school in 17 schools • School teams meet regularly • REACT meets monthly as group
Area	• Program varies by area served, under direction of each AEO • Serve high needs schools not served by Blum, REACT or Title- VI • Mixture of full-time and part-time mentors
Site-specific	• Peer mentors supported and trained by Project Site Support • Mentors and mentees participate in Electronic Learning Committee • Serves over 200 first- and second-year teachers
Title VI Class-Size Reduction Program	• Four full-time mentors from Professional Development Department trained in Blum model • Work as team with other full-time area mentors • Meet weekly for professional development • Serves 44 teachers in 8 schools

Mentoring Program Characteristics

At present, BCPSS has five different mentoring programs: REACT, Blum, area programs in each administrative area, site-specific programs served by Project Site Support, and other mentors trained in the Blum model. As mentioned above, all of these programs share a set of common core goals and have certain key requirements for their mentors. Additional requirements vary depending on whether it is a peer, full-time, or part-time mentor program. Mentor program characteristics are summarized in Exhibit 6-3.

Status reports from BCPSS document the completion of numerous steps related to mentoring between March 1999 and October 2000. The following are highlights of those action steps.

- The New Educators Professional Development and Mentoring Program was initiated in the fall of 1998, and Marsha Taylor was appointed as interim program coordinator.

- Marsha Taylor was hired as coordinator of beginning educators in March 1999, and the New Teachers' Induction and Orientation Program was revised.
- A restructuring of the responsibilities of all groups supporting beginning educators occurred beginnning in 1999.
- A contract was awarded to an external evaluator to evaluate the effectiveness of all mentoring programs over a 3-year period, beginning in 1999–2000. A program of Action Research was initiated to coordinate with the evaluation.
- The first report on that evaluation was provided to the administration in October 2000.
- Steps were taken to expand the New Teachers Professional Development Program.
- The first Mentor Academy for all BCPSS mentors was conducted on July 11–12, 2000.
- Project Site Support and Title-VI Class-size Reduction funded mentors were recruited, hired, and trained.
- Site-based facilitators in each building were identified to facilitate basic support for new teachers in their buildings.
- Schools developed plans that included strategies and action steps to support new teachers during the 2000–2001 school year.

What Conditions Contribute to the High Turnover Rate?

Many factors have been suggested as contributing to the teacher attrition problem. Some of the more frequently mentioned factors, in addition to noncompetitive salaries, are excessive use of provisionally certified teachers, hiring inadequately prepared teachers, lack of peer and administrator support for teachers, lack of sufficient instructional materials and resources, and too much paperwork.

Teacher Certification

Although, as revealed in the previous section of this report, some principals feel that provisional teachers may, in some cases be superior to some fully certified teachers, the presence of teachers without full certification remains a problem. This is true not only because of its potential implications for teacher quality, but also because uncertified teachers may be more prone to leave or be asked to leave their positions. Table 6-5 shows the percentage of teachers certified by each certification type. These data, taken from a Human Resources Department report dated May 4, 2001, show that 69.3 percent of BCPSS teachers are fully certified and 27.7 percent are provisionally certified professionals.

Table 6-5.
Percentage of BCPSS certified teachers, by certificate type

Certificate type	Percent
Total	99.9
CBA positions not requiring certification	2.8
Senior teacher	7.6
Resident teacher	2.2
Standard Professional-1	11.9
Standard Professional-2	4.8
Advanced Professional	42.8
Provisional degree	27.6
Provisional nondegree	0.1
Professional eligibility	0.1

NOTE: Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding; N=7,405.

SOURCE: BCPSS Human Resources Department, computer printout dated May 4, 2001.

Twenty-four percent of teachers surveyed reported they are not certified in one or more of the subjects they are teaching. This was most pronounced at middle school, where 33 percent reported they were not fully certified. As shown in Table 6-6, 64 percent of survey respondents who have been at their schools less than 1 year reported teaching in a subject area for which they are not certified. The longer teachers are at their schools, the less likely they will teach in an area where they lack certification (8 percent after 10 years). The unanswered question is whether this means that provisionals tend to leave the system as their years of experience increase, or that the

longer they stay the more likely they are to become certified. Since current data cannot provide answers to this question, further investigation is needed.

Table 6-6.
Percentage of teachers reporting they are not certified in an area they teach

Years in their school	Total number	Percent of total	Number reporting
Less than 1	11	64	7
2 or less	304	40	122
3 to 5	243	26	63
6 to 10	147	10	15
More than 10	314	8	25

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Teachers' Self-Perceived Preparedness to Teach

Teachers may also leave (or be asked to leave) because of lack of preparation. Only 14 percent of teachers who responded to the survey reported teaching in an area for which they feel inadequately prepared (see Table 6-4). This self-perception is lowest (7 percent) among teachers in middle schools and highest (20 percent) among teachers in the elementary/middle school combinations.

Among first-year teachers responding to the survey, 85 percent feel well prepared in all areas in which they teach. They seem to be less confident after their first year, however, with 79 percent of teachers with 2 or less years in their school reporting they feel adequately prepared. In our experience, it is not unusual for new teachers to have their confidence challenged by the realities of their first year of teaching.

Reported Reasons for Staying or Leaving

A more direct look at reasons for leaving comes from the teachers themselves. Two sets of questions on the teacher survey were designed to elicit information on reasons that teachers might want to leave BCPSS or stay. Generally speaking, teachers responded more strongly with reasons to stay than with reasons to leave (Table 6-7).

Table 6-7.
Teachers' top reasons to stay or leave BCPSS

Reason	Percent
Top reasons to stay	
Challenge/reward of urban system	73
Level of comfort/job awareness	54
Closeness to home	49
Compensation package	47
Geographic location	41
BCPSS educational philosophy	41
Collegiality	39
Reform effort	35
Professional challenge offered by BCPSS	35
Mentorship/support provided for new hires	26
Top reasons to leave	
Resource availability	56
Lack or inadequacy of mentorship/support provided for new hires	27
Collegiality	25
Professional challenge offered by BCPSS	24
Opportunity for professional development/ career advancement	22
Level of comfort/job awareness	21

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

The strongest reason for staying cited by teacher survey respondents was the challenge/reward of teaching in an urban system, chosen by 73 percent of respondents. Level of comfort with the job was second most favored at 54 percent.

Among the strongest reasons for leaving, 56 percent of respondents cited the level of resources or materials available to them as a reason to leave (although 22 percent identified that as a reason to stay). This factor made less of a difference after a teacher had spent 10 years or more in BCPSS, but was still cited as a reason by 41 percent of respondents. The collegiality and professional challenge of teaching in BCPSS were cited more as reasons to stay (39 percent and 35 percent, respectively) than as reasons to leave (25 percent and 24 percent, respectively).

There were no open-ended comments from the teacher survey overtly stating reasons to stay.

Numerous comments, however, could be interpreted as reasons to leave. These covered a broad spectrum but seemed to cluster around perceived lack of support from the administration and discontentment with the new Performance-Based Evaluation System. A sampling of illustrative comments follows:

> *BCPSS is set up for failure! They implement a strategy and then change it . They never follow through with anything. They try too much at one time. There is never any support for the teachers. It also seems like the people that get promoted are the people that need to get fired. Professional development does not work because of the lack of abilities of the presenters.*
>
> ***
>
> *I am tired of paper work, changes that occur each year and lack of support for new educators.*
>
> ***
>
> *I will not be returning because of lack of support from the administration.*
>
> ***
>
> *The current principal is the reason I am leaving. Only 5 months into her tenure and she has managed to influence 4 outstanding teachers to leave the system.*
>
> ***
>
> *My experience here has caused me to abandon the field. The PBES is unfair to Special Ed because of portfolios we are required to do, also because of the different levels, it is impossible to choose one goal that fits all kids.*
>
> ***
>
> *The reason teachers leave Baltimore City is because they are treated unfairly. They [teachers] are abused by principals.*
>
> ***
>
> *The portfolio is a complete waste of time and resources. It is just too much work for a new teacher, and a slap in the face for experienced ones. And they wonder why the young ones are leaving and the experienced ones are retiring.*
>
> ***
>
> *The biggest problem BCPSS faces is losing their experienced teachers. Lack of pay and support are the primary cause of this.*

Teacher Focus Group Comments on Reasons to Stay or Leave

Based on their responses to the survey question asking if they would recommend BCPSS to a friend or colleague as a place to work, two focus groups of teachers were formed. One group comprised participants who answered "no" and were thus designated the "would not recommend" (WNR) group. The other comprised participants who answered "yes" and who were designated the "would recommend" (WR) group. A number of focus group teacher-participants, both those who would and would not recommend staying, expressed strong concerns about student discipline problems as a possible reason that teachers leave the BCPSS.

> *I know that in many schools there is not a problem with discipline, it has to do with image. But in some schools there is a genuine problem with discipline that is never resolved, and as an actual fact we had a hemorrhage of teachers…from my school two years ago, simply because we hadn't taken our school back from the children and we still haven't. It is a genuine problem and it is not resolved.*
>
> ***
>
> *The teachers are afraid of administrators, and administrators are afraid of North Avenue, and North Avenue is afraid of the parents. The parents are afraid of the children, and the children are afraid of nothing.*

***

If a teacher writes a referral and gives it to the administrator, and after he has had it a whole thirty days, then you might get a response.

Teachers in the WNR group were asked to give reasons why they stay in the district. The reasons given were both positive and negative as characterized by these excerpts:

This is not a reason why people would want to stay, but one reason that forces people to stay, is when you're told your certification comes up for renewal, you can put your money in, have all the requirements for certification in July, and not get your actual certificate until the end of May or beginning of June the next year. By that point it's too late to just say that you're going to leave. You can't really go to another system and interview without that piece of paper. They will tie you up. They keep you in.

***

Seeing improvement—even some. That's what would make me want to stay. Being able to put new programs in place.

***

I like the system because my principal locks herself in her office and leaves me alone. I can do what I want in my classroom. I am responsible enough to be able to do that.

Other issues related to retention that these WR focus group teachers mentioned included lack of planning time, the resentment of more experienced teachers toward the incentives now being offered to newer teachers, poor quality of physical plants, class-size and lack of parental support, and involvement and accountability.

In addition, comments from the principals' focus group interview suggest that new teachers who enter the system with the intention of leaving after they get some experience can be resistant to retention efforts. If a new teacher does not enter the district with the intention of making a commitment to staying, little can be done to keep that teacher. They imply that efforts to provide extra support for such noncommitted teachers are costly and won't work if the teachers lack the commitment.

Principals' Reasons to Leave BCPSS

The principal survey asked respondents to identify the top two reasons they would want to stay or leave BCPSS. The challenge and reward of working in an urban school system was the most frequently cited reason to stay, with 86 percent of principals choosing it (Table 6-8). Desire to participate in the reform effort was the second most frequently chosen reason to stay, and BCPSS' philosophy of education was a close third. Collegiality within BCPSS, the opportunity for professional development and career advancement, and professional encouragement were also frequently chosen reasons to stay. On the other hand, 50 percent of principals cited the compensation package as a reason to leave, while 36 percent identified it as a reason to stay.

Roles of Teachers and Principals in Establishing Retention Practices

Both the principal and teacher surveys contained questions on the extent to which the respondents have input into the design/conduct of recruitment, mentoring, and retention practices for teachers. Additionally, principals were asked the extent to which they had input into those practices as applied to school administrators.

The vast majority of teachers responding to the survey did not feel they had much input into the design and implementation of the current reform efforts. Of the teachers who responded to the question "In your view, to what extent do BCPSS teachers have input into the design/conduct of mentoring/retention practices for teachers?" only 6 percent indicated they had a good to great extent of input. Alternatively, 76 percent

indicated the extent of their input to be slight to not at all.

Table 6-8.
Principals' top reasons to stay or leave BCPSS

Reason	Percent
Top reasons to stay	
Urban challenge	86
Reform effort	74
BCPSS educational philosophy	72
Collegiality	58
Opportunity for professional development and career advancement	55
Professional encouragement	51
Mentorship or support by BCPSS	47
Compensation package	36
Top reasons to leave	
Amount of paperwork	79
Compensation package	50

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Principals, on the other hand, felt they had more input into reforms related to teacher retention than they did into those affecting principals more directly. Forty-four percent of principals reported they had little or no input into developing mentoring strategies for new administrators; only 23 percent reported having a good or great extent of input.

In contrast, 48 percent of principals reported having a good or great extent of input into teacher mentoring practices, with only 22 percent reporting having little or none. Forty-two percent of principals reported good or great extent of input into teacher retention practices, as opposed to 29 percent reporting they had little or none.

Principals in the focus group did not feel they had input into the decision-making process in BCPSS. One principal seemed to express the feeling of the group with this comment:

> *They make the policy up there then we get a letter or whatever, and we go to a meeting and they say, "This is the way it is." If you have input or if you ask questions, they don't have answers because they haven't looked into it.*

A few of the comments from principals who took the time to add comments to the survey complained about feeling they had little or no input into reform efforts. Some of their dissatisfaction was related to a broader level of dissatisfaction with special education policies and management. Following are a few examples of comments related to principal input:

> *I'll leave you with this thought "nobody asks principals for their input…"*

***

> *This is a top-down system. The top persons make the decisions and the underlings "down" them.*

***

> *When Special Education violations are reported area office pretends they didn't occur because they are often the party responsible for the problem. Under the new administration of B. Morgan, a selected group of supporters have all of the input, the rest of us are ignored.*

Perceived Effectiveness of Retention Practices

Our focus groups also provided important information on the perceived effectiveness of the retention practices. Teachers in the "would recommend" focus group were not as positive toward BCPSS retention efforts as one might expect. They were critical of retention efforts, the Performance-Based Evaluation System, administration, the lack of discipline in the schools, and the lack of personalized support for teachers, as illustrated by these excerpts from the focus group interviews.

> *It is hard to recruit and retain math teachers, and we have a high turnover rate. We have not had one grade for the last three years with the same math teacher.*

***

The word around the state is that Baltimore City is a training ground. If you can teach in Baltimore City, you can teach anywhere. What happens is, there is a tremendous turnover and no retention.

***

Baltimore City is the only LEA that requires portfolios [for teacher evaluation]. The only one in the state. So, therefore, when they look at that and they look at the other counties, they only come to the City when the other counties don't pick them up. Then, after they have been there one or two years and they have the City experience, the other counties are ready to take them

***

I think a lot of it has to do with if you don't really have the desire to teach in Baltimore City, you will go. [Name omitted] county called me again, but I had already committed to working with the students in Baltimore City. If I would have had a rougher year, I probably would have taken that money and ran with it, because pay for special education is higher in [ ] county.

***

What is really driving some of these young teachers to want to be in Baltimore City? It is because they offer so many ways to hurry up and move through and not have to pay all that money. It is almost like using Baltimore City as their stepping stone, and when they get all they need, they move on up, and Baltimore City is left with all these vacancies.

***

Those books you need to give your students in order for them to be prepared for the next day - how in the world do you do that without textbooks? One doesn't need professional development to do that. These are the things that need to be addressed if things are going to get accomplished. The portfolio and goal setting as it is, is a farce.

***

We have had so many new teachers in our building this past school year, and I know for this upcoming school year we are going to have a lot of new teachers, and we have had little gatherings after school where we tell them," Come on in. We are going to have cake and punch." And they just sit around and have an open forum, and it is just talking about what is coming up in their life, and what kind of things they are doing and where they are going. They share a lot of experiences, and he puts himself down on that level with them, and they really like that—it gives them some incentive to want to come back…

Principal responses also tended to be somewhat negative. In their responses to the survey, principals were more dissatisfied than satisfied with district efforts to retain principals. Fifty-one percent reported they were moderately to extremely satisfied, while 49 percent reported they were not at all to slightly satisfied. Only 16 percent were strongly to extremely satisfied with principal retention efforts. Conversely, 72 percent of principals reported that they would recommend BCPSS to a friend or colleague as a place to work.

It appears that although principals are more negative than positive in their satisfaction with principal retention efforts, they still are more likely than not to recommend BCPSS as a place to work. Obviously something about their work is satisfying. This was consistent with principals' responses to survey questions regarding reasons to stay in or leave BCPSS, which were also generally positive.

Perceived Effectiveness of Compensation Changes

In addition to these general comments, we were especially interested in staff reaction to two of BCPSS' major retention strategies: compensation changes and mentoring programs. According to the Director of Human Resources, recent measures to make BCPSS more attractive to teachers through restructuring the salary scale and other inducements have reduced the need to hire as many teachers as a few years ago. Presumably, this will have a positive effect on teacher retention.

> *Three years ago we filled 1200 (teacher) vacancies; last year 1056 teachers, this year we anticipate 900 teachers. The rate is rather constant across content areas...Three years ago we opened school with 1057 vacancies; last year we opened with 36 vacancies. This year we hope to hold the line. We restructured the compensation package at a cost of $23 million. We gave an across the board increase plus differential increases…. each teacher got 20 to 21 percent… Of 24 districts in the state we were 24, now we're number 4. Of the 24 systems we were number 20 for principals; now we're number 2.*
>
> ***
>
> *The retention system is better because we restructured our compensation package, especially at the 12-year point. Teachers were frozen at the 12-year point for 3 years. They'd leave and go to other districts and get an immediate raise. Now they get a raise every year. We restructured to deal with systemic improvements in annual increments.* [56]

Teachers' responses to survey questions about the compensation package were generally more positive than negative. The compensation package was cited as either the most important or second most important for recommending BCPSS as a place to work by 26 percent of teachers responding to the survey. Even more positively, 47 percent of teachers responding to the survey question on reasons for staying in or leaving BPSS identified the compensation package as a reason to stay.

However, open-ended comments from the teacher survey about the compensation package were generally more negative than positive. Criticisms reflected a perceived unfairness toward more experienced teachers in favor of new teachers in the way salary scale adjustments were made. This attitude may, however, be held by a minority of teachers, but it persists in spite of the substantial salary adjustments made for all teachers. A few illustrative comments follow:

> *As stated before, your benefits package is the only attractive thing in your compensation package. The salary looked great until BCPSS re-adjusted our steps. If they re-adjust the benefits package, a number of teachers will flee for the county school systems. Why? Better pay, equal benefits, and commitment to a conducive learning environment. Benefits is what is keeping some of the younger teachers like myself within the system.*
>
> ***
>
> *The pay scale was raised to entice new teachers and teachers that have retired, but no incentive was provided for teachers that have stuck it out for 5 – 6 years.*
>
> ***
>
> *It seems that BCPSS offers great incentives for new teachers and for retired teachers to come back, but they overlook the teachers who are already working very hard in the system.*
>
> ***

[56] Interview with Theodore Thornton, Director of Human Resources, Baltimore City Public Schools, May 9, 2001.

Teachers with less experience are brought in making more money. It is an insult to those of us who continue to give our all every day.

Principals' reactions to the survey questions on the compensation package were less positive than those of teachers. The compensation package was identified as a reason they would recommend BCPSS as a place to work by only 6 percent of principals, whereas it was either the first or second most important reason to not recommend BCPSS for 43 percent of the principals. Consistent with this, 50 percent of principals cited the compensation package as either a major or minor reason to leave BCPSS, while only 36 percent identified it as a reason to stay with BCPSS. There were few, if any, open-ended comments directly related to principals' salary or compensation on the survey.

Perceived Effectiveness of Mentoring

Overall, 43 percent of the teachers who responded to the survey question on the effectiveness of the mentoring program found it only slightly effective at best, while only 26 percent found it strongly to extremely effective. This finding was consistent for elementary and middle school teachers, but a smaller percentage of high school teachers held strong opinions, either positive or negative, about mentoring. Forty-five percent of elementary teachers found mentoring to be not at all to slightly effective, while 26 percent found it strongly to extremely effective; 44 percent of middle school teachers found it not at all to slightly effective and only 24 percent, strongly to extremely effective. Among high school teachers, 35 percent found it slightly to not all effective and 21 percent found it strongly to extremely effective.

Mentoring and retention practices for teachers were not perceived by a majority of teachers in the survey sample as a reason to stay or leave, with 27 percent citing them as a minor or major reason to leave and 26 percent citing them as a minor or major reason to stay in BCPSS.

Open-ended teacher survey comments tended to be critical of the way mentoring programs were working, although there was some expression of need for and appreciation of them. A few illustrations follow:

Special Ed. schools have largely been ignored. We don't have resources, there are no mentors.

***

It would have been very helpful if a mentor was helping the new teachers on a daily basis. There were times when I really needed the help.

***

The support system is in place of WBMS, however, the mentor teachers were busy doing other things such as substitute teaching.

***

From a first year teacher, please learn how to retain first year teachers! The mentors are a help (especially those from Blum and North Avenue).

***

All schools need at least one mentor for new teachers.

***

We need a stronger mentoring program to support new teachers.

***

Mentoring should last for 5 years at least.

Again focus groups provided valuable, additional information. Focus group teachers were asked, *"What role does or could mentoring play in the retention of new teachers? Do you have any experience as a mentor or mentee?"* Focus group teachers who had indicated on their surveys that they would not recommend BCPSS as a place to work saw mentors as helpful, but seemed to want more from them than the mentors were providing

for new teachers. Following are some examples of their comments.

> *I had a mentor in my first year, and she's the reason I stayed beyond that. She's now in the classroom teaching 4th grade because there's no one else to teach.*
>
> ***
>
> *Yeah, we have mentors, but it's unofficial, though—who has time to mentor?*
>
> ***
>
> *Yes, I've been paired up with another teacher, but unfortunately, he's just recently been certified, he came out of a great program, too, but he said "I kind of feel like we're mentoring each other." I really feel, though, there's one teacher, and she was the only other new teacher to our school, and she has thirty-three out-of-control 3rd graders, and the poor girl has had very little support. Ideally, I think your greatest mentor should be your principal. A principal that is checking in on you to make sure you're okay. It needs to be your master teacher, which our "master teacher" has too much work piled on her. She's great, but the only time she can help us is if you go ask her a question.*
>
> ***
>
> *I had two mentors, one provided by North Avenue, for Title VI, and I have one from my school, and she is a retired teacher with quite a few years experience. She's very, very knowledgeable. The problem in my school—the retired teacher is specifically paid to be a mentor for me and for another teacher, and this other girl has no clue what's going on, and so, just because I could make a coherent lesson plan and I know how to read a teacher's guide, she dropped me. She said, "I've got to focus on this girl." She's in her classroom everyday all day long. Her class is out-of-control.*

Finally, a focus group of seven mentors representing each of the BCPSS mentoring programs were asked to respond to a range of questions about mentoring in BCPSS. As a group, they provided insights into the mentors' roles and the effectiveness of mentoring in BCPSS. The following statements summarize their reactions:

- Several mentors felt there were not enough mentors to meet district needs. Not all schools with first-year teachers have mentors, and there are schools in need of mentors that don't have any.
- Area mentoring programs are still quite diverse in philosophy and approach, reflecting the varied styles and approaches of the AEOs.
- The frequency of meetings for sharing ideas and receiving information and training varies across programs. Although there is some sharing of information across programs it could be improved.
- Most mentors, especially those in Blum and REACT, value the training they have received through the Mentor Academy and other offerings. Training is not as structured in some of the area programs as in other programs.
- Mentors' duties cover a broad range of activities including, but not limited to, lesson planning, co-teaching, modeling instructional techniques, teaching mentees how to conduct parent conferences, using bulletin boards, coordinating access to school resources such as laminating machines, understanding the school culture, and providing personal support to new teachers, sometimes beyond the boundaries of the structured school day.
- Mentoring support has improved since more funds have been available. Mentors now have fewer mentees, making it easier for them to provide the kind of assistance that is needed.
- Mentors cited changes in mentees' attitudes, as well as the quality of their instruction, as evidence of success. But, they cautioned, a mentor cannot be successful without support

for the mentee from other teachers in the building. They can't do it by themselves.

- Mentoring program strengths identified included structured curriculum for some programs (Blum), collaboration and teamwork (Blum), training (REACT), and collegial support from other mentors.

- Improvements suggested by the mentors included providing a handbook for new mentors, involving principals more in the mentoring process, providing more and better training in some area programs, consolidating all mentoring programs into one central, coordinated program, and training administrators in how to provide building-level support for new teachers.

Summary of Perceived Effectiveness of Retention and Mentoring Efforts

A few clear conclusions can be drawn from the data gathered for this evaluation on retention and mentoring efforts. Although teachers are generally pleased with changes in the compensation package, there is an undertone of resentment among some of the more senior teachers based on a perception that the new salary scale favors newer versus more experienced teachers. This perception persists in spite of substantial increases given to teachers in recent years that have moved BCPSS from 24th position in the state to third in terms of teacher salaries. This perception could be a carryover from the past, but it is, nevertheless, present among some members of the senior teaching staff.

Teachers value mentoring as a means of support, and they feel there is a need for more mentors, perhaps even to the extent of providing mentors for all new teachers regardless of where they teach. They do not feel that current mentoring programs are as good as they could be, citing lack of consistency and coordination of efforts as problems. Mentor teachers themselves believe they are making a difference, and they also would like to see more mentors.

Although principals see the mentoring program as only somewhat effective, they would nevertheless like to see more mentors in the schools. Neither principals nor teachers feel they have had much input into the reforms implemented to retain and mentor teachers, characterizing the system as top-down in policy formulation and decisionmaking. Furthermore, principals are not satisfied with their current compensation package.

Progress can be seen in the areas of improved salaries and incentives for new teachers, and an expanded mentoring program with improved training and coordination. The Mentor Academy, for example, while not a specific subject of study, received favorable comments from teachers who were familiar with it. It is too early, however, to judge any of these efforts as successful, either in retaining teachers or in terms of their contribution to improved student achievement. The question remains whether the first- and second-year teachers now in the system will still be there in 5, 10, or 20 years.

Finally, we would be remiss not to mention the high level of negativity, frustration, and even anger expressed by many of the participants in each of the focus groups toward the BCPSS administration. This was evident almost without regard for the topic of discussion. Lack of follow-through, lack of support, lack of communication, lack of service coordination, and lack of opportunity for input were common themes heard in these discussions. While the scope of our evaluation did not allow for an indepth examination of this discontentment, it was obvious that there are problems here that need to be addressed.

Issues for Further Consideration and Recommendations for BCPSS

Although progress has been made on efforts to attract and retain a quality teaching force at BCPSS, the job is not finished. Incipient resentment of more experienced teachers toward the administration based on perceived inequities in the salary structure could grow into a major problem if not dealt with soon. This issue needs further investigation to determine exactly why

experienced teachers feel they are not being treated fairly with respect to recent changes in the compensation package.

It is difficult to ascertain, based on current data, just how effective the mentoring programs are. It is obvious from the focus group interviews, however, that the perceived quality varies by program, with the area-based programs seen as the most varied in quality and effectiveness. The mentor program evaluation currently underway should examine this more closely.

BCPSS has made major changes in the organizational structure and staffing of the central administration. This was most evident to us in the Department of Human Resources. So far as the teachers and principals are concerned, however, on how effective these changes will be in creating a more efficient, client-oriented system is still unknown. BCPSS needs to attend carefully to the perceptions we found regarding the lack of responsiveness of central office to teachers' and administrators' concerns, as well as the lack of communication and coordination. As long as teachers and principals believe that the central office is uncaring and nonresponsive, they will behave as though it is, thereby making effective reform more difficult. A concerted effort should be made to involve teachers and principals in finding a solution to this problem, lest the perceptions of the past become barriers to substantive improvement in the present and the future.

Findings in Professional Development for Teachers and Principals

Summary

Professional development efforts within BCPSS have responded to the mandates and guidelines of SB 795 and The Master Plan. The content of professional development offerings has been aligned with Master Plan objectives and with MSDE curriculum and certification requirements. Teachers and principals are offered professional development from a variety of sources within BCPSS. For example, the Department of Professional Development (DPD) provides professional development opportunities through the following programs: New Educators Professional Development, Systemic Mentoring, Aspiring Leaders, Assistant Principals (new), and New Principals Induction Institute; other departments (e.g., Curriculum and Instruction, Human Resources, and Information Technology) also have professional development responsibilities. Teachers and principals can and do participate in professional development from any and/or all of these sources.

Teachers' and principals' responses to the survey items and to the focus group queries were most often directed toward the professional development offered across and throughout the BCPSS. We the evaluators hold the view that survey, focus group, and interview respondents were in the main addressing their responses to the centrally developed and offered professional development opportunities, and therefore we view their aggregated responses as salient and useful for BCPSS in charting its future plans regarding professional development expectations and opportunities.

There appears to be consensus that BCPSS professional development has become more focused and relevant than previously, and there is widespread participation in the professional development offerings among BCPSS principals and teachers, including those in special education. The array of professional development offerings includes many that are directly geared toward principals' and teachers' professional lives, including qualified observer training, portfolio preparation, classroom management, and so on. The highest rates of participation occur in those offerings that appear to link most closely with daily practice in the schools.

Nevertheless, more remains to be done. Teachers' responses do not indicate that professional development is valued beyond attendance requirements: close to half of the teachers reported that they participate only because it is a requirement of employment in the district—not a ringing endorsement by consumers of the perceived usefulness of what is being

offered. Communication among the professionals within the district about professional development remains problematic as well. For example, substantial majorities of principals and teachers believe they have little or no input into the design and conduct of professional development, and others suggest that the district's offerings could be made more relevant to their working situations.

This section discusses the professional development opportunities offered within BCPSS and the impact of these activities. We examine:

- Changes since the enactment of SB 795,
- Extent to which activities are school-based,
- Range of areas addressed,
- Extent to which teachers receive supports in working with students having special needs,
- Access to professional development for special education teachers,
- Input of teachers into services offered,
- Participation in professional development,
- Reactions to professional development,
- Perceived impacts of professional development, and
- Issues requiring further consideration and recommendations for BCPSS and MSDE.

The specific Master Plan strategies relevant to professional development include:

- Strategy 2.1.1: Design and Implement a Teacher Development Program.
- Strategy 2.1.4: A Structured System of Teacher Input Regarding Reform Initiatives.
- Strategy 2.2.1: Ongoing Professional Development for All Teachers.
- Strategy 2.2.2: New Educators Professional Development Program.
- Strategy 2.2.3: Academy for Educational Leadership.

Professional Development Supports: Evaluation Questions

Changes Since Enactment of Senate Bill 795

Interviews with DPD personnel provided a context within which to view changes in professional development. Many staff stated that it was difficult to compare their current activities in professional development with those prior to the implementation of The Master Plan, noting that they did not work in that department at that time. Later interviews elicited the comments that professional development activities were now becoming more "focused" and "systemic" than previously, and that real attempts were being made to deliver professional development opportunities to principals and teachers that were directly relevant to their professional lives as educators within BCPSS. Examples included sessions on the rationale for and implementation of the Performance-Based Evaluation System, preparation of portfolios, Qualified Observers training, and the New Teachers Summer Institute and Orientation. Illustrative comments from these interviews follow:

> *The system is beginning to see…you can't do these fragmented, one-shot deals. (We're) seeing more consistency and more follow-up to the offerings. We're doing a better job of…creating a community of learners—doing a better job.*

***

> *…there's a system-wide focus now—a systemic approach—in the past it was very fragmented [and] planning was lacking and was ad-hoc.*

***

(I) can remember a time when it was so fragmented. Now everyone understands what they're supposed to do.

***

Prior to 1999 there was no coordination of effort for individual teachers regarding what PD activities they participated in. Now there is a systematic process. (My) job has been to coordinate all plans. (I) maintain a calendar, which changes 3 times each year. All systemic activities are shown each quarter. The calendar also helps principals keep track of dates for which they will need substitute teachers, allowing them to plan for substitutes in advance.

Additional materials provided by DPD personnel illustrated the changes they are implementing. The catalogs listing professional development opportunities within BCPSS and through local colleges and universities, for example, show offerings that are cross-referenced with the relevant Master Plan objectives, the PBES requirements, and the MSDE requirements for teacher certification.

During a March 2001 interview, officials from the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU) generally agreed with the statements above, although they stressed the need for continued improvement:

We have to make professional development meaningful to the teachers—it's (been) described as "drive-by professional development." (The) BTU wants to be partners with the system and to make it meaningful for teachers in the classroom. Professional development is moving in the right direction, but there's much work to be done. The effort to focus professional development on standards and professional development teams—we need more support; the effort and the thinking is there. Is BCPSS on the right track with professional development? Yes. Is it working? No, not yet.

For their part, BCPSS principals were asked to rate changes in professional development sponsored by BCPSS since 1997–98, when SB 795 ushered in the reform efforts associated with The Master Plan. Eighty-five percent of the principals responding to the principal survey rated professional development as slightly to much improved. High school principals were less likely to rate professional development activities as slightly to much improved (65 percent) than their peers at other instructional levels, and were more likely to rate professional development activities as "worse" (18 percent). A comment from a principal who attended the focus group interview is illustrative:

What's improved are the changes with the unified curriculum and the amount of materials that we receive in order to implement the program. Another area is that I think there are people who understand the importance of professional development. I think they are taking more time looking at what they are doing as far as professional development is concerned, and working on trying to make it more focused, because that really has an impact on what is going to happen in the classroom.

BCPSS teachers were mixed in their views of changes in professional development. Written comments taken from the teacher survey and comments from the two teacher focus group interviews suggested that the teachers feel changes in the delivery and content of professional development since SB 795 are noticeable, but that some offerings are perhaps either missing the mark or are of questionable value:

It has been the last two to three years that there has really been a turn around. Prior to that time professional development never really had anything to do with what we were actually doing. We hated it with a passion.

***

I have seen a lot of changes. It seems to me that Baltimore City sometimes jumps from program to program. When I first came in we'd get comfortable with a program. Then here I have to adapt ours to theirs and things don't mesh together. I am one of those teachers who, if my kids don't have it, we are going to stay with it a little bit longer, and I will catch up somewhere else along the line. I heard this summer we have to go through new science training and I just felt like I had all of the science down pat, and I went through and got all my resources and materials and learned it backward and forwards. I had a file cabinet full of resources that I could use, and now they tell me they are changing again. As soon as you get comfortable with something, they change it.

***

Okay, you all have school-based staff development. And your opinion of school-based staff development is? [group consensus: negative] Exactly. The only reason that they're doing it is it's a response to the management plan and Senate Bill 795. The sad thing is, is that—for the 5-year people that are here, and for the 34-year people that are here—we have been there, done that, and we are so frustrated. All those years that you put in.

***

One quick point. I came in 3 years ago. There was not a session for new teachers. I think it was two days before school actually started, PDC got it over here. Then, as new teachers started rolling in, the last 2 years—I think that is a step in the right direction to help those teachers coming in, because I didn't have that when I first came here. I think it is a step in the right direction and they should keep it up.

Extent to Which Professional Development Activities are School Based

Survey data from both the principals and the teachers provided mixed views on whether or not the professional development activities offered through BCPSS are school based. Survey results presented in Table 6-9 suggest that the majority of principals and teachers reported that professional development activities are relevant, practical, and useful. However, when asked if professional development activities offered through BCPSS are "tailored to meet your needs as a school leader (teaching professional)," the majority of principals and teachers indicated that this was so only to a slight or moderate degree.

Table 6-9.
Percentage of principals and teachers indicating BCPSS professional development activities are tailored to their needs as school leaders or teaching professionals

Respondent	Not at all/ moderate degree	Good/great degree
Principals		
Total	51	49
Elementary	41	59
Elementary/middle	64	36
Middle	57	43
High school	63	37
Other	100	0
Teachers		
Total	67	33
Elementary	64	36
Elementary/middle	72	28
Middle	63	37
High school	76	24
Other	64	36

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher and Principal Surveys, 2001.

Within instructional levels, a majority of elementary school principals indicated that professional development was tailored to meet their needs to a good or great degree. However, majorities of principals at other instructional levels indicated that the professional development activities in which they participated were tailored to meet their needs not at all or to a moderate degree. Similarly, a majority of BCPSS teachers reported that professional development activities

in which they participated were not or only moderately tailored to meet their needs, with high school and elementary/middle school teachers more likely to rate professional development tailored to meet their needs to a moderate or lesser extent than their elementary school colleagues.

Focus group responses and written comments from the principal and teacher surveys provide illustrations of these views:

> *It was like an hour and a half, "Boring." People would go to sleep, because they knew the things that they were trying to talk about had really nothing to do with what teachers were really dealing with, with young people and issues in school.*
>
> ***
>
> *But it's the same thing every year. The same training with a different name.*
>
> ***
>
> *I am so tired of getting the same workshop with a different name. It's just a waste of my time.*
>
> ***
>
> *What has been my concern in all the years is, as a senior level teacher, when will they give me something that I can grow on? When will they bother to look to find out who has had what? Because we have to register for these things, nobody's looking. They're just taking the information—do you know what I'm speaking of? When you take certain things, they have records of what you've taken. But it's just sitting there. So, why not look and see, now, what's the next level that we might look at, so they can grow professionally, and continually? And not go back and keep on regenerating the same old thing.*
>
> ***
>
> *I don't have a background in teaching. I have a bachelor's degree, and I've had some training—I was getting my master's degree at the same time, but I feel insulted at professional development workshops that we go to. So insulted to the point I don't go anymore. I have never been to one where I have learned something new. [I agree; That's right] I went to one that was 2 hours of what a rubric is. All they did was give me thirty-five pages of what a rubric is, and I thought, it's a waste of paper, it's a waste of my time, and I haven't been back since.*
>
> ***
>
> *I think that there should be a wide variety of workshops, from which teachers make their own choices about what to take. What is the use of doing an Individual Development Plan each year, only to find out that BCPSS pretty much dictates what workshop teachers have to attend?*

Range of Areas Addressed in Professional Development

Information on the opportunities available for professional development through the BCPSS DPD can be found in the Professional Development Catalog, Summer 2001, and online at the BCPSS website: (http://www.bcps.k12.md.us/dept_pro_dev/default.html). Professional development offerings are cross-referenced against The Master Plan objectives, PBES requirements, and MSDE certification requirements.

BCPSS principals indicated participating in a range of professional development opportunities relevant to their leadership roles in the schools. BCPSS teachers also participated in a wide range of professional development activities, as summarized in Table 6-10.

Table 6-10.
Percentage of BCPSS teachers participating in professional development activities

Professional development activity	Percentage participating
Qualified Observer for PBES	40
Consultant teacher	19
Leadership	29
PRAXIS/NTE test-taking	15
Instructional methodology/practice	64
Instructional planning	76
Classroom management	74
Portfolio development	85
Assessment of student achievement	72
Teaching special populations	63
Computer technology	50
Administering national, state, or local assessments	64
Using achievement data for school improvement	57
Implementing new curriculum	71
Other	10

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System. How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001

Extent to Which All Teachers Receive Supports in Working with Special Needs Students

Responses to the teacher survey, comments written on the teacher survey, and focus group responses suggest that BCPSS teachers do not feel they have adequate supports in working with students with special needs in their classrooms.

While 63 percent of the teachers indicated they had had professional development relevant to teaching special populations, a majority of teachers (52 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed that training adequately covered in the use of the new curriculum materials in reading for students with disabilities. However, 58 percent of these teachers agreed or strongly agreed that training received on the use of the new mathematics textbooks was helpful for using these materials with students with disabilities. When provided the opportunity to suggest additional topics for professional development, teachers frequently referred to those related to working with students with disabilities included in their classrooms:

New topics would include things that teachers need up-to-date or state of the art help with, such as: 1. Teaching diverse classes, tiring lessons. 2. Teaching inclusion classes.

***

The new topics for professional development include various assessment methods applicable for special education students.

***

Inclusion.

***

Inclusion and new teachers.

***

Including diverse learners, classroom management.

***

Inclusion of Special Ed into regular Ed.

***

Inclusion resources.

In terms of support in working with students with disabilities in the classroom, there was agreement among the teachers (77 percent) and among principals (53 percent) that there was moderate or less support available.

With regard to the availability of different types of supports for the inclusion of students with special needs in the classroom, however, principals and teachers held quite contradictory views. Across the support types, BCPSS principals consistently indicated that more support was available than did the teachers. It is difficult to tell the source of the discrepancies from the survey data shown in Table 6-11, or from the comments obtained from the focus group interviews, individual interviews with BCPSS personnel, and written comments respondents supplied with their surveys.

Table 6-11.
Percentage of principals and teachers indicating availability of specific supports for inclusion of students with special needs in the classroom

Support type	Percentage indicating support is available	
	Principals	Teachers
Co-teaching	71	45
Instructional consultation	91	64
Resource room	67	51
Supplemental aides	78	49

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System. How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal and Teacher Surveys, 2001.

Access to Professional Development for Special Education Teachers

The BCPSS Department of Professional Development Catalog lists available opportunities for professional development, including the intended target audience for each offering. Survey responses from BCPSS teachers indicated that special education teachers, like their general education colleagues, participated in a wide range of professional development opportunities. As shown in Table 6-12, they appear to be activities with direct connection to their daily professional lives (e.g., portfolio development, classroom management, and instructional planning).

Input of Teachers into Services Offered

The strategy to provide ongoing school-based professional development and state certification coursework for teachers targets, in part, teacher input into the design and content of professional development activities. This strategy seeks to bring about professional development that is more closely site-based and differentiated by teachers' experience levels. In addition, the DPD receives input from the Professional Development Coordinating Council, an advisory group established to discuss "various aspects pertinent to professional development in BCPSS. Membership on the PDCC includes representatives from the area offices, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Management Information Systems, Baltimore Teachers Union, Public School Administrators and Supervisors Association, Office of Performance-Based Evaluation, and principals."[57]

Table 6-12.
Percentage of special education teachers participating in professional development offerings through BCPSS

Professional development activity	Percent participating
Qualified observer for PBES	44
Consultant teacher	31
Leadership	39
PRAXIS/NTE test-taking	17
Instructional methodology/practice	54
Instructional planning	79
Classroom management	85
Portfolio development	89
Assessment of student achievement	81
Teaching special populations	82
Computer technology	74
Administering national, state, or local assessments	44
Using achievement data for school improvement	51
Implementing new curriculum	74
Other	24

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System. How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Survey data from both teachers and principals suggest that these efforts to obtain teacher input on professional development have yet to take hold. Eighty-five percent of the teachers, representing all instructional levels, responded that their input into the design/conduct of professional development was moderate or less. These survey data were supported by comments from the focus group interviews with teachers and the written comments that teachers made on the survey:

> *I would like to see professional development geared toward the immediate needs. Everything that we mentioned here. How do you deal with an*

[57]Executive Summary. Department of Professional Development, Baltimore City Public School System.

alternative child? How do you deal with teachers leaving and getting someone on board? I did not have one team with the same teacher from September until December. How to deal with those kind of situations.

***

More professional development needs to be centered around specific training, like you said. Things that we actually go through in the classroom. When we went through our training they didn't discuss that there were kids that haven't had part four, or didn't have the workbook. How do we bring that child up? They don't get real specific with the real problems that we have. I would like to see less of the repetitiveness that we get in training. Sometimes I feel like I am learning the same things over and over again, and I never get anything new. I think they need to address specific concerns that we have with those children that come in lacking skills. If we have to adjust and give the skills that the child needs and show improvement right then and there—show us how we can fix it, then maybe we won't have these problems.

***

I am totally dissatisfied with staff development. I cannot stay in a system that is not going to give back to me; that's not going to educate me, to bring me to the newest and the latest things to where I can help my children. I don't feel like I should know more than my principal. And at this point in time, that's what I feel. She comes to me. That's not right—I have four years teaching [laughter]; she's been doing this for longer—she's been doing this for about twenty. That, to me, is ridiculous. Absolutely ridiculous.

***

I believe there should be more surveys of teacher needs, so they can reach different levels of needs.

The principals appeared to echo this view, albeit indirectly, in their survey responses to a question regarding the amount of input they have in the design/conduct of recruitment, mentoring, and retention practices for new administrators and teachers. The majority of the principals (52 to 87 percent) indicated they have moderate or less input into the design or conduct of recruitment, mentoring, or retention practices for new administrators and teachers. Qualitative responses from the principals may illustrate their beliefs: The exchange that follows occurred during a series of questions about teacher retention (if one considered professional development as an aspect of teacher retention efforts):

Question: Do you have opportunity for input in the system?

Ha. [Ditto; ditto.]

***

Even if we're heard, that's where it stops.

***

If you have a reasonable AEO, that makes a difference, but those making policy don't have a clue what's going on.

***

(It's) passed down policy—if you go to that person and say, "This is happening." They make the policy up here (and) then we get a letter or whatever, and we go to a meeting and they say, "This is the way it is." If you have input or if you ask questions, they don't have answers because they haven't looked into it. They have not looked into the fine-tuning of it. They make decisions about policy during the same meeting the issues are brought up, and there's no time to think it through.

Discussion

There appears to be consensus among the survey participants and other stakeholders that professional development has changed in positive ways since the enactment of SB 795. While there may be disagreement on the amount of change, there appears agreement on its direction. Yet, there are contradictions in the data. Professional development is praised for the organization, relevance, and practicality of its content, and participation in it is broad, especially in areas that appear directly applicable to school leadership and classroom teaching. Despite these views, however, a sizable majority of teachers and approximately half of the principals state that professional development activities are, at best, only moderately tailored to their needs. In terms of school-based input about professional development, the views are stronger still: substantial majorities of teachers and principals feel they have only moderate or less input into the design and conduct of professional development.

In terms of instructional support for teaching students with disabilities, there exist differences in perception among the principals and teachers about the amount and types of support available. Despite the offerings of professional development activities on topics relevant to inclusion and instruction of students with disabilities in the regular classroom, and in spite of the high level of participation in professional development related to these topics, additional topics on working with this population of students are among the most frequently requested by the teachers.

Participation in Professional Development

Participation in professional development is widespread for BCPSS school principals. For example, 99 percent of the principals indicated they had received training as qualified observers for the Performance-Based Evaluation System for teachers within the last 2 years. Approximately 70 percent of the principals indicated they had also received professional development in mentoring (for teachers or principals) and/or institutional leadership. High school principals were somewhat less likely to have participated in mentoring or institutional leadership training than their colleagues at other instructional levels, while middle school principals were more likely to have done so.

Teacher participation in professional development was also high, with 92 percent of the teachers reporting participation in professional development activities during summer 2000 or the 2000–2001 academic year. Participation in some type of professional development was consistent across all instructional levels. Training that centered on the development of portfolios for the PBES was most frequently reported, with 85 percent of the teachers participating. More than 70 percent of the teachers reported participating in training that focused on classroom applications and operations (e.g., instructional planning, classroom management, assessment of student achievement, and implementing new curriculum).

Teachers were also asked to indicate their primary purpose for participating in their most recent professional development experience. A plurality of the teachers across instructional levels and school characteristics (45 percent) indicated that they participated because it was required. The one exception to this pattern occurred with teachers who had been at their school for 1 year or less—primarily as novice or beginning teachers, although this group may also include teachers who have transferred into a new school in the district. According to their survey responses, 13 percent of these teachers attended because participation was mandatory, while 73 percent participated to build their skills, improve their practice, or apply the knowledge they had gained.

Reactions to Professional Development

In their surveys, principals and teachers were asked to indicate their perceptions of the quality of the professional development received along a number of dimensions. Substantial majorities within both groups rated their most recent professional development experiences as

adequate to excellent across the dimensions rated (Table 6-13).

Table 6-13.
Percentage of principals and teachers rating various dimensions of professional development as good or excellent

Dimension of professional development	Principals	Teachers
Relevance of professional development activities	61	47
Practicality of activities for classroom use	59	46
Knowledge of facilitators	67	58
Organization of presentations	64	58
Clarity of presentations	64	57
Amount of new material presented	55	43
Usefulness of content	62	48
Quality of materials	62	49

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System. How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal and Teacher Surveys, 2001.

One area of professional development that drew consistent praise was the New Teachers Summer Institute and Orientation, a 5-week training program designed to familiarize newly hired teachers with BCPSS procedures, the realities of teaching in a large urban school district, and the opportunities and amenities available throughout the City of Baltimore. Focus group participants cited this training as an example of a successful professional development offering:

> *They offered the summer workshops for all the new people, and it was voluntary whether it be attended or not. You got breakfast and lunch, and I chose to attend all sessions that they had. It was seven weeks all together. I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of orientation that I had in this building in the summer, and I found it challenging. It not only gave you help for getting ready for the year, but it also gave you interaction with other teachers. We often interacted with each other even if we were with different schools. It gave us somebody to sound off to, get help from or encourage or whatever. I think that was a really important development that they made for teachers to have success in teaching in Baltimore City.*

***

I can honestly tell you that in my eighteen years prior everything—I have two Master's degrees—I have never had as much information as was made available to me in one place. It was just masterfully done here at PDC. Everything from how to get around in personnel to all the services that could possibly be provided by Baltimore City. They brought in every representative in from every organization that they have. I can't tell you what it is, but I know we have a lot of it. Maybe next year I will be able to understand ARD. I can deal with the children first—all those outside services that they would introduce to us, even though we didn't know who they are. At least I have heard of them before. Foreign language students, everything that had to do with fathers. I can't even begin to name off all these services. There was just too many. A different group of people. They had performances that they brought in once or twice a week maybe. There were people that did special plays. They did music productions, art performances, interpretations, and all kinds of experiences that gave you a flavor for what you were going to see. It also gave you feedback to anticipate what I had experienced first hand, because I am not sure whether I would have been on the same page, especially with my circumstances. I am white and most of my children are African-American. I have a lot to learn in terms of cultural differences, having not a lot of knowledge about the socio-economics of my immediate community that I teach in. They also did things with behavioral objectives. They talked about portfolios, and they went section by section. Again, I still didn't understand the impact of how important that portfolio was. We were introduced to it, so it wasn't completely foreign. They went through again. I can't

even imagine with the success I have had in another school system without the preparation that I had, and agree with [peer] one hundred percent. I am so enthusiastic about what they have to offer me as a professional. I have never ever experienced so many opportunities. Just recently at my school, some of you may have seen it, there is a list that just came out with this new partnership for summer for all of these classes that you can take. They are virtually free.

When considering differences in reactions among the teachers at different instructional levels, a greater proportion of high school teachers tended to rate the various dimensions of professional development as very poor or poor than did their teaching colleagues at other instructional levels (Table 6-14). Ratings of the principals from different instructional levels did not repeat this pattern of consistently lower ratings by high school personnel.

Specific criticisms of the professional development offerings taken from the focus group interviews and the written comments from the teacher and principal surveys suggested that "newness" of material presented was problematic. Several teachers remarked on the redundancy of topics and of having "heard this before." Representative comments from the focus groups and surveys follow:

But it's the same thing every year. The same training with a different name.

***

I am so tired of getting the same workshop with a different name. It's just a waste of my time.

***

First, it isn't so much what we need to cover, but that we DO NOT need to spend every single professional development day spent discussing the same things about the end of course exams and state tests. We have had at least two years of this stuff and it really hasn't changed in any significant way since our first meeting.

These comments seem to be mirrored in the survey data from both the principals and teachers. While overall ratings among the teachers and principals indicated satisfaction with most aspects of professional development, the dimensions reflecting practicality—amount of new material presented—and usefulness of the content received the highest proportion of very poor/poor ratings (Table 6-15).

Table 6-14.
Percentage of teachers rating aspects of professional development as very poor or poor, by instructional level

Dimension of professional development	High school	Middle	Elementary/ middle	Elementary	Other
Relevance of professional development activities	21	15	13	10	9
Practicality of activities for classroom use	26	17	17	14	14
Knowledge of facilitators	16	10	8	7	5
Organizations of presentations	17	11	6	8	6
Clarity of presentations	18	10	8	9	10
Amount of new material presented	28	17	17	16	13
Usefulness of content	28	16	14	14	13
Quality of materials	20	12	10	11	10

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Table 6-15.
Percentage of teachers and principals rating selected aspects of professional development as very poor or poor

Dimension of professional development	Teachers	Principals
Practicality of activities for classroom use	17	12
Amount of new material presented	19	16
Usefulness of content	17	10

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal and Teacher Surveys, 2001.

Impact of Professional Development

In their survey, principals were asked to indicate the extent to which "professional development offered in BCPSS helped you do a better job of school leadership." The majority of principals (57 percent) indicated that professional development helped them to a good/great extent; among elementary school principals, 68 percent felt that way, in comparison to 42 percent of high school principals.

Teachers were asked a corresponding question concerning the extent to which professional development has helped "you do a better job of teaching." In contrast to the principals' responses, 40 percent of the teachers indicated that professional development helped them to a good/great extent. Middle school teachers were most likely to rate professional development as helping them to a good/great extent (50 percent),while high school teachers were least likely to do so (32 percent).

We also examined perceptions of the impacts of professional development on student learning. BCPSS principals and teachers were asked to indicate the effects or contributions of professional development activities, under the auspices and guidance of The Master Plan, on students' learning. Despite the positive views of the content and presentation of professional development offerings from BCPSS, there were differences among the principals and teachers as to whether the lessons are working their way into classroom practice and thereby having an effect on students' learning.

The principals were asked to offer their views of the effects of various aspects of The Master Plan (e.g., teacher recruitment, new teacher mentoring, teacher and principal professional development) on changes in students' learning as seen at their schools. The principals rated all aspects of The Master Plan as having moderate to strong effects on improving student learning, with teacher professional development, new teacher mentoring, and principal professional development receiving the greatest percentages of ratings of moderate to strong effects on students' learning (Table 6-16).

Table 6-16.
Percentage of principals rating various aspects of Master Plan elements as having a moderate/strong effect on students' learning

Master Plan element	Percent of principals
Teacher professional development	90
New teacher mentoring	86
Principal professional development	82

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System. How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Similarly, BCPSS teachers were asked in their survey to indicate their views of the extent that professional development activities provided through BCPSS enhanced *their* students' learning in specific areas (e.g., reading, math, science, problem solving). The teachers were not as strong as the principals in attributing enhancements in student learning to professional development activities (Table 6-17).

Within instructional levels, differences in attributions of enhancement for learning occurred: a significantly higher number of elementary teachers attributed enhancements in student learning in reading, writing, math, and raised academic standards to professional development than did their high school level colleagues. These differences are presented in Table 6-18.

Table 6-17.
Percentage of teachers rating professional development activities as producing much/very much enhancement of their students' learning

Academic area	Percent of teachers
Reading	39
Writing	36
Math	30
Science	21
Social studies	19
Technology/computers	19
Integrating information	26
Problem solving	28
Critical thinking	31
Decision making	27
Raised academic standards	34

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System. How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Table 6-18.
Percentage of elementary and high school teachers rating professional development activities as producing much/very much enhancement of students' learning

Academic area	Percent of teachers	
	Elementary	High school
Reading	48	22
Writing	43	24
Mathematics	37	21
Raised academic standards	38	28

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System. How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

The reader is reminded, however, that ratings for much/very much enhancement in student learning were lower for all teachers regardless of instructional level than were ratings indicating not at all/slight/moderate enhancements of students' learning.

Discussion

The data described above indicate that there is widespread participation in professional development activities among BCPSS principals and teachers at all instructional levels. The professional development they receive earned moderate to high ratings for its relevance, organization, practicality, and clarity. The principals believed that professional development activities have helped them do a better job of school leadership, while the teachers were less sure that their abilities to teach have been enhanced by professional development. There were also mixed views on whether professional development activities have contributed to student learning in meaningful ways. The principals expressed a global belief that student learning has been enhanced by professional development, although the teachers did not share that view.

Minorities of teachers, across instructional levels, believed that professional development has enhanced student learning in specific subjects or content areas in any meaningful way. High school teachers and principals had a tendency to view professional development less positively than did their peers at other instructional levels. When the overall ratings for a given survey question were negative, it was not unusual for the high school personnel to respond more negatively; when the overall ratings for a given survey question were positive, it was not unusual for the high school personnel to respond less positively than their peers. It is also important to point out that nearly half of the teachers reported attending professional development activities because they are required to do so, and not for reasons of enhanced instructional skill or acquisition of new teaching methods.

Issues Requiring Further Consideration

As stated previously, the data obtained present contradictions and inconsistencies that may require additional consideration. While nearly half the teachers indicate they attend professional development only because it is mandatory, the professional development offerings themselves are viewed moderately positively and are described as relevant. And yet despite their apparent relevance, professional development offerings are not seen as contributing in a detectable way to student achievement. These contradictions may relate to a more generalized sense of fatigue and negativity that permeated

many of the responses of the principals, teachers, and other BCPSS personnel: the narrative and numerical data reveal an undercurrent of negativity about teachers' and principals' professional lives in BCPSS. This negativity does not seem directed at particular departments or instructional or support groups, although each group in the professional ladder seems to have some animus toward those above it. Whether this negative undercurrent is a "state" that is largely influenced by transitory issues, or a "trait" that is consistent over time, across situations, and embedded in the culture of BCPSS, remains an issue for further consideration.

An additional contradiction is seen when one compares both the array of choices for professional development, particularly opportunities that appear to be related directly to school-based practice, and the high level of participation in these activities with the frequent suggestions and pleas that professional development offerings be more relevant to the teachers' professional lives. Whether the disconnect is because the professional development offerings do not deliver what they promise, because teachers are not getting the information they need to plan for their professional development in a timely manner, or because the negativity discussed above creates a lens through which all communication within BCPSS is viewed remains an issue for further consideration.

One area to examine is communication. The Master Plan, and the Metis Interim Evaluation Report (2000) both contain recommendations for more direct teacher input into professional development offerings and more differentiation of professional development based on levels of experience and need. Attempts to connect more meaningfully with the teachers regarding their professional development needs are underway, but these efforts may not yet have had sufficient impact to counteract the impressions of professional development offerings formed prior to the enactment of SB 795 and The Master Plan.

Many teachers commented on the difficulty of getting information about professional development in a timely manner. Some indicated they had to rely on their principals to get information to them; others stated their "lifeline" was their mailbox at school, but that so much information about so many different aspects of working in BCPSS is placed there that they rarely have time, or take the time, to sort through it to find information about professional development. Given that 45 percent of the teachers only attend professional development because it is required, one must wonder how diligently they seek out information on specific offerings.

In addition, according to the principals, 66 percent of the schools either have no access to email or have email access only for administrators. This lack of electronic communication closes off a potential avenue of input to, and from, teachers about professional development. According to the principals, half of the schools should have email access by the end of the school year, with the remaining half gaining access over the summer. If, as part of this effort, access extends to teachers, then communication about professional development (as well as more generally) may be enhanced.

Strategy 2.2.1, priority initiative 2.2.1a, from the BCPSS Master Plan Update 2001-2002 directs area executive officers and principals to "provide for all teachers school-based professional development that is included in the school improvement plan and that meets the individual needs and interests of teachers." This provides some evidence that BCPSS recognizes the importance of teacher input into professional development and is moving toward getting that input more systematically and successfully, as does the Professional Development Coordinating Council within the Department of Professional Development. The council was established to provide one means of monitoring professional development offerings and tailoring them to principals' and teachers' specific needs.

Finally, the views of personnel working at the high school level, either as principals or as teachers, were somewhat more negative toward professional development offerings across many of the dimensions examined. Why this is so is an issue for further consideration. Is it related to issues of input and communication? Or is it

related to the advertised content of professional development offerings, which could also be an issue of teacher input into professional development design and conduct?

Recommendations

The data obtained from the various numerical and narrative sources offer reasons to praise the professional development available in BCPSS. They also provide direction for continuing the efforts to provide focused and relevant professional development that will ultimately play a role in raising BCPSS students' levels of achievement. Specific suggestions that derive from the data relevant to professional development follow:

1. BCPSS should continue, and perhaps expand, its efforts to solicit meaningful input from its teachers about their needs and desires for professional development, and make more visible to them the fact that this input is sought, valued, and used, in designing professional development offerings.

2. A review of the means by which information about professional development is disseminated to principals and teachers seems indicated. Factors to include in such a review should include the timeliness of dissemination, and whether a sufficient variety of means of dissemination exists.

3. Increased attention to the needs and experiences of high school personnel seems indicated.

Findings in Performance-Based Evaluation for Teachers and Principals

Summary

Within its overall effort to improve the quality, stability, and effectiveness of its teaching and school administration workforces, BCPSS has recognized the need to modernize its policies and procedures concerning the performance evaluation of personnel in the schools. For any organization, this is an important recognition, as we know through experience and research that the evaluation of personnel can provide an important venue for examining and improving individual, program, and institutional performance. This can be particularly so if the system accurately portrays the capabilities and accomplishments of its workers and is genuinely oriented toward performance improvement, rather than overly tilted toward sanction under the guise of "accountability." As the often-quoted dictum of Dan Stufflebeam goes, the primary purpose of evaluation is "not to prove but to improve."[58]

Since the enactment of Maryland's SB 795, BCPSS has designed and implemented changes in the performance evaluation systems for both teachers and principals that are now in use for the majority of the schools' workforces. Changes in the performance evaluation system for principals have been less extensive or dramatic and consequently perhaps less disruptive or controversial than those made in the evaluation system for teachers. Under The Master Plan, there is now increased focus on principals' accountability for student achievement and attendance. To draw attention to these changes in emphasis, these two factors were elevated to become stand-alone indicators in the main instrument used in the performance evaluation of principals.

On the other hand, the evaluation of BCPSS teachers has undergone substantial change as directed by The Master Plan. The new Performance-Based Evaluation System (PBES) for teachers contains five domains, the first four of which continue to address traditionally assessed areas of teacher work: preparation and planning, learning environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities (Office of Performance-Based Teacher Evaluation, 1999). The fifth domain, demonstrated student

[43]Daniel Stufflebeam. (1983). The CIPP model for program evaluation. In *Evaluation Models: Viewpoints on Educational and Human Services Evaluation*, edited by G. Madaus, M. Scriven, and D. L. Stufflebeam. Boston: Kluwer, 1983.

achievement (teacher/parent interaction for improved achievement and attendance) is new to the district and requires each teacher to develop a Demonstrated Student Achievement (DSA) Portfolio that documents a sample of students' progress toward identified learning goals. It is the intent and the reality of producing the DSA Portfolio that for teachers represents the most significant change in their performance evaluation. That is, the DSA Portfolio has come to represent in a very real sense a "lightning rod" for teachers' general dissatisfaction with administrative mandates from the district's central office.

In addition to the design and development of the DSA Portfolio and associated procedures, the training of qualified school personnel to use the new system for teachers is essentially complete.[59] Additional procedures have been or are under development for specialist groups in the schools, and the DSA Portfolio has now undergone two state-led audits (MSDE, 2000), annual review by personnel in the Office of Performance-Based Evaluation, and resulting revision and improvement.

There does not appear to be immediate or significant cause for concern regarding the performance evaluation system for BCPSS principals. Principals generally seem content with the system by which their performance as school leaders is judged. For now, the main area that requires attention seems to be the alignment of district-based professional development offered to principals with the results of their performance evaluations. That is, BCPSS professional development offerings for the admittedly low numbers of BCPSS principals working under plans of assistance (seven principals or 4 percent of those responding to the survey) must be more closely informed by principals' professional needs as pointed up by their performance evaluations. A second area of concern may be the very low numbers of principals, concentrated at the elementary/middle and middle levels, who have recently worked under plans of assistance. These low numbers (zero among high school principals) may indicate that the evaluation system at present does not sufficiently distinguish among truly differing levels of job performance for BCPSS principals. This possibility warrants further study.

For BCPSS teachers, the new Performance-Based Evaluation System is now in place, with most, if not all, eligible teacher-evaluators and a substantial number of teachers trained in its purposes and procedures. However, the system (represented primarily by the DSA Portfolio) exists and operates absent widespread and needed support or ownership from either teachers or principals, and without much evidence at this time that it contributes to the improvement of the teaching workforce. In fact, the views of many teachers and administrators regarding the evaluation system's centerpiece portfolio seems to be that it is simply one more hurdle to jump over, and is largely disconnected from what teachers actually do in their classrooms. This situation requires attention and action.

In this discussion of the performance evaluation systems for teachers and principals implemented over the past 3 school years, including their views on the evaluation system, we address the following specific points of inquiry:

- Changes in BCPSS personnel evaluation policy and practice since the enactment of SB 795;
- Assessment of the adequacy of implementation of the new systems;
- Input of teachers and principals;
- Effectiveness of the mandated training program;
- Impacts on retention/dismissal decisions and placement on performance improvement plans (for teachers) or plans of assistance (for principals);
- School stakeholders' perceptions of impacts of the new evaluation systems, including student performance;

[59]Interview with N. Neilson, Director of the Office of Performance-Based Evaluation, June 8, 2001.

- Alignment of the performance evaluation system with the Joint Committee's Personnel Evaluation Standards;
- Sustainability of the evaluation system, including comparisons with systems in other urban school systems; and
- Issues requiring further consideration and recommendations for BCPSS and MSDE.

Sources of data used in compiling the information presented in this section include principal and teacher surveys, individual and group interviews with BCPSS and Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU) personnel, focus group interviews with BCPSS teachers, principals, and new-teacher mentors, document reviews of BCPSS materials, and site visit reports.

Changes Since the Enactment of SB 795

Role of The Master Plan

As noted previously in this report, the BCPSS Master Plan has provided the blueprint for guiding districtwide school improvement efforts. Structured to respond to SB 795 and the consent decree, the BCPSS Master Plan provides objectives, strategies, and action steps for both guiding and assessing progress. A central aspect of this final evaluation is to examine the implementation of The Master Plan and assess the extent to which key objectives have been attained. The City-State Partnership legislation thus provides both direction and guidance for the reforms underway within BCPSS, and among its requirements are those relating to two long-term goals:

- Goal 1: Improving student achievement.
- Goal 2: Establishing effective management systems in support of quality instruction.

Accompanying these goals are six supporting objectives:

1. Increase student achievement prekindergarten through grade 12.
2. Provide students with teachers and principals who are qualified and competent.
3. Comply fully with federal and state laws governing the education of students with disabilities.
4. Design and implement effective and cost-efficient management systems and practices to improve the support to instruction.
5. Increase the level of parent, family, community, and business support and involvement.
6. Provide secure, civil, and orderly learning environments.

As with the other parts of this section of the evaluation, Objective 2, focusing on the provision and support of qualified teachers and principals, guides the reform efforts most directly relevant to Human Resources. Specific strategies relevant to performance-based evaluation include:

- Strategy 2.4.1: Implement the Performance-Based Personnel Evaluation System for Teachers.
- Strategy 2.4.2: Implement the Performance-Based Personnel Evaluation System for Principals and Administrators.
- Strategy 2.3.1: Continue to Implement the Performance-Based Evaluation System for Teachers.
- Strategy 2.3.2: Continue to Implement the Performance-Based Evaluation System for Principals.

BCPSS Accomplishments 1998–2001

According to BCPSS Master Plan Updates spanning school years 1998–1999 through 2000–2001, as well as individual interviews[60] conducted with staff of the Office of Performance-Based Teacher Evaluation, including the newly appointed Coordinator (March 2001), BCPSS has made solid progress in systematically accomplishing most of the action steps within Master Plan strategies related to the performance evaluation systems for teachers and principals.

A few highlights of these achievements, beginning in 1998 and continuing through summer 2001, follow:

- Two "teachers-on-assignment" were identified and assigned to staff the Office of Performance-Based Teacher Evaluation.
- PBES staff developed training modules for the new teacher system and delivered them to teachers, principals, and other administrators.
- Implementation of the PBES for teachers employed a trainer-of-trainers model, beginning with training a select group of teachers, school administrators, and central office support staff. They, in turn, delivered the information on the new Performance-Based Evaluation System to teachers, administrators, and other instructional staff, who attended the 1998 Summer K-8 Language Arts Institute or the 1998 High School Institute; teachers in Direct Instruction schools; teachers in the Children's Literacy Initiative Workshop; and teachers from other subject areas and disciplines who were interested in receiving more information about the new system. There were over 5,000 BCPSS staff members trained during this period.
- PBES staff created teacher portfolio procedures, scoring rubrics, and samples for piloting the portfolio instrument linking student achievement to teacher performance.
- The revision and implementation of changes to the Performance-Based Evaluation System for principals was completed at the beginning of the 1998–99 school year.
- PBES staff developed system adaptations for school-based positions other than full-time classroom teachers, including instructional support teachers, department heads, master teachers, consulting teachers, facilitators, curriculum coordinators, crisis center managers, technology coordinators, Direct Instruction coordinators, etc. The adaptations include performance domains and indicators, performance ratings, a holistic scoring rubric, forms for the evaluation process, and guidelines for the development of the DSA Portfolio.
- These adaptations added about 1,000 teacher-level persons to the number of full-time classroom teachers who were evaluated under the new performance-based system since September 1998.
- After summer 2000 reviews of DSA Portfolios by BCPSS and MSDE identified that the selection of suitable goals was a major weakness in the portfolio process, the Office of Performance-Based Teacher Evaluation, in collaboration with specialists in the Office of Curriculum and Instruction, prepared the document *Goals for the DSA Portfolio.* Copies of the document were provided to every school for qualified observers to use with teachers as they collaboratively work at goal-setting conferences. Participants in the New Teacher Institute were provided copies during their training about the evaluation system.
- To address the needs of both teachers and qualified observers in the effective implementation of the portfolio process, the Office of Performance-Based Evaluation designed and provided the following ongoing support strategies:

[60]Interviews with Marcia Brown, Teacher-on-Assignment to PBES (March 14, 2001, and June 8, 2001), and with Nancy Nielsen, new Director, PBES (June 8, 2001).

– Offered multiple sessions of three workshops, mandated for all qualified observers by the district CEO for the 2000–2001 school year, (Understanding the Performance-Based Evaluation System; Portfolio Development; Effective Evaluation Methods);

– Distributed *Goals for the DSA Portfolio* to all qualified observers and teachers; and

– Focused the monthly PBES newsletter on providing additional information and guidance in the development of the DSA Portfolio.

- Specific training in the development and documentation of appropriate portfolio goals, along with information about the development of the portfolio, was provided for new teachers through the New Educators Professional Development Training Program; for first- and second-year principals through the Academy for Educational Leadership Skill Builder Series; for teachers and qualified observers at school site trainings; and for Direct Instruction principals at area training sessions.

- Area executive officers completed mid-year evaluation conferences with principals during summer 2000. The AEOs reviewed with principals their school improvement goals and objectives derived from The Master Plan.

- In the spring of 2001, a new coordinator of the Office of Performance-Based Evaluation was hired (a former BCPSS principal, and vice president of the Administrators' Association). The new coordinator has facilitated improved attendance of BCPSS administrators at mandated training workshops.

- By the end of the 2000–2001 school year, 168 principals had taken all three workshops; 183 (100 percent) had taken at least one workshop. Among assistant principals, 210 of 240 (88 percent) had taken all three workshops. Among area office staff, 64 had completed all three workshops, as have 57 central office staff.

- The director and staff of the Office of Performance-Based Evaluation are currently compiling data on the numbers of teachers placed on "2nd class certification" as a result of their performance evaluations so that the Professional Development Center can better plan with regard to citywide staff development, i.e., tailor offerings based on teachers' most commonly weak domains.

- A second BCPSS-MSDE audit of the DSA portfolios took place in the late summer 2001. This audit, consistent with the current evaluation, found that essentially all school principals had completed the necessary training to be classified as "qualified observers" for the PBES (MSDE, 2001). The audit also found that 8 of 10 portfolios examined contained goals related to instruction (a substantial improvement over the previous audit), and that 9 of 10 portfolios contained relevant data about the sample student group. The auditors also found that just 6 of 10 portfolios provided evidence of teacher effectiveness in terms of students' learning progress toward identified goals. Additionally, 7 of 10 portfolios contained adequate documentation of teachers' addressing student attendance, and 8 of 10 contained evidence of teachers' efforts to interact with parents. Overall, the audit reported substantial progress across the areas examined in teachers' development of their DSA Portfolios.

This list of accomplishments in improving the performance evaluation of both BCPSS teachers and principals is provided to serve as a strong reminder that the two teachers on assignment to the Office of Performance-Based Evaluation, as well as the new director, have achieved a great deal with limited resources over a relatively short span of time. Particularly, the new PBES for teachers, with the development and field implementation of its centerpiece DSA Portfolio, as well as the training of qualified observers in the schools, can be counted a considerable

accomplishment over the short course of three school years.

Summary of Changes for Teachers

As required by SB 795, the New Board of School Commissioners adopted a new Performance-Based Evaluation System for teachers in 1998. The PBES is designed to improve the quality of instruction and increase student achievement in BCPSS. The PBES breaks new ground for BCPSS by introducing student learning as one of the evaluation domains and thus shifts the focus from the process of teaching to the results of teaching.

Summary of Changes for Principals

As was the case prior to SB 795, principals' performance continues to be evaluated by the BCPSS AEOs. Under The Master Plan, the major change made in the evaluation of BCPSS school principals has been to elevate the prominence of students' attendance and student achievement as stand-alone indicators of principals' work performance. The intended effects of this change were to increase the visibility of and focus on these important outcomes for principals, AEOs, schools, and the district as a whole, as well as to increase principals' accountability for achievement and attendance. Therefore, the instrument (evaluation form) used in evaluating principals was changed. Additionally, the cycle for evaluating principals has changed; conferences with AEOs are now conducted at mid-year (June/July) so that principals' evaluations may take into account the previous school year's accomplishments and inform the coming year's school improvement plans. Final evaluations are done in February as they take into account MSPAP scores, which are typically received in November and December.

Views of the New Performance-Based Evaluation Systems

In this section, we examine the two performance evaluation systems from the perspective of those who must use them in the schools to evaluate others in their charge, or who are themselves subject to the processes and results that embody the systems. The examination addresses a) adequacy of implementation; b) perceived input of teachers and principals; c) effectiveness of training; d) impacts on retention/dismissal decisions and placement on improvement or assistance plans; and e) perceptions of impacts of the new evaluation systems, including impacts on student performance.

Principals' Performance-Based Evaluation System

Table 6-19 provides an overall view of BCPSS principals' perceptions and experiences regarding their own performance evaluation system. As shown, the great majority of BCPSS principals have been formally evaluated during the past year, essentially all by AEOs, which means that implementation of the new system for principals has been accomplished.

As shown in the table, 50 percent of principals currently rate student learning as the primary purpose behind their performance evaluations. By inference, then, we might say that the training associated with changes in the performance evaluation system for principals has been at least moderately effective in shaping principals' understanding of the purposes associated with the new system. However, the new system for principals does not seem to be resulting in enhanced identification of principals in need of assistance:

- Very few principals (7 out of 168 survey respondents) worked under plans of assistance over the past 2 years, and only 2 of these reported that BCPSS professional development offerings facilitated the implementation of their plans.

Table 6-19.
BCPSS principals' overall survey responses regarding the district's Performance-Based Evaluation System for principals

Survey item	Response	Percent of principals
When was your most recent formal performance evaluation in BCPSS? (Q. 22)	This school year	85
Who conducted your most recent performance evaluation in BCPSS? (Q. 23)	Area executive officer	99
	Mentor principal	1
Within the last 2 years, have you worked under a Plan of Assistance (Q. 8)	Yes	4
To what degree has the Plan of Assistance been implemented?	Good/great degree	72
To what degree did the professional development offered by BCPSS facilitate the implementation of your assistance plan or your Individual Development Plan (IDP)?	Good/great degree	28
What is/are the primary purpose(s) of principal performance evaluation in BCPSS as it is currently implemented? (Q.21)	Primary purpose	
To help improve principals' practice/skills		17
Salary adjustment		1
Continuation/termination of contract		18
To help improve principals' effectiveness (student learning)		50
To ensure a quality school workforce		12
Career advancement		1
What evaluation activities were included in your last evaluation? (Q. 24)		
School site visit (observation)	Yes	86
Principal portfolio		32
Goal setting conference		95
Performance review		94
Principal self-assessment		62
Rate these components in terms of their usefulness in your improvement as a principal. (Q. 25)		
School site visit (observation)	Good/great degree	72
Principal portfolio		29
Goal setting conference		75
Performance review		79
Principal self-assessment		79
Please rate your most recent performance evaluation on the following dimensions. (Q. 26)		
Adherence to an agreed upon schedule	Good/excellent	84
Usefulness in guiding your professional development		68
Coverage of important aspects of school leadership		78
Accuracy in portraying you as a school leader		71
Focus on criteria and information relevant to your job		76
Conducted in a dignified and respectful manner		89
Help in setting future direction		74
Showed understanding of my strengths and weaknesses		75
Rate the effect of each of the following areas of program improvement under The Master Plan on changes in students' learning (Q. 29)		
New performance-based principal evaluation	Moderately/strongly	70

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

- Whether principals were at schools designated reconstitution eligible or not, the length of principals' tenure made no difference in their likelihood of working under a plan of assistance.

The factor that did make a difference was the change in principals' school performance index (SPI) over the past 3 years. In those schools that had experienced no change or a decline in SPI, principals were substantially more likely to have experienced a plan of assistance as compared to schools that had shown even a modest increase in SPI. This constitutes at least some evidence that the principals' system is working as intended, even if based on small numbers.

In terms of data-generating activities included in principals' evaluations, goal-setting conferences, performance reviews, and school site visits were those experienced by most principals. Two-thirds of the principals also conducted self-assessments, but, starkly different from classroom teachers, only one-third developed a portfolio within the evaluation process. About three-quarters of the principals rated goal-setting conferences, performance reviews, self-assessments, and school site visits as having a good or great degree of usefulness in their improvement as school leaders. The following comment from a principal who participated in the focus group is representative of the value that principals place on person-to-person contact with their AEOs, as well as the value placed on area officers getting to know their schools.

> *I had an AEO that was great. In and out every week in my building. The kids knew him. He could talk and evaluate about how I worked with teachers and kids in the school from a broad standpoint. I had another AEO who came one time. That evaluation carried no weight with me.*

On the other hand, only a third of the principals rated portfolios useful to a good or great degree, although it should be pointed out that this might be the same third that experienced portfolio development as part of their evaluations. That is, it could very well be that the one-third of BCPSS principals who do construct portfolios as part of the evidence used in their performance evaluations find them very useful for their own growth and improvement. Substantially more principal portfolios were produced in AF than in DI schools, in the very poorest schools (75 percent or greater eligibility for free or reduced-cost meals) compared to less poor schools, and in reconstitution-eligible schools compared to noneligible schools.

Overall, it is also evident from Table 6-19 that principals rated highly the procedures (manner), accuracy, and usefulness of their performance evaluation system. A great majority of principals reported that schedules are adhered to and evaluation procedures are carried out in a dignified manner. About three-quarters said that their evaluations are valid in that they cover salient aspects of a principal's work, and portray the accomplishment of that work accurately. Two-thirds rated their evaluation as useful in guiding their professional development, likely a signal that better coordination is needed between the needs for professional development on the part of principals as pointed up by their performance evaluations, and the professional development offered by the district. Such coordination should not be a major obstacle for the district to overcome.

Thus, most principals seem satisfied with the current state of affairs with respect to how their performance is evaluated. However, when principals participating in the focus group interview were asked, "Do you find the current evaluation for principals helpful [in comparison to] how principals were evaluated previous to the City-State Partnership?" their answers were more equivocal.

> *No, when the person who came in all the time, that was helpful—always got some feedback. Always there was something said that gave me something to think about. That's helpful, far more than the evaluation.*
>
> ***
>
> *There's a big desire to be data driven: "How many meetings did you have in the*

month of December?" "How many calls were coming in?"

***

I don't like [it] and it shouldn't be. If the data isn't good, the principal doesn't get "satisfactory." It should be the same for accountability purposes. But there's too much. Number of parent complaints, number of prior complaints, number of parent visits, number of office referrals—a bit much.

On the question of whether the changes made in the performance evaluations of principals are having any effect on students' learning in the schools, 7 out of 10 principals answered that they do have a moderate or strong effect. This represents overall a solid endorsement of changes made, and is aligned with at least half the principals' beliefs that student achievement is now the primary purpose underlying their evaluation system. Notably, however, is that this view does vary somewhat depending on the SPI of the principals' schools over the past 3 years (Table 6-20). Principals associated with those schools that have shown no change or declines in SPI over the past year are considerably less likely (6 out of 10) to rate the effect moderate to strong as compared to principals whose schools have shown increases in SPI of over 10 points (almost 8 in 10 of these principals rate the effect as moderate to strong).

Table 6-20.
Percentage of BCPSS principals reporting that the performance evaluation system for principals has had a moderate or strong effect on students' learning

Change in SPI over past 3 years	Percent of principals
No changes/decline in score	60
Increase of 1 to 5 points.....	72
Increase of 6 to 10 points.....	72
Increase over 10 points.....	78

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Teachers' Performance-Based Evaluation System

Table 6-21 provides an overall view of BCPSS teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the Performance-Based Evaluation System now in place to appraise their teaching performance and effectiveness. Similarly, Table 6-22 provides the overall views of BCPSS principals regarding the PBES for teachers. Throughout the presentation of findings that follows, the perspectives of these two groups are compared and contrasted.

During this past school year, the great majority (87 percent) of BCPSS teachers experienced a formal performance evaluation, and essentially all of these (98 percent) were conducted under the guidelines of the new PBES. Consistent with this, essentially all BCPSS principals reported having used the new system, although just about two-thirds of the teachers reported that principals had conducted their performance evaluations. The other third of the teachers reported that a qualified observer other than the principal had conducted their evaluations (e.g., assistant principal, department head). In addition, virtually all principals and a surprisingly high number of teachers (4 out of 10) had received qualified observer training, and a high percentage of teachers had also received training in portfolio development and in the assessment of student achievement—an essential component of the new DSA Portfolio.

Taken as a whole, these survey findings indicate that through direct experience, BCPSS principals and teachers are in generally advantageous positions to comment on the procedures and policies associated with the new PBES. Beyond personally experiencing the system, both teachers and principals report acquiring their familiarity with PBES through BCPSS training, and through reading the handbook. Further, essentially all principals (97 percent) report a good or great degree of familiarity with the PBES for teachers. On the other hand, a considerably smaller proportion of BCPSS teachers (6 out of 10) report the same high level of familiarity. However, after only a couple of years of widespread implementation in a school system as large as

Table 6-21.
BCPSS teachers' overall survey responses regarding the district's Performance-Based Evaluation System for teachers

Survey item	Response	Percent of teachers
When was your most recent formal performance evaluation in BCPSS? (Q. 22)	This school year	87
Who conducted your most recent performance evaluation in BCPSS? (Q. 23)	Principal	66
	Qualified observer	31
Was your most recent evaluation conducted under the new BCPSS Performance-Based Evaluation System? (Q. 24)	Yes	98
Have you received training from BCPSS in the following? (Q. 1)		
Qualified observer for the new PBES	Yes	40
Portfolio development		85
Assessment of student achievement		72
Using student achievement data for school improvement		57
Within the last 2 years, have you worked under an Individual Development Plan (IDP)? (Q. 7)	Yes	81
To what degree are the results of your performance evaluation tied to your professional development activities (Q. 4)	Good/great degree	34
Within the last 2 years, have you initiated a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)? (Q. 8)	Yes	25
To what degree has the PIP been implemented?		
To what degree did the professional development offered by BCPSS facilitate the implementation of your plan?	Good/great degree	52
		37
What is/are the primary purpose(s) of teacher performance evaluation in BCPSS as it is currently implemented? (Q.20)	Primary purpose	
To help improve teachers' practice		19
Salary adjustment		5
Continuation / termination of contract		18
To help improve teachers' effectiveness (student learning)		44
To ensure a quality school workforce		12
Career advancement		1
What is your level of familiarity with the PBES? (Q. 21)	Good/great	59
How did you acquire your familiarity? (Q. 21a)		
Received in-service or professional development	Yes	85
Read PBES handbook materials		90
Word of mouth		67
Please rate the degree to which the Guidelines in the PBES Handbook meet the following standards. (Q. 21b)		
Clear/understandable	Good/great degree	45
Applied evenly		36
Ethical		39
Fair		34
Oriented toward teacher improvement		34
Provide for due process		32

Table 6-21.
BCPSS teachers' overall survey responses regarding the district's Performance-Based Evaluation System for teachers (continued)

Survey item	Response	Percent of teachers
What evaluation activities were included in your last evaluation? (Q. 25)		
Classroom observation	Yes	98
Teacher portfolio		92
Goal setting conference		91
Performance review		91
Teacher self-assessment		64
Rate these activities in terms of their usefulness in your improvement as a teacher. (Q. 26)		
Classroom observation	Good/ great degree	63
Teacher portfolio		21
Goal setting conference		41
Performance review		52
Teacher self-assessment		51
Please rate your most recent performance evaluation on the following dimensions. (Q. 27)		
Adherence to an agreed upon schedule	Good/excellent	65
Usefulness in guiding your professional development		50
Coverage of important aspects of teaching		55
Accuracy in portraying you as a teacher		57
Focus on criteria and information relevant to your job		57
Conducted in a dignified and respectful manner		75

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Table 6-22.
BCPSS principals' overall survey responses regarding the district's Performance-Based Evaluation System for teachers

Survey item	Response	Percent of principals
In your view, what is/are the primary purpose(s) of teacher performance evaluation in BCPSS as currently implemented? (Q.20)	Primary purpose	
To help improve teachers' practice		21
Salary adjustment		1
Continuation / termination of contract		4
To help improve teachers' effectiveness (student learning)		67
To ensure a quality school workforce		7
Career advancement		0
Have you received training sponsored by BCPSS in any of the following areas within the last 2 years? (Q. 7)		
Qualified observer for the new Performance-Based Teacher Evaluation System	Yes	99
Have you conducted any teacher evaluations using the new BCPSS Performance-Based Evaluation System? (Q. 27)	Yes	99
What is your level of familiarity with the new PBES? (Q. 30)	Good/great	97
How did you acquire your familiarity? (Q. 31)		
Received in-service or professional development	Yes	99
Read PBES handbook materials		100
Word of mouth		45
Please rate the degree to which the Guidelines in the PBES Handbook meet the following standards. (Q. 32)		
Clear, understandable	Good/great	81
Applied evenly across teachers/personnel		72
Ethical		85
Fair		76
Oriented toward teacher improvement		74
Provide for due process regarding participants' rights		78
As currently implemented, rate these components of the PBES in terms of their usefulness in teacher improvement. (Q. 33)		
Class observation	Good/great	92
Teacher portfolio		50
Goal-setting conference		76
Performance review		83
Teacher self-assessment		68
Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements (Q. 54)		
I have the authority I need to remove incompetent or unsatisfactory teachers	Agree/strongly agree	52
Rate the effect of each of the following areas of program improvement under The Master Plan on changes in students' learning (Q. 29)		
New performance-based teacher evaluation	Moderately/strongly	68

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

BCPSS, it is not surprising that all teachers do not yet report high levels of familiarity with the PBES, and particularly with the DSA Portfolio. In fact, the self-reported levels of familiarity with the new system on the part of teachers and principals can be viewed as generally satisfactory.

In terms of the purpose of teacher performance evaluation, a majority of principals (67 percent) and a plurality of teachers (44 percent) agreed that the PBES is primarily intended to improve teacher effectiveness, as represented by student learning. As principals have had substantially more training and use of the PBES than teachers, this difference is not surprising. A fifth of both teachers and principals agree that the primary purpose of the system is to improve teachers' practice. These findings provide some indication that the district's emphasis on improving student learning, as well as the Office of Performance-Based Evaluation's intended purpose for the PBES, are finding their way into the thinking of both principals and teachers.

In terms of performance evaluation for teacher improvement, the use of the PBES by Baltimore City principals and teachers over the past couple of years has resulted in a substantial proportion of the district's teachers (25 percent) placed on performance improvement plans (PIPs). Comparisons to the proportion of teachers placed on PIPs prior to SB 795 has not been possible as these data are being gathered and compiled by the Office of Performance-Based Evaluation. It can currently be said, however, that:

- No differences were noted in the proportions of teachers placed on PIPs among schools based on changes in their SPI over the past 3 years, one measure of the degree to which a school has or has not improved over time.
- Neither is there any difference in the proportions of teachers placed on PIPs based on the reconstitution eligibility of the school, or the grossly measured poverty level of the school's population.
- It is considerably more likely that a PIP would result for the one-fifth of BCPSS teachers who are provisionally certified (31 percent had been given a PIP in the last 2 years) as compared to the majority of respondents who hold full certification (22 percent had been given a PIP within the last 2 years).

It should also be noted that only half of those who had been on an improvement plan reported that the plan had been implemented to a good or great degree, and a still smaller 37 percent reported that BCPSS professional development had facilitated implementation of their plan. Thus, although the PBES may be allowing the identification of teachers who need help in one area or another, the general perception of those who are identified as needing improvement is that BCPSS professional development is not currently providing the means for that improvement.

This message is consistent with ratings from the overall sample of teachers on the usefulness of their evaluations in guiding their professional development and, although on a larger scale, with findings for the principals' performance evaluation system.

On the question of whether the guidelines (in effect, the written policies) provided in the PBES handbook meet accepted standards of Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1988), BCPSS principals and teachers hold very different views. For instance,

- While 81 percent of principals believe the PBES guidelines to be clear and understandable, only 45 percent of teachers share that view.
- Generally, only 3 to 4 out of every 10 teachers currently feel that the PBES policies are applied evenly, are fair and ethical, are oriented toward teacher improvement, and provide for due process. In contrast, typically 7 to 8 of every 10 principals believe that these standards are met to a good or great degree.

Again, this difference may well lie in the fact that principals have generally had more indepth training on the new system than have teachers,

and routinely conduct many teacher evaluations over the course of the school year. Teachers, on the other hand, have had less intensive training, and experience only their own evaluations. Still, this level of dissatisfaction on the part of teachers with the degree to which the new PBES guidelines meet important standards for personnel evaluation systems is troubling, and indicative of considerable unhappiness.

Additional important standards for educational personnel evaluation were also addressed in the teacher survey, and in general, teachers were more positive about the manner in which their evaluations were conducted than about the policies noted above. For example,

- A substantial majority of teachers rated the timeliness, dignity, and respect with which their evaluations were conducted as good to excellent.
- Smaller majorities of teachers (5 to 6 out of every 10) rated the validity (accuracy, coverage of relevant aspects of their work) of the PBES as good or excellent.

Thus, these results provide some encouragement in that many BCPSS teachers, despite significant unhappiness with important aspects of the new PBES, are relatively satisfied with the manner in which it is conducted, and its overall validity, although less so with the guidance its results provide for their professional development. It is evident, however, that the primary source of unhappiness or frustration with the PBES on the part of teachers is the required DSA Portfolio, and that this view of the portfolio is shared by a substantial portion of BCPSS principals. Specifically, when prompted to rate various components of their recent evaluations, almost two-thirds of teachers rated classroom observation by a supervisor as useful for improving as a teacher, and just over one-half of the teachers also rated performance reviews and self-assessments as equally useful. However, only one in five teachers currently see the DSA Portfolio as useful to their own improvement as teaching professionals. In similar relative proportions, principals rated observation as the most useful for teachers' improvement, followed by performance reviews. Lagging considerably in principals' generally positive ratings is the portfolio, rated useful to a good or great degree by just half of the principals. The following comments from principals and teachers attending the focus group interviews elaborate on the widespread dissatisfaction with the portfolio.

BCPSS Principals:

> *I don't like it. Especially the portfolio. Maybe I am missing something, and I am trying to be open-minded, but I don't see the purpose for portfolio the way it's presented. I would much rather see all students instead of just six. Then on the evaluation portion of it, it [the portfolio] weighs too heavily on the person's overall evaluation. Let's say that the person is a satisfactory teacher and they have done a fairly decent job in the classroom, with classroom management, professional development, and all that kind of stuff, and their portfolio is not good. They receive low on the portfolio—receive an unsatisfactory, which is not fair. So you lie to save that teacher, to make sure that person doesn't get an unsatisfactory.*
>
> ***
>
> *The portfolio is so artificial.*
>
> ***
>
> *I thought the intent was to show growth in children, to show how you bring children up to a certain level. There's so much pressure on teachers, especially in this district. This is just one more added piece to add to the pressure, along with all the Milestones. Let us do our jobs as principals. If I am just a principal who is walking around…[I can see who's doing what]…. The portfolio itself is just a lot of paperwork. I could work a lot to show on paper how great I am, but for that time spent nothing is really done.*
>
> ***

We had an underground movement. Some of our veteran teachers refuse. "I am not doing one. Period." And they are sticking to their guns. They said, "Take us to North Avenue. We are going to fight." We have to write "unsatisfactory" on that area on their final evaluation. Overall, they still come out satisfactory because their ongoing performance as professionals, they just finally drew the line and said, "I am not doing it. I have thirty-five years. I have demonstrated it over and over again, and to stick it in an envelope changes nothing." And they did not do them and I value their decision. They have thirty-five and thirty-six years respectively. They were adamant they were not doing it. I have three excellent teachers who are superior and at this point are satisfied with "satisfactory" ratings. They felt it was an intrusion in what they had to do as teachers. They have enough to do than to have to maintain this portfolio. Our superior teachers didn't do it either. They had better things to do with their time. They were satisfied with "satisfactory."

***

Performance evaluation is an ongoing process. I have not met a principal who really liked the portfolio. I think most principals see it as just an additional task. Teachers would say observe, sitting with me for evaluation and support and help, and do some staff development. Teachers would agree that this is more meaningful to me than a portfolio.

***

There is no way that somebody is proven on thirty points for a portfolio—that does not indicate that their ability to teach or not teach children.

***

One of the things I think the state mandated is that they wanted to see a tool that would indicate the student's progress tied to teacher effectiveness. There is no way. There is always going to be an element of subjectivity. People talk about keeping the job professional. I have had some people suspended for attendance. What you're getting is a thesis, not what's happening in class.

***

The intent should be to show you what the children are doing in the class. If the students are doing well it's because teachers are doing well. I think if we are going to be an instructional leader…we say they are doing well, our scores are going up. So, the fact that this notebook says that this teacher did well this year is just another piece of documentation. The fact that the school is doing better, the fact that principals are being trained to help teachers do better, is the important piece, not the notebook. This notebook just becomes another piece of paper that we have to be responsible for.

BCPSS Teachers:

The portfolios and all the goals that encompasses, and you sit there and you listen and try to establish what are your goals. It's a farce.

***

The portfolio was a good idea, but what was a bad idea was the people—the portfolio was part of the persons having to look around to see what was going on in a lot of places that were really working out well. The problem is, Baltimore City put its flavor to it, and that's where you're going to fail…

***

I think that the portfolio in my school in many cases is thrown together the night before. Mine—I don't think really any of the objectives that are set for a measure of me as a teacher shows what I'm doing in the classroom, doesn't show what

programs I am using in the classroom, all it's showing is a work sample; its showing my attendance, which really—in my school—I'm not responsible if a child gets sick. Give us more than one bathroom so we can wash our hands once a day. I feel like there are better ways of doing this. The portfolio is totally useless. Give me something that I can use; come in, rather than have me put more paperwork into something, have me put my time into a committee—lets start a program and use that to evaluate me. Look at what I'm doing in the school as a member of the school community, as well as just a teacher in the classroom. Use those things to evaluate me.

***

Anybody can do a good portfolio. The worst teacher in the school can do a good portfolio.

***

A lot of your rating is based on that stupid portfolio.

***

And it's also like you were saying, the teachers that don't really teach—you know you're getting observed; you know they're coming in. You can make a good class and they go out thinking that's a good teacher in that classroom, and then when they're gone they go back to watching movies.

***

I think one of the best things of it is, the only thing of it that I think is useful, what two things do I really want to focus on in my class? What do I really want to do? I teach high school English, and that's good. I really want my kids to be able to write this way, and it helps me, Like, "oh, crap, I better plan six of those activities." To me, the objective set helps me focus on what I'm actually going to do. The assembling of it is a pain in the butt.

***

Everyone must be held accountable: teachers, counselors, resource personnel, and administrators. A viable evaluation instrument must be developed for all of these areas. Portfolios, as now developed by BCPSS, are virtually worthless. They are extremely time consuming and not a valuable evaluation instrument. Baltimore City School System is buried in paper work.

Although these comments derive from relatively few gatherings of BCPSS principals and teachers, the sentiments expressed were common to all groups, consistent with the overall ratings of teachers on the usefulness of the DSA Portfolio, and, to a lesser degree, consistent with the views of principals.

The last issue to be addressed in this section is the possible impact of the new PBES. These findings derive primarily from the responses of principals to the survey and in their focus group session. On their survey, almost 7 out of 10 BCPSS principals rated the effect on student learning of the new PBES for teachers as moderate or strong. This was similar to principals' ratings of the strength of effect for their own performance evaluation system on students' learning. This view, however was not the case in the principals' focus group interview, as illustrated by the following responses to the question, What do you see as the impact for teachers? That is, what impact or value is it expected to have on teachers and the quality of instruction?

None. [General agreement].

***

It's time consuming…I don't care what kind of process you put in place, there are always going to be people who don't like it. But this is the worse I have seen. I liked the old evaluation form for department heads, administration, not the new one. And the portfolio for specialists—they're going through all the process. What I don't like, things like attendance and punctuality. It is not even

a part of it (PBES) and how can it not be? How can you concentrate and how can you improve student learning if you are not there? I know of no job where you don't consider attendance and punctuality.

***

The way it's structured now takes too much time. And what does it have to do with teaching? What impact does it have on the classroom? [What about the children? Johnny gets lost in all of this.]

Summary Remarks on Performance-Based Evaluation in BCPSS

Conclusions

In the view of this evaluation, there is technically little at fault with the new performance evaluation systems for either principals or teachers. In fact, the new performance evaluation procedures for principals seem to have been well accepted, and the process by which principal evaluations are conducted receives high marks from principals on all dimensions examined. Similarly, BCPSS teachers give high marks for the conduct of their performance evaluations. Teachers generally feel that their overall evaluations are done in a dignified and respectful manner, adhere to an agreed-upon schedule, and are reasonably valid. Most importantly, there seems to be an increased focus on student learning within BCPSS, not solely attributable to the new performance evaluation systems, but certainly consistent with the changes that have been made in them over the past couple years.

For BCPSS teachers, however, there are serious concerns about the need for and usefulness of the centerpiece portfolio of their new Performance-Based Evaluation System. Further, school principals in general share this concern, and are considerably less sanguine about the DSA Portfolio than about other instruments or procedures used in the evaluation of teachers. It is not that teacher portfolios are unusual or untried—they have been introduced and used in teacher performance evaluation systems in other districts such as Dallas, Denver, and Miami with reasonable success and acceptance. In other contexts they have been adopted into state policy, for example, as a requirement for teacher licensure in Oregon, Connecticut, and in Colorado. However, in the massive current reform context of BCPSS, it may be that the DSA Portfolio administratively represents the "straw that potentially breaks the camel's back."

In this vein, and because of the high stakes perceived, unintended effects of requiring the DSA Portfolio have begun to appear, such as school administrators "fixing" the portfolios of their teachers, or simply constructing one "auditable" portfolio for an entire teaching staff, while directing the staff to "not worry about it." The following comment illustrates:

What I did was write all these notes of things to put in there, and she (teacher) did that and we redid that portfolio to make it "proficient." That is what we did.

The recommendations that follow in the next section are thus made with recognition of the good work that has been accomplished in teacher and principal performance evaluation, but also with an awareness of the multiple reform efforts ongoing for Baltimore City schools may place on the teaching and administrative workforces. For example, the growth of maneuvers to avoid or circumvent or to marginalize the DSA Portfolio because of its perceived irrelevance or administrative burden could potentially undermine important achievements already made for the city's schools and students.

Recommendations

In light of the findings presented in this section, we offer the following recommendations to the leadership of BCPSS:

1. Consistent with objectives consistently laid out in The Master Plan that guides the reform effort for the district, systematically and routinely seek input from BCPSS principals and teachers on the conduct of and

instruments used in their performance evaluation systems. In particular, input from teachers should enhance their sense of ownership of their evaluation system.

2. Take steps to improve the coordination and alignment of BCPSS professional development offerings for both principals and teachers with the results of their performance evaluations. That is, if a performance evaluation reveals that a teacher needs further training or development in a particular domain or aspect of practice, the Department of Professional Development should make appropriate workshops or courses available immediately. Thus, BCPSS must improve its responsiveness to the identified needs of its teaching and administrative workforces if such professional development is to be perceived as useful by school professionals. The transfer of the Office of Performance-Based Evaluation staff from district headquarters at North Avenue to the Professional Development Center at Northern Parkway is a step in the right direction in this regard.

3. Focusing teachers' and principals' attention on the results of their work (student learning), in addition to the processes by which those results are achieved (instruction, etc.) has constituted a great leap forward for BCPSS, and that focus should not be lost. Additionally, we reemphasize that in our view, the current difficulties and dissatisfaction with the DSA Portfolio do not derive from the method or even the instrument itself. No method, or instrument in and of itself will provide a simple "fix" what ails the system. Rather, we are of the view that the current dissatisfaction and likely misuse of the portfolio are the result of poor marketing (communication) and of the large volume of change efforts, as well as change efforts that themselves have changed, that for have been imposed on teachers within a short span of time in disconnected ways.

   Whatever the cause, we strongly believe, based on the results of the survey and the focus groups, that the BCPSS teacher portfolio is not functioning the way it was intended. It is seen and approached by many teachers and principals as one more district hurdle to jump over, and just about completely disconnected from what teachers do in the classroom. Neither teachers nor principals have bought into it—in fact, just the opposite has occurred. Thus, the portfolio is not measuring teachers' "effectiveness" other than their effectiveness in constructing portfolios, and has resulted in considerable fallout. Further, we have no notion as to the reliability of the results of teacher portfolio assessment, but could posit considerable variance depending on who does the rating.

In our opinion, the results of assessing teachers' portfolios are currently less than valid for their intended purposes. We therefore recommend two possible, interrelated courses of action for BCPSS with respect to the DSA portfolio for teachers.

First, there are multiple ways in which teachers might demonstrate their effectiveness in fostering student learning, including a) teacher portfolios; b) teacher work samples (e.g., as described in McConney, Schalock, and Schalock, 1998); c) value-added teacher effectiveness indices based on fall/spring or spring/spring standardized test scores (e.g., as developed in Dallas or Tennessee, although we acknowledge that test-based teacher effectiveness indices may not be currently possible for BCPSS because of a lack of year-on-year testing); d) student and/or parent surveys; and e) an abbreviated "student achievement reporting form" supported by data and/or artifacts (as developed by Ken Peterson). Thus, BCPSS might consider providing a suite of instruments and/or methods of data collection from which teachers may choose to demonstrate their effectiveness in fostering student learning. Again, the work of Ken Peterson as a developer of teacher evaluation systems that work may provide useful guidance in this regard, in that it demonstrates that professional educators may be offered choices in their own performance evaluations, and as a result respond with genuine

ownership and use of the system. The key should be teachers' performance to standard on the various domains of teacher practice rather than emphasizing the use of one particular instrument type (i.e., the portfolio).

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the BCPSS leadership should strongly consider making the portfolio requirement optional for some portion of its teaching workforce, perhaps differentiated by credential or past accomplishment. Such a system might look something like:

a. Do not require portfolios from first-year teachers. Rather, use all available resources to support and facilitate their successful induction into the city's schools.

b. Do require annual DSA Portfolios from teachers in years 2 through 5, and from all those who are provisionally credentialed. (This may provide additional needed incentive for the one-quarter of provisionally licensed teachers in BCPSS to complete their certification programs.)

c. Do not require portfolios for teachers who are fully credentialed, have 6 or more years in the BCPS system, and have 2 consecutive years of exemplary performance evaluations. Rather, only require these teachers to produce portfolios every third year. In other years, make the portfolio optional (i.e., choose from suite of instruments as outlined above).

d. For teachers who continue to get exemplary performance evaluations, and have more than 15 or more years with BCPSS, make annual performance evaluation optional if they mentor a first-year teacher.

In these ways, principals and other resources persons might be freed up to better help induct early career teachers. Additionally, this differentiated system may remove one incentive to leave BCPSS at the 5-year mark, and rather replace it with an incentive to stay.

4. Put in place a system for periodic internal and external evaluations of both performance evaluation systems. Ideally, this might be done through a medium- to long-term contract with one group or center, so that consistent focus and approach are maintained.

Consistent with, but perhaps with a more authentic voice than these recommendations from the evaluation team, recommendations are now offered in the words of BCPSS principals and teachers:

> *We have spent quite a bit of time talking about the evaluations and I do believe that is something that needs some action. Definitely we need to look at PBES, which needs immediate attention—there's no value in having a system in place that really doesn't work.*
>
> ***
>
> *First of all, I would say that before implementing policy that would effect the principal and teachers, as well as the students, that there would be more communication between the policy makers and those of us who have to implement the policy…Without communication with us they are putting things in place that we are supposed to then carry out. We need communication before implementing a new policy.*
>
> ***
>
> *I think probably if there was one thing I would like to get the powers that be to focus in on is the large number of priorities that we have. You can't be successful when you have got all of these priorities, and I think this is the basis and the foundation on which most of us are frustrated.*
>
> ***
>
> *One, all evaluations of teachers should be made by observers from the outside.*

Two, eliminate the portfolio. Three: improve communications with other administrators above the level of principal. And four make an effort to retain teachers with less than twenty years experience. Pay them bonuses to stay.

***

Goals for the portfolio need to be specific to the teacher's focus. The portfolio need not be laborious; rather, it should be a reflection of what you are doing daily as a teacher in the classroom. And part of the evaluation must be observation. An average of all observations should be used, meaning that evaluation from direct principals, outside principals or area officials, and fellow teachers should be averaged in order to eliminate favoritism or discrimination.

***

Communication is a major problem in this system. The portfolio is a waste of time.

***

Performance needs to be evaluated through peer review and on-going discussion groups. Documentation of performance needs to be narrative to reflect the process. The portfolio documents static snapshots. You have to support and retain new teachers to develop a professional staff. New teachers need to be assigned to fewer classes. They need to have mentors.

***

Number one, teachers should be able to rate administrators. Administration should be able to share information with live personnel. Teachers should be allowed to participate and work for school reform as an equal. Political considerations should not be the driving force in educational reform. Staff development should not be a way to fill up time, but be meaningful and professional-growth oriented.

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7. Findings on Organization and Management

During the past few years, BCPSS has made great progress in addressing organizational and managerial problems that historically have impeded its efforts to achieve the district's mission and goals—particularly Goal II, "establishing effective management systems in support of quality instruction," as stated in the BCPSS Master Plan 2001–2002 Update. In fact, Objective 4 of the 1998 BCPSS Master Plan called on the district to "design and implement effective and cost-efficient management systems and practices to improve the support of instruction." Yet, some problems remain, decreasing efficiency at the systemwide and departmental levels and preventing a fully appropriate allocation of resources to student instruction.

Despite frequent turnover of high-level administrators, the district has shown the resolve to continue this process until the problems are solved by such actions as developing a Master Plan that ties together ongoing initiatives around a set of specific objectives, and a shift toward hiring technically proficient managers to head technical functions. Nonetheless, several system-wide problems remain; perhaps two of the most significant are the substantial and costly surplus building capacity and the number of mid- and upper-level administrative staff. A third widespread problem identified through our investigation is inefficient and duplicative communication patterns. Finally, we learned that contract work rules often impede management flexibility.

At a departmental level, BCPSS has placed competent administrators in several key positions, and many of their decisions are leading to successful outcomes. Some BCPSS departments—such as Food Services, Procurement, and Information Technology—have already become strong performers. Led by managers who understand the problems clearly and staffed by competent individuals, these departments have developed cogent and feasible solutions. The Division of Research, Evaluation, and Accountability (READ) has begun to make significant improvement under new leadership. Other departments—such as Facilities and Human Resources—have yet to identify a clear direction that will lead to efficient or effective operations, despite the good intentions of the staff.

Overview of this Chapter

This chapter has four sections.

- Section 1 examines BCPSS organization and management from a systemwide perspective. Issues addressed in this section, including policies, structures, and resource allocation, affect the school district as a whole.
- Section 2 examines BCPSS organization and management from a department-level perspective. Since many of the "academic" functions of BCPSS, such as curriculum and instruction, are reviewed elsewhere in this report, we concentrate in this section largely on those support functions that exist *in service to* the "core" academic functions of the school district. Specifically, we address facilities (e.g., maintenance, construction, repair, and waste management), financial management, procurement, information technology, and READ.
- Using the insights that we have gained through our discussions with district and school staff, the survey data collection, and site visits, we review The Master Plan and assess its impact on the achievements and remaining challenges facing BCPSS management. We present this assessment in Section 3.

- Finally, in Section 4 we assess the role of the New Board of School Commissioners—the group of civic leaders and professional experts appointed to help shepherd BCPSS through this period of transition. We note that, unlike most large school district boards with which we are familiar, this group has worked tirelessly on this process without pay or other compensation.

Section 1. Systemwide Organization and Management

BCPSS must effectively manage people and property to efficiently fulfill its primary objective—educating students. Over the last year, the district has hired a team of highly qualified individuals to lead various administrative groups. In addition, efforts have been made to improve the accuracy and timeliness of information that the district shares with the school regarding student test scores, attendance, and incidents of improper behavior. Finally, the district conducted a facilities needs assessment and identified 12 schools for closure.

While these steps are encouraging, interviews with staff throughout the district and analysis of enrollment data indicate that further progress is urgently needed. There is an imbalance in the number of highly paid administrators serving the district and the number of other staff—particularly at the school level—available to help perform routine and day-to-day activities. Finally, several challenges exist in determining facilities needs, balancing physical capacity, humane considerations, and programmatic needs. Recommendations include examining the BCPSS system for classifying administrative staff; examining current staffing levels, levels of administrators, central office staff, and administrative support staff; enhancing internal capacity for demographic and geographic planning by hiring staff with expertise in these areas; continuing to explore strategies for reducing excess capacity; and exploring public/private partnerships for new construction.

The management of a system responsible for teaching, supervising, and feeding nearly 100,000 students daily is not simple. To perform its responsibility, BCPSS (like all organizations) must manage both people and property. In this section, we discuss the district's efforts to efficiently manage these resources.

We start with the most important resource—the people who work within BCPSS. The district has recently made several appointments of systemwide administrative staff and hired more proficient technicians to manage technical functions. However, our findings indicate an inappropriate mix of too many highly paid administrators and too few support staff. In addition, we found that many school principals felt they were afforded little staffing or managerial flexibility, and that what little they have been given might soon disappear.

Second, we address the issue of property. Two strategies designed to accomplish Objective 4 of the 1998 BCPSS Master Plan specifically address property management.

- Strategy 4.1.1: Establish an effective system for school construction, maintenance, and repair.
- Strategy 4.1.2: Determine the most efficient use of school buildings.

BCPSS operates about 200 individual property sites, many of which consist of multiple buildings and include grounds that must be maintained. In addition to the physical plants, most buildings house expensive and complicated machinery or equipment in their cafeterias, boiler rooms, and computer labs. While the district owns none of this real estate in a legal sense (i.e., it uses City of Baltimore property rent-free), it does have responsibility for cleaning, maintenance and repair, and compliance with health and safety codes.

People

Personnel is one of BCPSS' most important and expensive resources. The evaluation addressed two questions related to the personnel organization.

1. Does the organization reflect an emphasis on the central goals of educating students?

2. Have redundancies in staffing and functions been eliminated or reduced?

A number of changes have been made to the organizational structure to improve efficiency and quality of administrative services. These have included alterations in the reporting relationships and reorganization of the area offices, and the decision to create a Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) area targeted on the needs of schools with severe academic problems. In addition to creating this unit directly under the oversight of the CEO, this reorganization moves to a structure organized by schools' needs for support. Thus, schools with considerable academic stress are in a separate administrative area than those that are doing well, but should still be expected to improve. In theory, this approach seems well aligned with system needs and priorities. However, this reorganization and the other changes have been put into place only recently, and how they might evolve and what they will accomplish cannot yet be assessed.

During the course of the evaluation, a third question related to personnel organization surfaced quickly: Does the make-up and configuration of administrative staff facilitate or hinder the efficient and effective implementation of student instruction? It became apparent that an inappropriate balance between the number of highly paid administrators and the number of support staff remains, increasing the likelihood that highly paid administrators perform tasks normally conducted by secretaries and clerks at much lower cost in other school districts. This, in turn, absorbs funds that might otherwise be spent on instructional programs and student support services.

In addition to the site visit and survey data used in the analysis of other issues addressed in this report, we utilized the following data sources for this investigation.

- In-person interviews, telephone conversations, and email contacts with key managers at BCPSS and with principals and assistant principals at 35 BCPSS schools. Discussions with 10 of the principals and assistant principals focused on operations and financial management issues, whereas those with the other 25 were focused on other issues and included only brief discussions on finance issues.

- Document reviews including a) relevant financial reports from BCPSS, the State of Maryland, and outside auditors (e.g., Arthur Anderson, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Moody's Investor Service); b) practice standards documents from the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO), the American Education Finance Association (AEFA), and other states and school districts; c) *Tribute for a Light* and *Mission Creep* from the Education Intelligence Agency; and d) relevant documents from other advocacy groups, including the New Maryland Education Coalition, Advocates for Children and Youth, and the Calvert Institute.

We also examined data needed for comparative analysis and benchmarking, including:

- Public School District Finances report files (from the U.S. Census Bureau) from 1992 through 1998;[61]

- NCES' *Digest of Education Statistics* for state-level financial information;

- MSDE financial summaries for all Maryland school districts going back 10 years;

- BCPSS' budgets, year-end financial statements, and auditor's statements going back to 1990 (when available);

- Data on school-level resources and staffing for 30 schools visited by Westat team members;

- Before and after (i.e., 1995–96 and 1999–2000) benchmarking by the Education Research Service on revenues and

[61] We selected a sample of school districts similar in composition to Baltimore's and compared levels and trends in revenues and expenditures.

expenditures with 18 other, similar school districts;[62] and

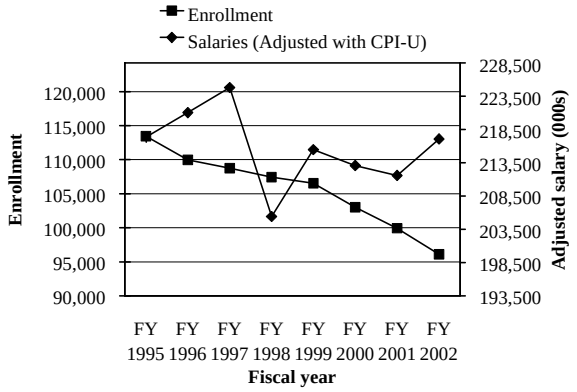
- Budgets and financial statements for the past several years for several other large urban school districts (e.g., Cleveland, Memphis, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, St. Louis).

We attempted to use benchmarking as an assessment technique for these analyses. We found many measures and much data to which we could validly and reliably benchmark BCPSS expenditure indicators. Unfortunately, we were never fully satisfied that the BCPSS expenditure indicators we wished to use were valid and accurate.

This problem was most profound when considering the dollar amounts for expenditure categories such as administrative and instructional salaries. While standards of practice exist for classifying expenditures, they do not always match the circumstances of unique school districts. For example, it can be difficult to classify those who work in "administration" and those who work in "instruction," since the boundaries between these classifications can be somewhat unclear. Staff that support teachers (e.g., curriculum materials specialists) or that work in direct support of instruction, but do so out of a central office, could equally be considered administration or instruction.

As an illustration of this problem, consider the trends shown in Figure 7-1. For this analysis, we tried to compare instructional salaries (adjusted for inflation) with student enrollment over the past 7 years in BCPSS. The observed pattern is unexpected, and the dip in 1998 raises some questions about the consistency of accounting procedures. Adding to the puzzle is the comparable presentation of administrative salaries versus student enrollment shown in Figure 7-2. If these two graphs are accurate, they suggest a huge temporary decrease in salaries (i.e., layoff or other change in composition of teaching force) and a huge sudden hiring of administrators. We

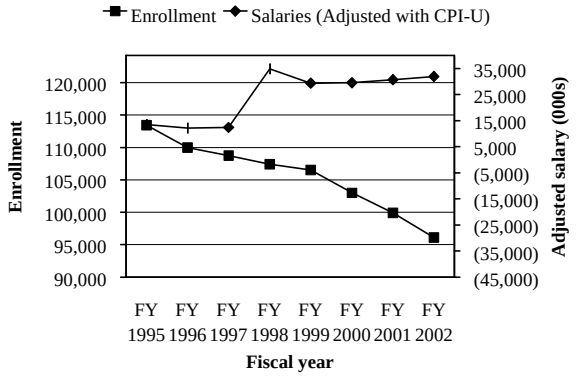
Figure 7-1.
Trends in enrollment and total instructional salaries (in 1983 dollars): 1995 to 2002



CPI-U = Consumer Price Index-Urban.

SOURCE: Maryland Department of Planning, *Public School Enrollment Projections, 2000–2009*, September 2000; U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, *Public School Finances*, 1995–99; Baltimore City Public School System, Budget, 2001–02; Baltimore City Public School System, Annual Report, 2000; *Economic Report of the President*, Executive Office of the President, 2000.

Figure 7-2.
Trends in enrollment and administration salaries (in 1983 dollars): 1995 to 2002



CPI-U = Consumer Price Index-Urban.

SOURCE: Maryland Department of Planning, *Public School Enrollment Projections, 2000–2009*, September 2000; U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, *Public School Finances*, 1995–99; Baltimore City Public School System, Budget, 2001–02; Baltimore City Public School System, Annual Report, 2000.

suspect these fluctuations are actually the result of an expenditure classification problem rather than true staffing changes. Moreover, further investigation revealed that the problem, while

[62]The other school districts had size, economic, and demographic characteristics similar to those of BCPSS.

most dramatic in 1998, perhaps, is not unique to 1998, or to these expenditure categories.[63]

In response to the questions raised by these data, and given the potential sensitivity and importance of any conclusions we might make about BCPSS salaries or staffing, we took the following steps to classify administrative positions.

1. We listed each job classification specified in the BCPSS job classification manual. The manual included the number of employees requested in the budget by classification title and the average salary for each classification title.

2. We defined the work performed by each staff within classification in consultation with BCPSS staff.

3. We consulted the MSDE job classification manual to determine how other Maryland school districts classified each position.

Some of the administrative positions were easily classified (e.g., the top-level managers whose positions appear on the BCPSS organization chart, school principals, and assistant principals). However, BCPSS uses other administrative positions that are less easily classified. In Table 7-1, we list these other positions, the number of positions, and the average salary of each position.[64]

Figure 7-3 shows the percentage of administrative staff within three categories for BCPSS and other Maryland school districts. Staff defined as upper and mid-level are mostly central office-based, but the category also includes school principals. Other noninstructional school-based administrators are primarily assistant principals, department heads, and pupil support or service staff such as librarians and counselors.[65] Staff in the third category include secretaries and clerks who work in the central office or in schools and are paid the least of the three groups.

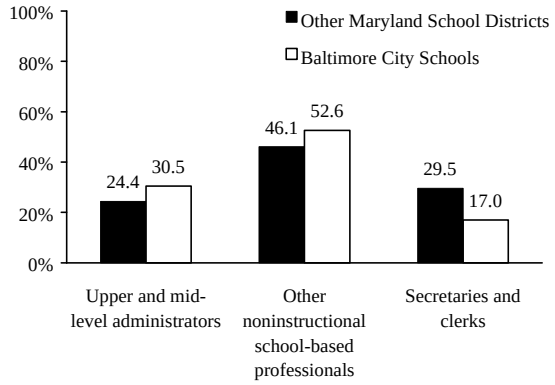
Table 7-1.
BCPSS administrative positions and salaries

Classification	Number of positions	Average salary
Area Executive Officer	7	$99,510
Managing Director	4	93,185
Director III	14	87,162
Director II	14	83,453
Administrative Assistant	18	77,129
Director I	23	75,564
Coordinator	56	67,699
Curriculum Specialist	83	65,597
Department Head*	150	60,398
Staff Specialist	88	59,875
Educational Associate	21	59,413
Master Teacher*	96	56,632
Staff Associate	56	52,325
Pupil Service Associate	8	50,931
Instructional Support Teacher	99	50,567
Facilitator	35	48,795

*Position is school-based and likely involves some direct teaching time, subject to principal's discretion.

SOURCE: BCPSS Budget department.

Figure 7-3.
Percentage of personnel who serve mostly administrative functions in BCPSS and other Maryland schools districts, by category: 2000–2001



SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, *Staff Employed at School and Central Office Levels, Maryland Public Schools*, October 2000, Tables 1 and 9.

[63]Note that this discussion refers to a problem with the validity and accuracy of the classification of categories of expenditures. It should not be construed to be a reference to the validity or accuracy of expenditure totals.

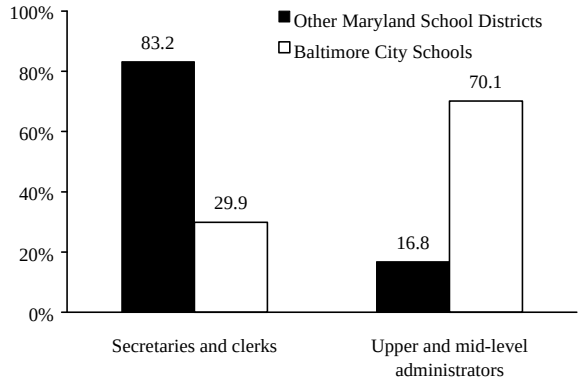
[64]We recognize the possibility that some reported differences between the staffing configuration within BCPSS and within other Maryland school districts may be due in part to differences in the way positions are classified, and not due to actual differences in staff levels. We acknowledge this possibility in the recommendations made later in this section.

[65]Some of these staff might also serve as part-time instructors.

The data suggest that BCPSS employs more highly paid upper and mid-level administrators and other noninstructional administrators, and fewer secretaries and clerks than do other districts in the state. These indicators point to the likelihood that administrative functions conducted within BCPSS are performed by higher paid staff than would be necessary if the staffing configuration shifted toward additional numbers of secretaries and clerks. Such a shift would most likely release resources for reallocation to student instruction efforts, thereby helping BCPSS better achieve its goals and objectives.

Figure 7-4 offers a more focused view of the differences between the central office administrative staffing configurations in BCPSS and other Maryland districts. We use "central office" in a generic sense to describe all non-school-based administrative staff, thereby excluding school principals from the group identified as upper and mid-level administrators.[66] This analysis adds credence to the suggestion that BCPSS may be using higher paid staff to do work performed by secretarial and clerical staff in other districts.

Figure 7-4.
Percentage of central office administrative personnel in BCPSS and other Maryland school districts, by level: 2000–2001



SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, *Staff Employed at School and Central Office Levels, Maryland Public Schools*, October 2000, Tables 1 and 9.

BCPSS classifies its employees somewhat differently than does the MSDE, which can lead to some misunderstanding. Some in BCPSS apparently suspect that support employees, such as Accounting Technician II and Payroll Technician I, get classified as administrative employees in BCPSS, but as secretaries or clerks in other Maryland school districts. We have no evidence that this is the case, and feel that all Maryland school districts are adhering reasonably well to the guidelines for employee classification established by the MSDE.[67]

Our site visits with principals and other school-based administrative personnel suggest other negative outcomes of the apparent staffing imbalance.

- School administrators and staff felt overwhelmed with paperwork; they perceived much of it as being duplicative or unnecessary.
- Their time was so filled with administrative tasks that they found it difficult to perform their roles as instructional managers—roles they thought they should have and that they wanted to have.
- They felt that their central office administrative contact persons were either unavailable or unresponsive.
- They expected that some of the staff that had been performing administrative tasks (e.g., the Sundry Educational Services (SES) employees) soon would be reassigned or otherwise taken away from the school.

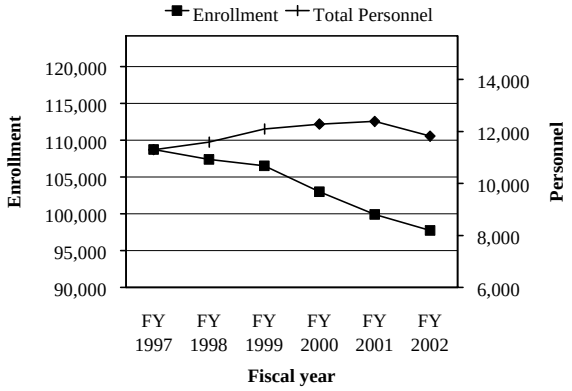
In addition to the imbalance between administrative and support staff, the district has faced staffing issues related to the decline in student enrollment. Figure 7-5 shows that following an increase after 1998, the overall number of BCPSS staff has begun to decline at a rate similar to that of enrollment. Staff levels have increased until this year in order to

[66]In BCPSS, this staff works in the district main offices on North Avenue, in area executive offices, or in other dedicated buildings such as the Professional Development Center.

[67]See BCPSS, READ, *District and School Employee Classification System*, 2001.

accommodate the needs of the new instructional initiatives described in previous chapters.

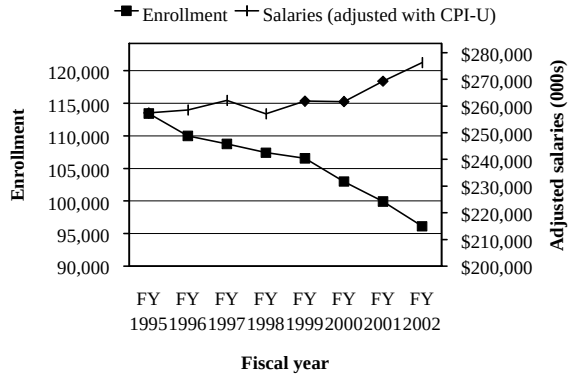
Figure 7-5.
Trends in enrollment and number of personnel



SOURCE: Public School Enrollment Projections, 2000–2009, Maryland Department of Planning (MDP), September 2000; BCPSS Chief Executive Officer's Proposed Fiscal 2001–02 Budget, April 24, 2001.

Figure 7-6 shows the trend from a budgetary point of view (in inflation-adjusted dollars). This graph is different from those shown in Figure 7-1 and Figure 7-2 in that it includes all BCPSS staff salaries. Clearly these two trends—steeply declining enrollments and steeply rising total salary expenditures—cannot coexist indefinitely.

Figure 7-6.
Trends in enrollment and total salaries (in 1983 dollars): 1995–2002

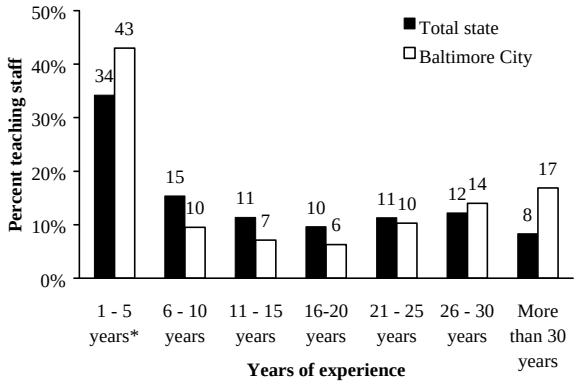


CPI-U = Consumer Price Index-Urban.

SOURCE: Maryland Department of Planning, *Public School Enrollment Projections, 2000–2009*, September 2000; U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, *Public School Finances*, 1995–99; Baltimore City Public School System, Budget,2001-02; Baltimore City Public School System, Annual Report, 2000.

The imbalance of higher and lower paid administrative staff does not occur among the instructional staff. Figure 7-7 compares the instructional staff of BCPSS to that of other Maryland school districts by years of experience. BCPSS has more less experienced teachers and more highly experienced teachers than the other districts, with relatively fewer teachers having served between 6 and 25 years.

Figure 7-7.
Percentage of teachers in BCPSS and the other Maryland school districts, by years of experience: 2000



*An additional 2.4 percent in Maryland and 7 percent in Baltimore City are "provisional" teachers.

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, *Characteristics of Professional Staff, Maryland Public Schools:* October 2000, Table 3.

Based on these observations and findings, we offer three recommendations aimed at confirming the existence of an imbalance within the administrative staff configuration and reducing the negative effects of any imbalance that might be found.

1. BCPSS should review data regarding the methods it uses and those used by other Maryland school districts to classify administrative staff. If differences in the methods are found, the analysis described in this section should be redone and reported using standardized classification methods to determine if actual differences exist between the districts.

2. Regardless of the outcome of such a review, BCPSS should examine the current staffing levels of school administrators and central

office staff, especially in light of declining student enrollment. If the level is deemed to be too high, the district should consider various methods to encourage voluntary staff reductions, such as increased retirement benefits, policies that prevent reductions in benefits for those who choose early retirement, and lump-sum payments to administrators who choose early retirement. An additional option would be for the state to encourage the transfer of experienced administrators from school districts with a declining student enrollment (i.e., BCPSS) to those with increasing student enrollment.

3. BCPSS should examine the current staffing levels of administrative support staff, especially school-based staff. If the level is deemed to be too low, leading to inappropriate or inefficient staffing assignments, the district should consider measures to increase the level. For example, salary increases and recruiting incentives may help attract qualified staff. Another option could be the implementation of a training program for community members to equip them with the necessary skills to perform the support tasks.

To the extent that staffing configurations can be revised so that more tasks are performed by less costly personnel, additional funds will become available for student instruction and support programs aimed at improving achievement. These outcomes will enable the district to achieve the goals described in The Master Plan.

Property

The City of Baltimore owns the facilities used by BCPSS and permits the district to use them rent-free. It is, and has been, understood by the State of Maryland, however, that during the period of the Partnership, BCPSS would move expeditiously toward assuming full legal ownership and responsibility for all school system property. BCPSS is the only one of Maryland's school systems that does not hold title to its schools. Whether or not the transfer of titles from the city to BCPSS was required by SB 795 continues to be controversial, however, and prompt clarification of what is actually required is important.

The most relevant legal language concerning the transfer of deeds and titles to all properties is contained in a June 18, 1998, Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Baltimore and the New Board (excerpted below):

"2. The purpose of this Memorandum is to set forth the understanding and agreement between the Board and the City, specifying their respective responsibilities in the implementation of certain uncodified Sections 3 and 4 of Senate Bill 795, 1997 Acts of Md., Ch. 105 ("Partnership Legislation"), as follows:

Section 3: AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That on the effective date of this Act, all functions, powers, duties, equipment, assets, liabilities, and all the certificated and noncertificated employees of the Baltimore City Public School System shall be transferred to the New Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners and to the Chief Executive Officer of the Board. If assets are not sufficient to fund liabilities transferred, the liabilities shall be retained by the Mayor and City Council.

"3. The City shall retain legal title to all property, real and personal, including land, buildings, fixtures, furniture, and equipment, obtained by the City on behalf of the Department of Education prior to July 1, 1997. The Board shall have the rights of use and possession of such property through the duration of the Partnership Legislation, unless otherwise determined by State law.

"4. All real property, including land, buildings, and fixtures, including new construction or renovation, acquired or constructed by the Board on or after July 1, 1997, regardless of the funding source, shall be titled in a manner consistent with the other Local Education Agencies ("LEAs") in the State

of Maryland through the duration of the Partnership Legislation, unless otherwise determined by State law."

While continued City of Baltimore ownership has meant some advantages to BCPSS, it has not relieved the district of responsibility for upkeep and maintenance of the facilities. In fact, BCPSS in many ways acts as the property manager for about 200 school, office, warehouse, and other facilities.

Property management issues can sometimes distract school-level staff from their instructional role. Some school principals asserted that facilities issues took up an inordinate amount of their time—in some cases, up to one-third or one-half of it. Moreover, since these facilities are used intensively by large populations of active children and are in many cases rather old, maintenance is costly.

In an effort to use space efficiently and minimize maintenance costs, BCPSS has begun a process to identify and close schools that are no longer needed or are otherwise not cost-effective. This process is especially important given the declines in student enrollment experienced by BCPSS. However, the school-closing process can be difficult, since many parents prefer to have schools close by, and a community can derive a sense of identity from its neighborhood school.

Because of the resources and community interests associated with property management, this issue has become an important one for BCPSS and, therefore, one of the main themes of this evaluation. The Westat team and the JOC identified many questions related to facilities that could be addressed through this evaluation. For example,

- How does one define "underutilization"? Which BCPSS properties are underutilized? Which schools could reasonably be merged or closed with no detrimental effect on instruction?
- How does the system for prioritizing the needs for improvements to the capital stock work in practice? Is this the best system for helping BCPSS reach its core goals of improvement in student achievement? Can it be improved? If so, how?
- Has BCPSS used sound methodologies to determine the local rated capacity, educational adequacy, and building condition for each school?
- Has BCPSS proposed reasonable timelines for closures of schools, mergers, and capital improvements?

The full list of questions can be found in the final study plan; this report addresses these questions collectively since they are so closely related to one another.

To conduct this portion of the evaluation, the Westat team conducted the following activities:

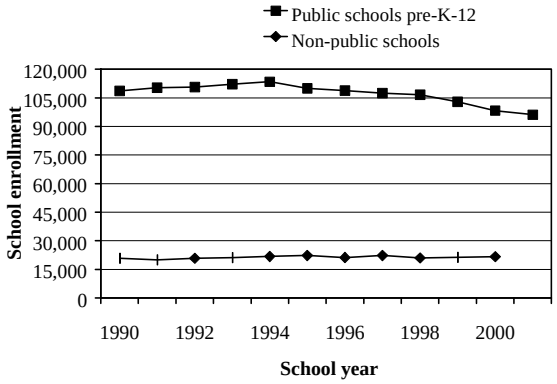
- In-person interviews with MSDE officials, several BCPSS officials involved in the process or in the legal review of the process, and staff from the City of Baltimore Department of Planning;
- Telephone interviews with officials from the Maryland Department of Planning and with many BCPSS managers;
- Attendance at the New Board of School Commissioners final public hearing, held at Coldstream Elementary School;
- Observations of most operations departments' facilities;
- Review of reports from Westat site visits that described the conditions of facilities;
- Review of the 3/D International reports of facilities' conditions and demographic trends, and documents published by the BCPSS Public Relations Office; and
- Primary data analysis.

These inquiries led the Westat team to conclude that a major facilities management issue facing

BCPSS is balancing overall declining student enrollment, which calls for reducing school capacity in carefully targeted areas with plans that require additional space to support high-quality education. Further, the system must keep in mind potential future demands for space in making decisions regarding existing facilities. The following discussion illustrates the impact that declining enrollment will have on BCPSS in the next few years and highlights the challenges that the district will face as it tries to maintain an appropriate level of occupancy.

Figure 7-8 shows that a decline in student enrollment that started in 1995 seems to have accelerated during 1999. For the past 2 years, BCPSS' student population has declined at a rate between 2,000 and 3,000 students per year, and this rate is expected to continue for several more years.

Figure 7-8.
Total enrollment in BCPSS schools, pre-K–12: September 1990–September 2000

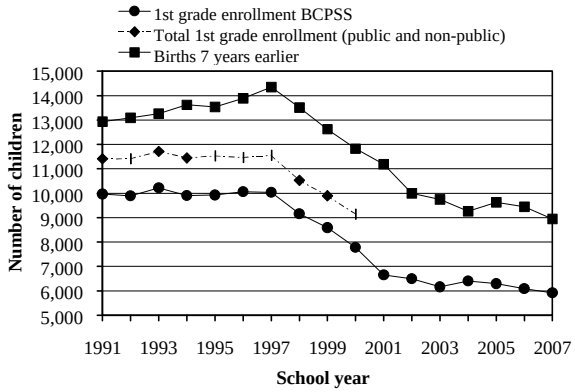


SOURCE: Maryland Department of Planning, *Public School Enrollment Projections, 2000–2009*, September 2000.

BCPSS, like any school district, must predict future levels of student enrollment in order to anticipate the need for school facilities. One of the best predictors of future enrollment is the number of births in a jurisdiction, since this number tends to be highly correlated with first-grade enrollments several years later. Figure 7-9 illustrates the highly correlated relationship between Baltimore birth trends and trends in 1st grade enrollments in the Baltimore City schools 7 years later. The number of births in Baltimore peaked in 1990, the birth year for the first-grade class in the 1997 school year. The birth rate declined precipitously until 1997, when it seemed to stabilize.

The decline in the birth rate was substantial—the birth rate of 1997 was one-third less than that of 1990. First-grade enrollments in 2004 thus are likely to be one-third less than those of 1997. Moreover, this drop in enrollment should gradually make its way through the school system from 1st grade through 12th grade, and enrollment throughout the district will be substantially less in the year 2010 than it was in 1997.

Figure 7-9
First grade enrollment in Baltimore schools and births 7 years earlier, for actual and projected years: 1991 to 2007



SOURCE: Maryland Department of Planning, *Public School Enrollment Projections, 2000–2009*, September 2000.

Cohort-survival models can be used to track demographic changes and their effect on student enrollment. With a cohort-survival model, one can estimate the proportion of students who move from grade to grade by looking at that relationship in past years. One can estimate the proportion of newborns (who will enroll eventually in 1st grade) to 1st graders several years later by looking at that same relationship in past years. BCPSS and Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) use a fairly standard cohort-survival model to make projections. Their model incorporates information from past years, with more weight given to the more recent past (i.e., using a 3-year moving average) in making projections. The BCPSS and MDP cohort-survival model is updated every year,

incorporating the latest data on births and enrollments by grade level.

As part of a facilities utilization study, BCPSS also contracted with 3D/International (3D/I) and its subcontractor, Towson University's RESI research and consulting group, for a demographic analysis. 3D/I-RESI used a different cohort-survival model than that used by BCPSS AND MDP. Their model was supplemented with information on housing permits (which suggest new residents coming), office building plans (which suggest new jobs coming), economic forecasts, and conversations with neighborhood groups about building plans for their areas that might affect population growth. The 3D/I-RESI report, *Demographic Analysis & Enrollment Projections: Final Report for the Baltimore City Public School System*, included a review of the BCPSS AND MDP methods.

Their report also included a set of student enrollment projections based on their cohort-survival model predicting that the student population would not decline as rapidly as the BCPSS AND MDP model had predicted. 3D/I-RESI identified two factors they felt underscored an "emerging momentum" of economic revival and urban renewal, and a slowing of out-migration:

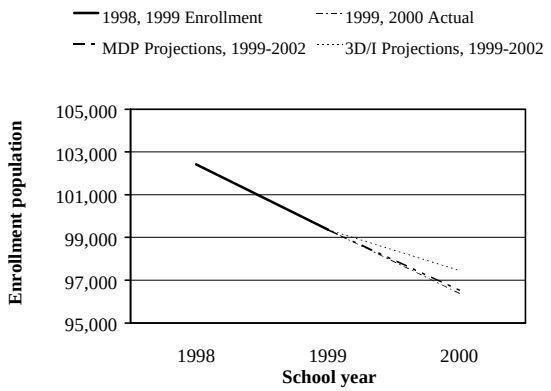
1. After losing jobs steadily throughout the 1990s, Baltimore City added jobs in the year 1999.

2. Continuing out-migration is being countered by a rising in-migration of certain demographic groups, in particular younger households, empty-nesters, and Hispanic immigrants.

However, there are reasons for caution in accepting the 3D/I-RESI projections. The predictions made by 3D/I-RESI rest largely on proposals and plans, not on current realities. In addition, a net in-migration of empty-nesters and young urban professionals would have a negligible impact on school populations since neither population tends to be accompanied by school-aged children. Finally, a growth rate of 1 percent a year in the city's Hispanic population will likely not have a large effect on overall school enrollment since Hispanics currently make up less than 2 percent of the city population.

Comparisons of the 3D/I-RESI projections, the BCPSS AND MDP projections, and actual enrollment for the 2000 school year are now possible. Figure 7-10 shows that 3D/I-RESI projected enrollment for 2000 to be about 1,000 students higher than did BCPSS AND MDP. However, the BCPSS AND MDP projections were closer to the actual enrollment.

Figure 7-10.
Actual versus projected enrollment data for grades K–12: 1998–2000



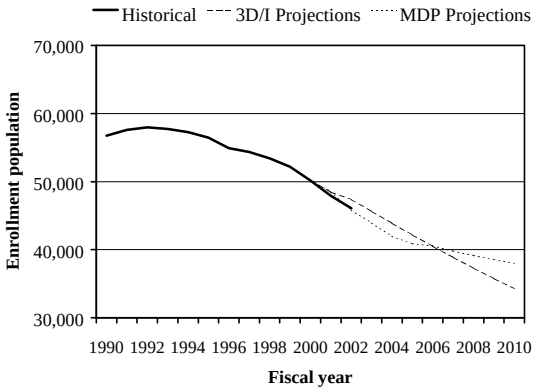
SOURCE: 3D/International, *Demographic Analysis and Enrollment Projections: Final Report*, September 2000; Maryland Department of Planning (MDP), *Public School Enrollment Projections, 2000–2009*, September 2000; Telephone communication with Victor Bonaparte, Maryland Department of Planning, July 2001.

Looking at the projections as they extend into the future, the gap between the 3D/I-RESI and BCPSS AND MDP projections grows to about 2,500 students before eventually narrowing. By 2006, the 3D/I-RESI projections do predict BCPSS student enrollment dipping below 85,000. Indeed, as shown in Figure 7-11, the 3D/I-RESI projections eventually overtake the BCPSS AND MDP projections for kindergarten through 5th grade. Thus, the 3D/I-RESI projections slightly postpone the need to reduce capacity, but they do not prevent the need from arising.

Some BCPSS managers are hopeful, however, that recent and forthcoming system improvements might lure some students who now attend private schools, or no school (i.e., they have dropped out)

back to the city public schools. If this is true, the loss of students due to declining enrollments may be offset in part by increases in the proportion of students who choose public education. Quantifying what this increase might be is extremely difficult.

Figure 7-11.
BCPSS actual and projected enrollments in grades K–5: 1990–2010



SOURCE: 3D/International, *Demographic Analysis and Enrollment Projections: Final Report*, September 2000; Maryland Department of Planning (MDP), *Public School Enrollment Projections, 2000–2009*, September 2000.

BCPSS has begun the process of examining its future needs and identifying schools for closure. The district has conducted thorough research and widespread public outreach. The result was indeed, very impressive. BCPSS' school closing process deserves high praise for its thoroughness, organization, transparency, patience, and sensitivity. Board members and BCPSS staff listened and responded with care to the heartbreaking stories of teary parents with genuine, personal concerns. They listed and responded calmly to angry, provocative, and threatening outbursts. No Baltimorean could fairly claim that they were not provided ample opportunity to express their views. Exhibit 7-1 describes the steps undertaken in the closing process.

To date, BCPSS has reduced capacity less than the enrollment statistics alone would indicate as being appropriate. In addition, those schools that have been closed had relatively low enrollment. BCPSS identified 12 schools for closure, and

Exhibit 7-1.
The closing process

The current version of the Code of Maryland Agency Regulations (COMAR) contains a section on local school closings (13A.02.09) stipulating that local school boards will establish procedures for school closings that take into account factors such as enrollment trends, age and condition of buildings, and transportation requirements. Furthermore, school boards are required to provide adequate public notice and public hearings. In its conduct of the school closing process, BCPSS has provided more information to the public, held more public hearings, and given more notice than was required.

- The 12 board commissioners held five public hearings, each about 4 hours long, and some of the commissioners attended additional local parent meetings.
- An initial "work group" of five high-level staff from the central office met a number of times.
- BCPSS held one public hearing on the proposed procedures.
- A 66-member Blue Ribbon Rezoning Steering Committee met eight times.
- Six Blue Ribbon subcommittees were formed and each met several times.
- Local steering subcommittees, each consisting of an area executive officer, principal, and PTA president, met on 59 separate occasions.
- BCPSS staff produced and disseminated information on the research, procedures, and notices of hearings via public forums, a telephone hotline, the BCPSS web page, brochures, fact sheets, audio and video cassettes, CD-ROMs, poster exhibits, media kits, and newsletters.
- The public was provided information through the BCPSS speakers' bureau, media partnerships and briefings, Office of Parent Involvement, television channel 7, and public service announcements.
- Various reports were compiled based on public letters and comments, and from meetings with the Mayor's Office and the City Departments of Public Works and Police.
- BCPSS performed its own analysis of the work and findings of 3D/I-RESI.

decided to close 7 in 2001, 1 in 2002, and 1 in 2003; decisions regarding the other 3 schools were deferred. Of the 9 schools slated for closure, 1 existed only on paper (Harbor View) and 2 were primary schools with prekindergarten through 2nd grade. The others included 3 elementary schools and 1 elementary/middle school. One or two additional schools, plus a couple of excess buildings, may eventually be closed as a result of another facilities review conducted in 2001.

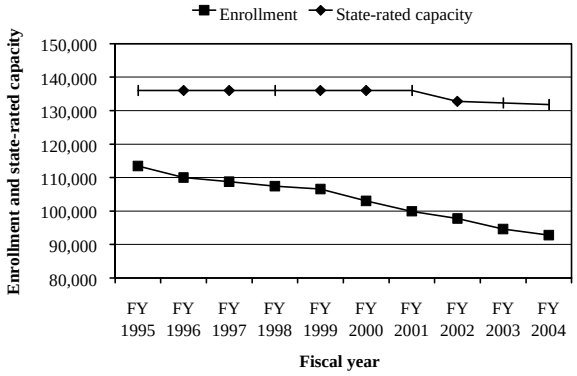
However, BCPSS officials feel that the state-rated capacity (SRC) measure, used by the MSDE, affects them uniquely in an adverse and unfair way. In fact, BCPSS has developed its own "local-rated capacity" (LRC) measure and applied it to all its schools. Usually, but not always, LRC is less than SRC.

Because BCPSS maintains a uniquely large number of very old school buildings, and because educational facility needs, standards, and preferences change over time, BCPSS has a large proportion of buildings ill-designed for today (though perhaps, well designed for 1920s instructional practices). As a result, BCPSS is more likely than most districts to have spaces that are either unusable, or a poor fit for modern requirements. All that being said, BCPSS still shows excess capacity even using its LRC measure, but not as much.[68]

Closing 9 of 183 schools, or 5 percent of its schools, by the year 2004 implies that CPSS is reducing capacity by roughly 5 percent. Because the schools it is closing are smaller than average size, however, total capacity is reduced by only 3 percent. Moreover, because enrollment is declining at a rater faster than the reduction in capacity, the proportion of BCPSS building capacity that is excess is growing.

Figure 7-12 illustrates the situation. The gap between state-rated capacity (the upper line) and enrollment (the lower line) was about 22,500 students in 1995. By 2004, it is likely to grow to over 35,000 students.

Figure 7-12.
Trends in enrollment and state-rated capacity: 1995–2004



NOTE: Utilization rate = enrollment/SRC.

SOURCE: Maryland Department of Planning, *Public School Enrollment Projections, 2000–2009*, September 2000; Data from State of Maryland School Construction Program, January 28, 2000.

BCPSS faces many challenges in addition to those related to enrollment projections that affect decisions regarding facilities. At times, these challenges have led to policies and actions that contradict one another. For example, while the district acknowledges the need to close schools, it also has sought to:

- Construct new additions onto elementary and middle schools as part of their conversion to prekindergarten through 8th grade schools (in an effort to reduce class size and modernize facilities);
- Build some new schools (typically in an effort to replace existing facilities that are in poor condition);
- Make better accommodations in regular schools for those special education students who require physical accommodations and who will be mainstreamed in the next few years (often leading to expanding existing facilities); and
- Obtain $600 million in funds for new construction and upgrades to existing properties.

[68]For example, SRCs for all zoned schools in 2000 summed to 112,503, whereas the equivalent LRCs ("with limits") summed to about 93,250, or 83 percent of the SRC sum.

Recent events make the challenge even more complex. Given the recommendations of the state Commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence, BCPSS might receive more state funding, and at least some of that money might support recent programs that have reduced class sizes, expanded prekindergarten programs, and increased the number of full-day kindergarten programs. These measures have had minimal effects on the overall size of the student population, but they have increased the number of classrooms needed.

The picture is very complicated, requiring the balancing of multiple, frequently inconsistent, demands. Based on these observations and findings, we offer the following recommendations regarding BCPSS facilities.

1. BCPSS should enhance its capacity for planning by hiring permanent staff with advanced analytic knowledge and skill in planning, including demography and geographic mobility.

2. BCPSS should re-examine the possible effects of converting schools to prekindergarten through 8th grade in circumstances where this requires new construction rather than rehabilitation, since this may add to the existing surplus building capacity and it may lead to additional school closures.

3. BCPSS should consider reducing excess capacity in a manner that does not necessitate closing an entire school, thereby eliminating the need for a COMAR school-closing process. For example, schools with multiple buildings could close just one or some of the buildings; some space could be provided or rented to other governmental, nonprofit, or for-profit groups that would contribute to the cost of building upkeep and maintenance; and some school buildings could house more than one school.

4. BCPSS should consider implementing different closing processes for two different types of schools—neighborhood schools, where students from the immediate neighborhood walk to school from home, and citywide schools, which can be located anywhere and still serve their same function. The district could conduct a less costly and rigorous closing process for "non-neighborhood" schools, closer to what is required under COMAR. This process would still provide ample opportunities for public review and comment.

5. For the long-term, BCPSS should consider developing a legal and administrative structure for public-private partnerships to construct new school facilities. These types of partnerships have taken several different forms in other cities, but usually involve a city government giving or selling land to a developer who, in turn, builds a school facility on part of the property. The school facility is then leased back to the school district for a minimal charge over a long term.[69]

   This type of arrangement could have several advantages over the current property management system, including:

   - Helping the school district to focus on its core mission;
   - Unlocking the market value of land that would otherwise produce no taxable revenues for the city and its schools (in the cases where taxable organizations share new facilities with the schools); and
   - Recognizing that populations exist in a constant state of movement and change,

[69]Indeed, a little-known provision in the omnibus federal tax bill gives local governments the opportunity to build public school buildings faster and at lower cost by forming such public-private partnerships with qualified real estate investors and developers. Section 422 of the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 (originating as H.R. 1836) extends the privilege of using tax-exempt, private activity bonds to qualified public education facilities. Until then, the ability to issue bonds that earn interest exempt from federal taxation was largely limited to state and local governments. Private developers now have access to tax-exempt lines of credit to help replace and renovate obsolete or deteriorated central city schools in financially troubled cities. Such provisions have long been in place in some other countries. For an introduction to the legislation and case studies in the United States and abroad, see Ronald D. Utt, New Tax Law Boosts School Construction with Public-Private Partnerships, *The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder*, No. 1463, Aug. 8, 2001.

and that permanent school facilities at particular sites are not always going to be needed.

6. Any new requests for additional funds for nonemergency or non-safety-related maintenance and repair of buildings should be directed toward buildings that BCPSS is most confident will still be used in 10 years.

Section 2. Departmentwide Organization and Management

Facilities Planning, Maintenance, and Operations

Objective 4 of The Master Plan defines facility maintenance and use as a focus area. Within this focus area, the plan specifies two strategies: 1) establish an effective system for school construction, maintenance, and repair; and 2) determine the most efficient use of available school buildings. Once again, SB 795 served as the impetus for these measures.

Since the passage of SB 795 and the adoption of The Master Plan, BCPSS has conducted an inventory of the facilities it operates and an evaluation of their condition. This investigation resulted in recommendations for specific school closures, and has prompted additional recommendations for capital improvement projects and suggested other types of improvements.

The study findings indicate varying levels of satisfaction with the services among school administrators. While there was widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of the maintenance and repair services available to the schools, there was widespread satisfaction with grounds keeping and waste management services. Improvements have also been made in Food Services and Mail Distribution. Issues regarding arrangements for custodial services within BCPSS are currently under close examination.

Recommendations include the development of an electronic work tracking system to monitor repairs and client satisfaction with them.

Our discussion of systemwide organization and management identified some broad-based issues regarding facilities usage, focusing on the use of space and the need to close more schools. In this section, we look more closely at the operation of the Facilities Department and its ability to meet documented needs for maintenance and repair.

The Facilities Department is responsible for tasks related primarily to the physical condition of school and administrative buildings, including construction, maintenance, repair, and cleaning. New construction, major building rehabilitation, and repairs to major equipment have long been contracted out, and recently construction management and some grounds work, grass cutting, and waste management have been added. General maintenance and repair and custodial services, however, are run as direct functions, using BCPSS employees.

SB 795 referred to the Facilities Department's responsibility directly:

> Develop an effective system for planning and providing for construction, repair, maintenance services for school buildings which shall include a review by the Board to assure the most efficient and productive use of the system's resources, including examination and reduction of the cost of underutilized schools and proposals for school mergers or closures if appropriate.

The legislation also instructed the Board to implement the key provisions of the Towers Perrins/Cresap report of 1992. Among its recommendations were the following:

> Operations. Streamlining operations is a key first step the System should take to improve its overall performance, especially in an environment where resources are scarce. Inefficient operations and ineffective deployment of staff cannot be tolerated. Analysis of current operations revealed that operations may be streamlined by
>
> - Automating operations currently performed manually;

- Adjusting schedules to ensure that employees work when and where they are most needed;
- Eliminating activities that do not need to be performed or that are redundantly performed in more than one unit;
- Reducing unnecessary specialization;
- Shifting responsibility for certain tasks from the central office to the schools, outside contractors, and other city agencies…; and
- Reducing staffing where workload does not justify existing staffing levels.

> It should be stressed that many of these operational efficiencies cannot be achieved without first making investments in the equipment and human resources needed to support automation. The lack of adequate investment is one of the primary causes of current inefficiencies.

Another, more specific Towers Perrin/Cresap recommendation relevant to the Facilities Department follows:

> The number of central office positions titles should be streamlined:
>
> - The organizational structure is cluttered by an extensive array of position titles.
> - Currently, 16 different titles are assigned to professional administrative positions in the Central Office.

Towers Perrin/Cresap advocated eliminating many North Avenue positions, including the building emergency operations coordinator and the (custodial) educational building managers (they thought custodians should report directly to school principals).

The work of the Facilities Department fits into The Master Plan's Objective 4: Design and implement effective and cost-effective management systems and practices to improve the support to instruction. Included within this objective is the New Board's priority to improve the physical plants of school system facilities.

Within Objective 4, Focus Area 1: Facility Maintenance and Use is most pertinent. It specifies two strategies:

1. Establish an effective system for school construction, maintenance, and repair.
2. Determine the most efficient use of available school buildings.

Our evaluation began with the following questions:

- How does the system for prioritizing the needs for improvements to the capital stock work in practice? Is this the best system for helping BCPSS reach its core goals of improvement in student achievement? Can it be improved? If so, how?
- Has performance improved or declined since the Interim Evaluation? If there is improvement, is it modest or substantial in bringing BCPSS closer to the standards of best practice? Explain how it compares to the experience of other similarly situated school districts. Judging by the standards of best practice, to what extent is BCPSS' practice supportive of student instruction?
- Does BCPSS have adequate, qualified staff and procedures in place to well manage the Capital Improvement Program and construction and maintenance contractors, and to complete projects on time?
- What are the key factors responsible for improvement or lack of improvement? Are new governance structures responsible?
- How well has BCPSS procured architectural and engineering design services and construction contractors, and has that

procurement process improved over the last couple of years?

- How does the BCPSS use of its capital stock compare to the experience of other similarly situated school districts? Judging by the standards of best practice, to what extent is BCPSS' practice supportive of student instruction?

Another area of inquiry was added during our JOC meetings. Some JOC members requested that we investigate the issue of deferred maintenance. They suspected that because such a strong emphasis had been put on improving academic performance in the past several years, the maintenance of facilities may have gotten less attention. In response, Westat offered to benchmark BCPSS expenditures on maintenance and repair to those of similar school districts. We also looked into the topic of optimal methods for raising capital investment funds for school rehabilitation and construction.

We consulted a variety of sources in our response to these questions. Our efforts included:

- Incorporating many questions about facilities management in our discussions with principals and other administrators during our site visits.
- Incorporating items in the formal surveys.
- Interviewing Facilities Department managers.
- Interviewing their counterparts at the MSDE.
- Interviewing several managers in the City of Baltimore's Planning Office.
- Reviewing many documents and analyzing the data, including all those produced by 3/D International under contract to BCPSS, as well as several annual BCPSS submissions to MSDE.
- Collecting data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Educational Research Service, and the MSDE regarding capital investment and expenditures on maintenance and repair over the past decade in many school districts similar in background to BCPSS.
- Reviewing some more general literature, such as research reports and newspaper articles, on optimal methods for capital investment and structuring operations functions.
- Driving around Baltimore City to observe all the outlying facilities of the Facilities Department.

BCPSS Actions Related to Facilities in the Past Several Years

The Facilities Department has upgraded its technology in some substantial ways, as was suggested by Towers Perrin/Cresap, and not only in terms of equipment, but also processes. Every employee now has computer access. The department now employs an automated work order system that is part of the Oracle Financials software package. This has helped to speed up the requisitions and change order processes.

The department has also instituted a program of continuous training, with the help of the Professional Development Center. But managers with whom we spoke felt their efforts to improve productivity were constrained by hiring rules. They have recently had to lay off temporary workers, who are less expensive and tend to be younger and more productive. With the end of the IT consulting contract, they also lost a couple of technical workers who managed the automated work order system; they would like to replace them, but they cannot do so because of budget constraints.

Several years ago, BCPSS engaged the services of building consultants 3D/I to conduct an inventory of BCPSS school buildings and assess their condition. By the time this report was written, they had conducted three large, comprehensive surveys addressing building safety, energy efficiency, repair needs, functionality, and educational adequacy.

The 3D/ International reports, *Comprehensive Facilities Assessments: Summary Report* (February 1998), *Demographic Analysis & Enrollment Projections* (September 2000), *Facility Utilization Study: Final*

Recommendations (December 2000), and *Strategic Facility Plan Evaluation: Baltimore City Public School System* (October 2001), contain detailed information about the condition of each BCPSS school. Among their most salient observations are the following:

1. Decline in student enrollment appears to be slowing.
2. There is excess capacity in the school system.
3. Many schools are overcrowded.
4. Schools have been converted to pre-K–8 facilities without the necessary renovations.
5. Many schools provide inadequate educational conditions.
6. Maintenance and capital renewal projects have been neglected.
7. Most schools do not comply with ADA requirements.
8. Most BCPSS schools are old.
9. Many middle and high schools are too large.

Though items 2 and 3 may seem contradictory, the consultants explained that the excess capacity and overcrowding were in different areas of the city.

The research and analysis in the 3D/I reports have been used to guide decisions regarding maintenance and repair and the relative priorities among needs. BCPSS has followed through on an extensive series of facility rehabilitation, energy conservation, and asbestos abatement projects over the past few years, ordered and advised substantially by 3D/I and other consultants they have employed. Moreover, the research and analysis has been used in the formation of the annual reports submitted by the Facilities Department to MSDE.

Item 6 of the original list of 3D/I "findings" above is of such relevance that it deserves highlighting. According to 3D/I:

> Approximately $604 million in deficiencies were identified in 1997 for schools related to deferred maintenance and capital renewal items. Even with the ongoing capital improvement expenditures since then, the amount of accumulated deficiency costs are estimated to have grown to approximately $680 million.[70]

The report, *Comprehensive Facilities Assessments*, reviewed all BCPSS school properties in operation at almost 200 schools (some with multiple buildings) in 1998. As indicated in the Executive Summary,

> Buildings are deteriorating very rapidly. It is extremely important to take immediate steps to decrease the rate at which buildings are deteriorating.
>
> Major areas of concern include obsolete and deteriorating heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems; outdated electrical systems; worn roofs and windows; cracks in the building structure; battered doors and walls; worn pavement and play surfaces; water infiltration.
>
> Deficiencies for …176 schools surveyed total $606,650,888. This price includes estimated fees for general construction conditions (12.93%), hazardous materials and asbestos abatement (10%), and A/E fees (5%). This final report does not include the price for correcting many civil and structural deficiencies requiring detailed testing and investigation…..In addition, this condition assessment does not contain surveys for educational adequacy, space utilization or enrollment projections.

This cost estimate would be reduced somewhat, of course, if some school buildings were taken out of the BCPSS inventory as a result of the school closing process. Moreover, the cost estimate should probably be reduced

[70] 3D/ International, *Facility Utilization Study: Initial Recommendations*, December 2000.

proportionally more than the size of the inventory because the more dilapidated schools, which are more expensive to repair, are more likely to be closed than schools in good physical condition. So, for example, if 10 percent of BCPSS schools were closed, it might mean a 15 percent reduction in the 3D/I cost estimate, since money would not be needed to fix those schools no longer in existence. However, even with this reduction a substantial need remains.

3D/I's recommendations were:

1. Close 12 schools.[71]
2. Consider closing more schools.
3. Build new schools and make needed improvements.
4. Engage in strategic planning.

Again, to explain what may seem to be contradictory, the schools suggested for closure were in different areas of the city than those in which they suggested new schools.

In the remainder of this section, we discuss our findings regarding the current status of facilities maintenance. We begin by discussing overall opinions of the work of the Facilities Department.

School Administrators' Opinions of Facilities Department Work

We discussed the work and the service quality of the Facilities Department, sometimes at considerable length, with the school administrators in our 10 site visits. The majority of them were very critical of the department's work; only one was supportive. We were to discover, however, that school administrators did not always know if workers who came to their school worked for contractors or directly for BCPSS. Some grounds work and grass cutting, for example, are now contracted out. Some repair and construction work is done under contract, particularly when a job is large.

This is not to say that school administrators are not aware of which types of work are the responsibility of the Facilities Department. They are. And, in our interviews, we could ferret out administrators' opinions of the work of various work groups and could, ourselves, determine whether those groups were contractors or not.

For the formal principals' survey, however, we cannot make any such distinction. Thus, "adequate support with regard to facilities and maintenance" could refer to work of maintenance and repair crews, grounds crews, or custodians. Furthermore, it is not possible to distinguish from the survey results alone whether the source of the problem is a systemwide paucity of resources for maintenance and repair or the behavior of BCPSS employees. One illustration of the resource problem is illustrated by the fact that until September 2001, no vehicles had been purchased for over 10 years. For many years, no funds were available to purchase the capital equipment needed to modernize the Facilities Department services.

One survey question asked principals to "indicate the degree to which your school has each of the following…." Seven possible areas were explored, including "your school has adequate support with regard to facilities and maintenance" (see Table 7-2).

Of all the seven areas of system support explored in this item of the survey, the area of facilities and maintenance was the one with the strongest level of dissatisfaction.

[71] 3D/I has just completed another study of citywide schools and recommended an additional two schools, plus parts of two others, be closed.

Table 7-2.
Percentage of principals agreeing and disagreeing that their school has adequate support with regard to facilities and maintenance

School characteristic	Disagree	Agree
Total	57	43
Instructional level		
Elementary	73	27
Elementary/middle	76	24
Middle	63	37
High	38	63
Other		
School status		
Regular schools	65	35
AF/DI schools	43	57
Alternative schools	29	71
Special education schools	43	57
Citywide schools	75	25

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Maintenance and Repair

Our site visits provided us with the opportunity to view schools' physical plants directly and, especially in our administrative site visits, discuss the adequacy of maintenance and repairs. Overall, we saw many buildings that were clearly in need of repair and heard many stories about maintenance problems that could interfere with BCPSS educational mission. Problems were found not only in old buildings, but in new ones that appeared to have deteriorated rapidly. A deferred maintenance problem clearly still exists.

In our interviews with school administrators, we encountered some deeply held opinions regarding the need for improvement in the physical facilities at the school sites and the work performance of BCPSS' maintenance and repair crews. A few principals told us that maintenance and repair issues took up an inordinate amount of their work time (e.g., one said 40 percent, another one-third to one-half). Some of that time was spent getting the maintenance and repair crews to respond to requests and to persist until a job was completed satisfactorily.

Probably the most bitter complaint had to do with Facilities Department employees doing no work, i.e., not even showing up, but still charging the hours to the school. The school would get billed, months later, for work that was never done, and they were still left with something not repaired. The most dramatic story was told by a principal who spotted someone across the street from her school, sitting in a car and sleeping. She called the police, who determined that the man was the Facilities Department employee who had been sent in response to an emergency call their school made earlier that day. The repair was not made, and the school was billed later for the service.

The above story presents evidence of two problems, one related to work performance and the other related to billing schools for maintenance and repair work. The 1992 Towers Perrin/Cresap report recommended that BCPSS move to a system of "enterprise schools" that would be responsible for their own budgets. This "site-based management" scheme envisioned the schools "purchasing" services, including maintenance and repair services, from North Avenue, with North Avenue, in return, billing individual schools for the work performed.

Towers Perrin/Cresap also recommended a second step in which competition would be allowed and each school would be free to purchase maintenance and repair services from more than one possible provider. As the enterprise school program was discontinued by BCPSS, based on their experience with it and a study of the research on the topic, this second step in the development process was never taken. Thus, each school was left with only one possible provider of maintenance and repair services—North Avenue.

As of this year, BCPSS has assumed all maintenance and repair charges centrally, and schools are no longer billed for Facilities Department repair work. Even if the billing problem is now eliminated, however, the other problem called out by the story above may persist: work not getting done, workers not arriving when scheduled, shoddy or incomplete work, and contempt for customer service. Our school-level interviewees seemed firmly

convinced that if the maintenance and repair performance has improved, it has been only slightly. Some of the more egregious behaviors, they think, remain. Among those perceived behaviors are a propensity on the part of maintenance and repair crews to "have to go back to the shop" to get something, a tool or a piece of material or equipment. Most of school administrators with whom we spoke seem convinced that, most of the time, such statements are an excuse to drive around town and avoid work.

One sincere management response to the problems of maintenance and repair services has been the assemblage of "blitz teams." Schools are instructed to provide a list of their important, but nonemergency, maintenance and repair problems. Then, on a quarterly basis, blitz teams come to attend to the items on that list. More than that, an inspector is supposed to arrive well in advance of the blitz team in order to evaluate the needs—which skills are needed, what materials, which tools, etc. In the abstract, it seems a clever, perfect solution to all the past problems.

Unfortunately, it does not seem to be working as well as it might, at least not according to the school administrators with whom we spoke. They tell us that workers still frequently "forget" something that they have to drive back to the shop to retrieve (while the other workers either go with them or just "sit around waiting" for them to return). A low percentage of the tasks on the list get completed. The work that is completed may be done shoddily. And, finally, though the workers are supposed to speak with the principal when they arrive and before they depart, they often do not always. By contrast, most of our interviewees seemed to think that the Facilities Department's emergency response function is now handled rather well.

Another management response has been to privatize some maintenance work through a traditional bid-contract process. We believe, however, that school principals are often not aware when a maintenance worker is a contractor. If some school administrators' suspicions are valid, and a "culture of work avoidance" is too deeply ingrained among some maintenance and repair employees to fix, the Facilities Department might consider injecting some competition into the system by, say, allowing private service providers to bid for schools' business in some parts of the city. There should be a healthy, competitive market for maintenance and repair services.

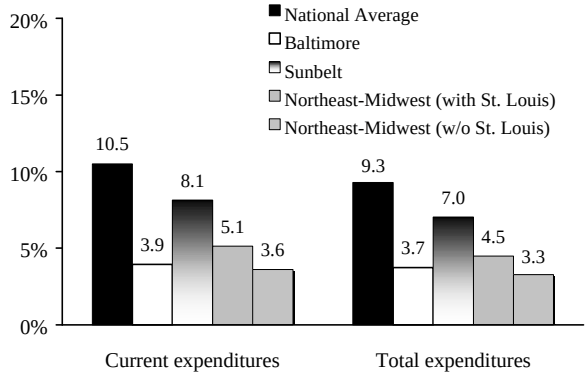
Currently, BCPSS has retained PriceWaterhouse-Coopers to study the operations of the Facilities Department in detail, and their report should be completed soon. Moreover, a new Facilities Department director has just been hired. BCPSS management then continues its determined effort to fix the problems.

Investment in Facilities

Westat was asked to investigate BCPSS' past and recent capital investment and funding for maintenance and repair. It was hypothesized that BCPSS has underinvested in facilities while it focused its efforts on academic improvement. To do so, we looked at the proportion of funds devoted to capital outlay in the past decade in BCPSS and compared it to the equivalent proportion in similar large, old, central city school districts. We could obtain complete number series for the years 1992–98 from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, and we display them for the national average of school districts, Baltimore, and groups of other school districts similar to BCPSS in some ways.

As shown in Figure 7-13, BCPSS' level of capital outlay was well below the national average. But that comparison may not be the most relevant. The national average includes all school districts, including all those that are growing in population and building new schools to accommodate new developments.

Figure 7-13.
Annual average capital outlay as a percentage of current and total expenditures for the nation and particular groups of urban school districts: 1992–98

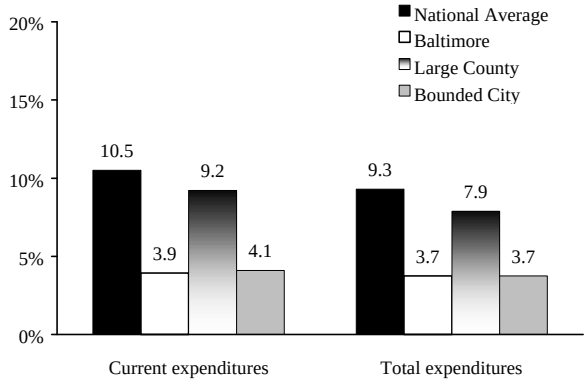


SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, *Public School Finances*, 1992 through 1998.

Other large central city school districts represent a more valid comparison group, and one can classify them in different ways. There is, for example, a large difference between Sunbelt cities and Northeast-Midwest cities in their levels of capital outlay. The Sunbelt cities—Charlotte, Memphis, New Orleans, Oakland, and Richmond—all spent more than Baltimore. That may be because of growing populations and, with the Southern cities, the fact that salaries are relatively low and capital expenditures account for larger proportions of total expenditures. The Northeast-Midwest cities—Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis—on average devoted somewhat more money to capital outlay than BCPSS, but that is only true if the group includes St. Louis—a school district that had been awarded a large sum of state money in a state desegregation court case. Take St. Louis out, and Baltimore's rate of capital outlay is slightly higher than that for the average of six other Northeast-Midwest cities.

Another way of classifying the cities would be to compare those that are geographically constrained and, thus, cannot grow any more, such as Baltimore, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and those who are joined with their surrounding county's school district and include "suburbanizing" areas where capital outlays are focused, such as Charlotte, Louisville, and Memphis (Figure 7-14).

Figure 7-14.
Annual average capital outlay as a percentage of current and total expenditures for the nation and particular groups of urban school districts: 1992–98



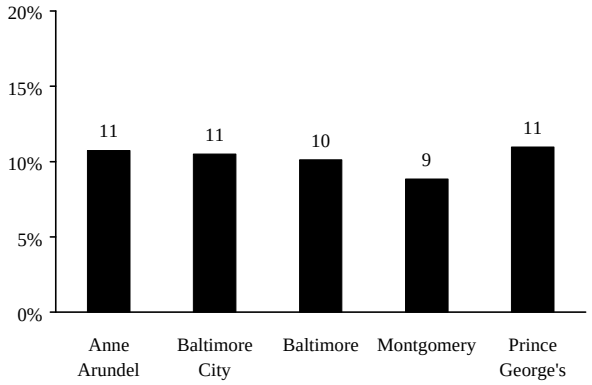
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, *Public School Finances*, 1992 through 1998.

Again, there are large city school districts that spent proportionally larger portions of their budgets on capital outlay, but they are really not very similar to Baltimore in respect to the factors most relevant to capital spending needs.

It is, of course, a plausible hypothesis that all these Northeast-Midwest cities have rundown infrastructure and, thus, parity would represent only a similar state of deterioration and deferred maintenance. Indeed, the recent State of Michigan decision to support a billion dollar capital renewal program in Detroit provides one piece of evidence to support that hypothesis. We have made no study of the relative quality or condition of facilities across school districts.

We investigated a similar hypothesis with regard to maintenance and repair. We looked at the proportion of expenditure devoted to maintenance and operation among large Maryland school districts in MSDE data sets, which share a common classification standard for which expenditures are considered to be "operation and maintenance of plant," for the same range of years, 1992–98 (see Figure 7-15).

Figure 7-15.
Annual average operation and maintenance of plant as a percentage of current expenditures for five large Maryland school districts: 1992–98



SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education, *Selected Financial Data: Maryland Public Schools,* 1991–92 through 1997–98.

Again, Baltimore City does not stand out as having made a proportionally different investment in its maintenance and repair function than other large districts in Maryland. We see no outstanding evidence indicating that BCPSS devoted a smaller proportion of resources or to its capital outlay or maintenance and repair functions than other districts did in the recent past.[72] However, this analysis looks only at the proportion of funds allocated, not at the need for repair. Given the age and condition of many of Baltimore's school facilities, it could well be argued that a greater proportion of funds is needed for facilities. From that perspective, the fact that Baltimore's proportion of expenditure for operation and maintenance matches other Maryland districts' is evidence of under-investment from lack of funds. Our evaluation could not address the relative need for repair in the jurisdictions for which we had expenditure data.

One more point merits attention. Until this year when the law was changed, BCPSS suffered a multi-year drought of capital investment because the City of Baltimore would not (or could not afford to) provide the matching funds required to gain state new construction funds. Even approved projects sometimes went undone for lack of matching funds. In its 2000–2001 session, the Maryland legislature lowered BCPSS' threshold requirements.

Grounds Keeping

Grounds keeping consists of a variety of tasks including grass cutting, snow shoveling, sweeping and cleaning outside areas, and trimming trees and shrubs. Some of this work is performed by private contractors and some by BCPSS employees. Judging from our conversations with school administrators during the 10 site visits, there seems to be a fairly high level of satisfaction with grounds keeping and a perception that its work performance and attitude toward customer service had greatly improved in the past few years. This opinion was not universal, but does represent the majority viewpoint among those with whom we spoke.

Waste Management

There is no specific mention of the waste management function in SB 795, the Towers Perrin/Cresap report, or The Master Plan. Waste management was simply one of the several services for which the Facilities Department was responsible. It became an area of some controversy just a few years ago, with television news videos showing large, unsanitary, vermin-attractive trash piles in school stairwells and blocking school emergency exits. It was a rather obvious health, safety, and management problem, and an embarrassment to BCPSS. Trash pick up was not thorough and not dependable.

In studying the situation, BCPSS managers uncovered that a significant amount of overtime was being expended, trash was not being picked up, and their trucks were often not running due to a lack of maintenance (BCPSS, thus, had to rely on the city for replacements). BCPSS hired Browning-Ferris Industries (BFI) on a small consulting contract to design the waste management system as if it didn't exist. In other

[72] Another plausible hypothesis is that due to inadequate funds, there may have been under- investments in capitol or maintenance in time periods not examined here.

words, what would they propose if BCPSS were to start from scratch (i.e.. routes, number of vehicles, number of employees). BFI did this, then compared their optimal design to the then-current BCPSS structure. They found that the routes weren't efficient, BCPSS picked trash up during peak traffic times, and it had too many people and too many vehicles for the amount of work involved.

The outcome was a redesign of the routes, a reduction in the number of employees (for front-end dumpsters, BFI suggested one instead of two employees; with rear-loaders, they suggested reducing the crew from three to two), and a change to working hours from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. In addition, BFI diagnosed the condition and design of the BCPSS vehicles and made recommendations for replacement. BCPSS implemented the suggestions, and service and efficiency improved. BCPSS also organized and implemented a recycling program.

We asked about the performance of and improvement in BCPSS' waste management service during our 10 site visits and in our interviews with the Chief Operating Officer and current managers of the Facilities Department. With some focused attention from North Avenue during the past couple of years, the service seems to have improved substantially. According to the school administrators with whom we spoke, there had been a serious performance problem regarding waste management, it was fixed, and fixed very well. They were very satisfied with the new service.

Nonetheless, BCPSS made a decision to test the market place by putting waste management services out to bid. They learned from their financial projections that they could conduct the operation in-house at a cost comparable to outsourcing. But, as waste management is not part of the BCPSS core mission, they decided that a comparable cost was not justification enough for maintaining the service in-house. On July 1, 2001, BCPSS signed a contract with BFI to operate the service. BCPSS also moved the supervision of the contract from the Facilities to the Transportation Department, and by all accounts this important aspect of operations is well under control.

Mail Distribution

BCPSS moves mail and packages from 180 schools to 180 schools, back and forth to North Avenue, City Hall, and MSDE. Transportation Department managers, who oversee this operation, were interested in evaluating the process, so BCPSS retained the United Parcel Service (UPS) under contract, pro bono, and they spent 30 days observing operations. What emerged was a plan that reduced the number of routes from 7 to 5, and a rationalization of the work performed. For example, prior to the UPS study, workers arrived at 7:30 a.m. and left at 3:30 or 4 p.m. The mail, however, did not arrive until 10 a.m., so some morning hours were wasted. Now the mail sorters arrive at 9 a.m. All the mail that arrives during the day is put in pouches for the next day, and drivers arrive at half-hour intervals beginning at 7:30 a.m. to get their materials and start their routes.

Custodial Services

There is no specific direct mention of the custodial function in SB 795 or The Master Plan. The Towers Perrin/Cresap report, however, made specific recommendations to eliminate the positions of the North Avenue-based custodial building managers and have regular custodians report directly to school principals, as part of their more general recommendation for BCPSS to move to a site-based management system. Towers Perrin/Cresap also recommended that school principals have the opportunity to shop around for custodial services in the open market.

In the intervening years since the 1992 Towers Perrin/Cresap report, BCPSS has tried several approaches to managing the custodial function. Similarly, school principals were given the option of hiring their own custodial staff, and some did. For a time, BCPSS hired private contractors to manage the custodial services at some schools. As we were conducting our evaluation, the custodial services function existed in something

of a nether world, while BCPSS deliberated what to do about it. Some schools still had their own custodial staff, but that option was being phased out. Administrators in the schools did not know whether BCPSS was going to contract out or use its own employees for custodial services in FY 2002.

Last year, BCPSS invited a consultant to do a prototype study of its cleaning processes and procedures. The consultant studied about 10 schools and made a number of findings, including:

1. BCPSS could operate more efficiently with different working hours.
2. Most custodial work is inherently a part-time, not full-time, job, and all BCPSS custodial workers were employed full time.
3. There was no formal training program.
4. BCPSS could benefit from developing performance measures.
5. BCPSS was not using the most efficient materials and equipment.

In an effort to fix the problems uncovered and to implement suggested changes, BCPSS recently let a contract conduct a pilot project, implement the new plans and procedures, and monitor their relative success.

We asked the school administrators at the 10 administrative site visit schools about their own experiences with the different types of custodial management in the past and their preferences for the future. These 10 schools did not compose a representative sample of BCPSS schools, nor did the people with whom we spoke necessarily provide representative examples of past experience with the various custodial management options. As might be expected, we heard a wide range of opinions on the most basic issues of the current quality of custodial services and schools' general cleanliness. Moreover, our reports from the other 25 site visits also revealed a wide range of service quality and cleanliness. On balance, there seemed to be somewhat more dissatisfaction than satisfaction with the quality and organization of custodial services, and quite a bit of apprehension regarding their future.

This much we can say is universal: custodial services management is an issue of some deep concern for school administrators that goes beyond the level of cleanliness. It is a matter of autonomy, authority, and control. Most principals we spoke with thought that they should have some say in what custodians do at their school and how they do it. Moreover, almost all the principals with whom we spoke thought that they should be able to choose the custodians. Principals also were insistent that custodial teams, regardless of the general management or contract structure, should have continuity. Not knowing who has keys to the building for which you are responsible could, quite obviously, be unsettling. A few of our interviewees also suggested that the more anonymous the custodial staff is, the greater is the probability of theft.

Many of the school administrators with whom we spoke had been using SES employees in a custodial capacity. SES employees are hired and fired by school principals. They do not belong to a union. They do not receive BCPSS benefits. They are, essentially, temporary or "contingent" employees. (Many of them have, however, been hired into permanent positions within BCPSS after doing a good job as SES employees.) Principals use them in a custodial capacity when they feel the regular BCPSS custodial employees cannot or will not conduct some custodial work the principal feels is important.

The principals seemed to like most the aspect that they could tell SES employees what to do, which allows immediate response to unforeseen needs. Regular BCPSS custodians, in contrast, often refuse principals' requests, citing work rules or BCPSS policies. These custodians do not work for school principals, after all; they work for North Avenue. Even if they are willing to do what school principals want, they may not be available —they may work hours set by North Avenue, not the school. Moreover, they may rotate from school to school and may be moved just when they have learned a particular school's routine. SES employees, hired by school principals, are dedicated to the school.

BCPSS has been under some pressure for some time, however, to eliminate the SES positions (see, for example, the discussion on pp.67-84 of the June 27, 2000 meeting of the New Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners). Legally, they are only supposed to be hired for periods of less than 90 days, although some have stayed on for longer periods than that. The latest news in the ongoing controversy regarding SES employees was that their positions would be phased out in the calendar year 2002, with the positions converted to union jobs. It was asserted at the June 27 Board meeting that a phase out would represent a reduction in that particular workforce by 25 to 30 percent (unless additional funds were found), since pay and benefits would need to be raised.

Currently, BCPSS is conducting a pilot project, testing two proposed new models for custodial management. Custodial services are also part of the current PriceWaterhouseCoopers review. We support these efforts. We also support the current BCPSS effort to review the number, job descriptions, and qualifications of custodial staff.

Organization and Staffing—Facilities Department

The Facilities Department employs over 900 employees in 40 different position classifications. To some degree, of course, this large number of different positions reflects the occupational environment. In the skilled trades, each trade tends to manage its own standards and negotiate its own pay agreements. But that explanation only goes so far and accounts for less than 10 of the job categories.

Granted, over half of the Facilities employees (521) are custodians. Of the 400 that remain after custodians are accounted for, however, there rest a confusingly wide variety of types of employee. What are the differences among coordinators (8), specialists (4), inspectors (3), associates (2), officers (2), chiefs (1), directors (1), supervisors (7), administrators (1), coordinators (2), managers (12), maintenance coordinators (5), inspectors (3), and associates (2)? Or, what are the differences among mechanics (20), engineers (107), technicians (24), building repairers (20), and specialists (4)?

The Towers Perrin/Cresap report in 1992 reported that "The organizational structure is cluttered by an extensive array of position titles. Currently, 16 different titles are assigned to professional administrative positions in the Central Office." The Facilities Department has many of its own, unique position titles in addition to some of those used by North Avenue central administrative staff. The report also made specific recommendations for phasing out some particular positions in the Facilities Department, such as the building emergency operations coordinator and the custodial managers (they thought that custodians should report to school principals). Those positions remained as of the FY 2002 budget.

Judging from position titles, we estimate that over 250 positions are probably designated for maintenance and repair work. That is well over one full-time maintenance and repair worker per school. With that high a ratio of workers, one would expect that the quality of that service could be fairly high.

Near-Term Plans—Facilities Department

BCPSS efforts to improve operations in the Facilities Department are by no means completed. Here is a sample of the actions currently, or soon to be, in motion:

1. Update the annual Facilities Master Plan. Identify annual funding levels for the State and local Capital Improvement Program.
2. Submit requests to the city and state for the annual Capital Improvement Program.
3. Develop construction, maintenance, and repair procedures based on School Board members' input and outline developed in April 2001.

4. Develop format and operating procedures for monthly review of construction projects.

5. Present to finance committee and School Board on monthly basis construction timelines and financial status.

6. Develop a facility planning business model for the department and present it to the facilities committee.

7. Finalize facility planning business model, and present it to the Chief Executive Officer and New Board for approval and implementation.

8. Assemble a working group and prepare draft of timeline tasks related to Capital Improvement Program (C.I.P), Qualified Zone Academy Board (QZAB), and Aging Schools.

9. Monitor and measure performance contracting energy guaranteed savings, and report results to the Board of School Commissioners.

10. Complete implementation of facilities automated system Applied Computer Technology (ACT 1000) throughout departments and school buildings.

11. Determine the local funding contribution and project state funding contribution for the FY 2003 Capital Improvement Plan.

12. Develop and submit the capital improvement plan for FY 2003 and amendments, if necessary.

13. Attend legislative hearings and pursue other funding sources for the Capital Improvement Program.

Conclusion—Facilities Department

The organization and staffing of the Facilities Department appears to be complicated. The complication comes in several forms:

- The department manages several different and separate functions, including waste management, building maintenance and repair, custodial services, grounds keeping, and new construction.

- Some of the work is done by contractors, some directly by BCPSS employees, and contract management is very different from direct service provision, and requires very different types of staff.

- The Facilities Department does not know what its future is—a decision could be made soon that will give it the additional $600 million in maintenance and construction money it has requested (or, conceivably, even more) or, perhaps, to give it no extra money, close more schools, and privatize more of its functions. Both these scenarios are well within the realm of plausibility. Such a large degree of uncertainty cannot make it easy to plan.

- There has been considerable staff turnover in recent years.

- Due to earlier restrictions on capital investment, the department has only recently been able to start modernizing its equipment and improve its technology.

- There exists a deep legacy of resentment and distrust among school-level personnel toward the Facilities Department, representing a formidable challenge for any Facilities Department manager to meet. Most school-level personnel we spoke with on the topic believe that the department suffers from a deeply ingrained, and perhaps still present, culture of work avoidance.

The evidence would indicate that the Facilities Department has a mixed record of performance regarding the accomplishment of its Master Plan objective. Substantial improvements have been made in the performance of waste management and grounds keeping services, according to school administrators with whom we spoke on the topics. There also seemed to be approval of the performance of the maintenance and repair group's emergency response.

Finally, BCPSS has made a considerable effort to research facilities issues and investigate possible solutions. They have been enterprising, innovative, clever, and dedicated. Their persistence in these efforts continues unabated to this day. In some areas their efforts have already paid off.

Despite their best efforts, however, judging from what we heard in our interviews with school administrators and their survey responses, the current system for maintenance and repair does not yet appear to be as effective as it could be, and it most certainly has a poor reputation for customer service.

One possible positive side effect of contracting out the waste management function could be to help the Facilities Department focus on improving the maintenance and repair function. The completion of the PriceWaterhouseCoopers review of department operations represents an important, and very hopeful, step. The next step might include the development of a set of standards priorities and scheduled responses to deferred maintenance.

Recommendations—Facilities Department

Aside from what we have already suggested, we also believe that it might be a good idea to consider an electronic work tracking system to which school principals have access. Regardless of the reason, it seems clear that work crews often do not meet school principals (or, sometimes, even other official school representatives) both before and after their visits to schools. The sign-off system does not appear to be working well.

Nor does it provide much information to the Facilities Department to use in judging the work performance—and particularly the customer service component—of its employees. Granted, adding one more task to the principals' already heavy load of administrative responsibilities may seem burdensome. Given the depth of sentiment on the topic of maintenance and repair service quality, however, we think they might like the idea. It could not hurt to ask them; indeed, they should be consulted in any such system's design.

An electronic check-off system could range from very simple to very complex. A simple system might include an email inquiry from Facilities to each principal the day after a scheduled work visit to her school. With an electronic tracking system, the Facilities Department would get useful information more quickly than they do now; currently, they send out an annual customer satisfaction survey, which the new system would replace. The Facilities Department also could more easily monitor work performance. They will more easily and quickly know who the problem employees are or, indeed, if the workers are employees at all, or contractors.

Food Services

While many school districts in the country, including, probably, most of the larger ones, have gotten out of the food service business because it is so expensive and complex, BCPSS runs a high-quality operation. Its daily task is enormous. Food Services must operate over 150 cafeterias with over 600 employees operating huge, expensive, and dangerous equipment. It must serve breakfast and lunch daily to over 100,000 students, teachers, staff, and some parents. Tons of food—fresh, frozen, and dry—must be ordered, stored, and delivered daily and in the right amounts and variety to over 150 locations. The food must be safe to eat—health requirements are meticulous and detailed. Food Services must keep the federal government, which provides much of its funding and food, happy at the same time it keeps its clients happy.

Yet, it operates efficiently, its clients are happy, and its cost structure may be lower than those of private contractors that are running so many other school districts' food services these days.

Food Services is different from other departments in that it must live within its own means (i.e., it is dependent on is own revenue sources—meal charges and federal government reimbursements for free and reduced-cost meals). This sets a lid under which the division must operate. But, that hasn't stopped the food services divisions in other school districts from going into the red (and going

out of business, as they were subsequently privatized).

We were interested in understanding better how Food Services runs so well. We start with a look at their organizational structure (Table 7-3).

Note several features of the Food Services Division organization:

- The overwhelming bulk of employees work at the point of service delivery, in school cafeterias. Indeed, well over 90 percent of Food Services employees work "on the line," as food service workers or managers. One could reasonably describe the organizational structure as "flat."
- The work these employees perform is easy to understand. We all know what the cafeteria workers do. Given the complexity and huge size of the food services operation, it is also easy to understand how the 8 administrators and their 10 clerical staff would be needed.

Table 7-3.
Food Services Division organization

Position	Number of positions	Percentage of positions	BCPSS average salary
Director	1	*	$75,764
Specialist	5	1	59,875
Associate	1	*	52,325
Cafeteria Facilities Supervisor	1	*	49,960
Architect	1	*	41,603
Cafeteria Manager III	12	2	25,292
Cafeteria Manager II	17	3	23,374
Cafeteria Manager I	59	9	22,428
Food Service Worker II	86	14	14,044
Food Service Worker I	420	67	13,491
Vehicle Operator	8	1	~22,500
Purchasing Assistant	2	*	31,187
Program Compliance Assistant	3	1	28,545
Secretary	4	1	~27,000

*Less than 0.5 percent

SOURCE: BCPSS Food Services Division.

- The *number* of employees is easy to understand, too. All told, the division has about 625 employees to serve 180 school buildings and a student and staff population over 100,000. That is about 3 workers per kitchen. Intuitively, that seems reasonable. (Lunch aides, who monitor the student population during meals, are not included here.)
- There are as many clerical staff as there are administrators.
- The average salary in the Food Services division is less than $18,000 per year, with most of those being 10-month positions.

Some features of the Food Services organization cannot be gleaned from Table 7-3; we learned of them from looking at other data. First, trends:

- Comparisons across years reveals that the Food Services Division is making its organizational structure even flatter as time goes on. In the fiscal year 2002 budget, they have eliminated some mid-level positions (e.g., contract administrator, cook, custodian) entirely.
- The number of cafeteria managers was reduced by 25 this year, whereas the number of food service workers was increased by 33. It is likely that the more highly paid managers were at the upper end of their pay scale and are retiring, whereas the lower paid workers are probably new and being paid at the lower end of their scale. Given the elimination of the seven cook positions as well, BCPSS, essentially, will have the same number of cafeteria line employees in 2002 as it did in 2001. But, because it has substituted lower paid employees, Food Services has saved almost a half million dollars in salary and benefit payouts with no net loss of employment in the cafeterias.

We also learned about Food Services method of quality control from our interviews and surveys:

- The Food Services Division monitors their cafeterias systematically, frequently, and

regularly. As a part of their monitoring efforts, they visit every school principal, both at the beginning of each visit, to get the principal's suggestions for what they should include in their evaluation, and at the end of each visit, to report on their evaluation. Formal scheduled appointments are made with each principal for these discussions.

- Far from being bothered by these visits, the principals seem exceedingly pleased with them. They like that they are kept "in the loop" and well informed. They also appreciate their opinions and suggestions being not only sought, but used. They feel that the Food Services Division treats them like valued customers.

While two of us were conducting a site visit at Cross Country Elementary School, we witnessed first-hand the responsiveness of the Food Services Division to a crisis, along with some laudably quick-witted behavior on the part of that school's personnel. The first employee to arrive that morning noticed a backup at the kitchen drain, probably caused by a poorly functioning grease trap. BCPSS repair department employees could not arrive in time to serve breakfast, nor fix the problem in time to prepare lunch. Breakfast could be cancelled, but regulations require that a school be closed if lunch cannot be served.

Food Services was telephoned. In response, they sent extra food and employees to a nearby high school with a large kitchen. Sack lunches were prepared there and driven over to Cross Country Elementary, where students, in an orderly manner, retrieved their sacks in the cafeteria, but ate at their desks. Breakfast and recess were cancelled. The entire school schedule was adjusted. But lunch was served. None of that day's academic lessons were missed. Even the entire schedule of our site visit was completed. It was a remarkable day.

BCPSS flirted with the idea of contracting out the food services function several years ago. They approached it carefully, awarding a contract only for the high schools to start. That incremental approach has some advantages:

- It gives the contractor an incentive to do a good job (because they see that they may be rewarded with more business later—at the other schools—if they do); and

- It retains the in-house capacity to do the work should the contractor do a bad job or quit the work at the contract's end.

The Food Services business is a bit different than, say, grounds keeping. BCPSS contracts out its grounds keeping work to several neighborhood-based small businesses. It is a diverse market, with an ease of entry and many potential service providers, that holds down costs and offers lots of choice. It is close to what economists label a "perfectly competitive" market.

The Food Services market is far more complex and there are not that many providers. Those that exist have what economists might call "pricing power." Should BCPSS have completely closed down its Food Services operations, let all its experienced employees go, and sold off its equipment and warehouses, its would have left itself exposed to the vagaries of this less-than-perfectly competitive market.

As it turns out, the contract was renewed once, but the second time, the contractor requested a substantial increase in reimbursement. BCPSS thought it was too much and that poor students and parents would suffer from the consequent increase in fees, and it let the contract go.

One commentator in our interviews, however, asserted that the contracting-out experience may still have been a good one for BCPSS. Food Service employees learned that their jobs are not tenured and, if the goodwill that they now work so hard to maintain with their customers is not constantly renewed, they can still lose their jobs in the future.

Financial Management

SB 795 directed BCPSS to implement an effective financial management and budgeting system, and to use that system as a management tool rather than simply as a management process. This direction was incorporated as Objective 4 in The Master Plan. One significant element of the new system would be its independence from the City of Baltimore system.

While the implementation of the new system has taken longer than first expected, the process has been largely successful. Whereas in 1997, outside auditors declined to evaluate BCPSS accounts, in 2000 PriceWaterhouseCoopers wrote that "…the new financial system implementation was a reasonably smooth transition from the old processing environment to the new environment." Additional steps are planned that will further improve the district's financial management and budgeting (e.g., the Enterprise Resource Planning system).

Findings from the surveys and interviews conducted by the Westat team indicate progress in several areas. Budget information provided to the schools by the central office is now viewed as more user-friendly, although timeliness is still a problem. The district's Finance Office help desk also was viewed as a positive step toward improving relations with the school staff. Finally, there were positive reactions to the new grants administrator, and to the efforts she has taken to improve communication between the division and the schools.

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (or Finance Office) subsumes responsibility for several essential functions in BCPSS, including budget, accounting, grants administration, procurement, treasury services, and third-party billing. The Chief Financial Officer reports to the Chief Operating Officer.

SB 795 referred to the Finance Office's responsibility by stating that BCPSS should:

> Provide an effective financial management and budgeting system for the Baltimore City Public School System to ensure the maximization and appropriate utilization of all available resources.
>
> By December 31 of each year…shall issue an annual report that includes a financial statement.
>
> The New Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners shall expeditiously establish a new financial reporting system which adequately tracks and reports school and system expenditures by function and by program for each school site and for the total system using an established financial model that can apply to all school systems. The financial reporting system should enhance the Board's ability to make informed decisions and the public's awareness of how public funds are spent…a financial audit of the Baltimore City Public School System shall be performed by an independent auditor to reconcile the financial accounts of the school system.

SB 795 also instructed the Board to implement the key provisions of the Towers Perrin/Cresap report of 1992. That report contains the following excerpts pertinent to the Finance Office's work:

> Budgeting: Assessment, the system tends to view budgeting as a financial process rather than as a management tool. Budgeting has been narrowly defined as a way to allocate System resources rather than as a vehicle for improving management and planning. Over the long term, the budget process should be used as a vehicle for setting and communicating priorities, apportioning resources, making investment decisions, holding managers accountable for results, and providing incentives for achieving results cost-effectively.
>
> The budgeting process should be used as a vehicle for improving the overall performance of the Baltimore City Public Schools.
>
> Setting Priorities: The budget process is an ideal mechanism for ensuring that each year the

System sets short-term priorities and reviews long-term priorities.

Communicating Priorities: The budget process also serves as a useful vehicle for communicating priorities throughout the System.

Apportioning Resources: The budget process provides a mechanism to assess systematically how best to allocate the System's scarce resources.

Making Investment Decisions: The budget process also serves as a vehicle for making investment decisions that will yield the highest benefits in cost reduction and service improvement.

Holding Managers Accountable for Results: Currently the budget is used to monitor expenditures and ensure that units do not spend more than they are allocated. If it is appropriately structured, the budget can be used to monitor the System's overall performance. As part of the annual budget process, two levels of performance expectations—budgeted and goal—should be set. The Board should also establish a fund to reward performance that exceeds expectations. Unit leaders and principals should have the authority to determine, subject to review by the Superintendent, the way the performance fund will be used in their respective units. Successful implementation of this program requires that the Board demonstrate a strong commitment to it.

The work of the Finance Office fits into The Master Plan's Objective 4: Design and implement effective and cost-effective management systems and practices to improve the support to instruction. Within Objective 4, the most pertinent sections are:

- Focus Area 2: Management Information Systems, Strategy 4.2.2: Implement management strategies that enhance finance and operations management; and
- Focus Area 3: Management Practices and Central Office Restructuring, particularly two strategies:
    1. Prepare and adopt a standard operating procedures manual.
    2. Improve the BCPSS management systems and practices.

Our evaluation started with the following set of questions:

- Do principals receive needed information in a timely manner? Is the information accurate? Has the process improved over what it used to be? How could it be made better?
- Does the financial management and budgeting system support and enhance BCPSS' classroom instruction?
- Has the financial management and budgeting process improved since the Interim Evaluation? If there is improvement, is it modest or substantial in bringing BCPSS closer to the standards of best practices? How does it compare to the experience of other similarly situated school districts? Judging by the standards of best practice, to what extent is BCPSS' practice supportive of student instruction?
- What are the key factors responsible for improvement or lack of improvement? Are new governance structures responsible?
- How accurate are the financial management and budgeting processes? Do simulations produce any errors? What are the sources of the errors?

We consulted a variety of sources in our response to these questions. Our efforts comprised the following:

- Including many questions about financial management in our discussions with principals and other administrators during our site visits;
- Interviewing Finance Office managers on several occasions;
- Interviewing an analyst at Moody's Investors Services who had reviewed several years of BCPSS financial records;
- Reviewing many documents, including auditor's statements, letters, memoranda, and reports, and budgets and financials going back a decade;
- Reviewing financial procedures best-practices documents from the Association of School Business Officers and the Council of Great City Schools;
- Conducting many simple tests and simulations of BCPSS financial numbers for verification; and
- Benchmarking BCPSS financial data and procedures to those of similar school districts, consulting other school districts' own documents and the data sets of the U.S. Census Bureau, the Educational Research Service, the MSDE, and the Council of Great City Schools.

Recent History

Given its essential function, the work of the Finance Office has been given particular attention by all stakeholders over the past few years.

Most disturbing to some observers, both in and outside BCPSS, were two particular pieces of information:

- A few years ago, outside auditors declined to evaluate BCPSS accounts. They reported that they could not understand BCPSS figures well enough to make sense of them (they could not, with any confidence, calculate a "trial balance") and, thus, could not vouch for any audit of the books.
- BCPSS used to use a "rolling budget." That is, when bills came in they were paid, and when revenue arrived it was deposited in the bank account. The annual financial statements were little more than strong hypotheses, with no accounting for some outstanding liabilities, for which there was no central record. According to BCPSS, "There was no full accounting of expenditures, but the school system would close out the books [in 1997] with a deficit of more than $8-12 million for 1997."

One of the two most important tasks of the current Finance Office management was to set a date on which accounts would be reconciled, once and for all, something that is done at least annually in financially responsible organizations and daily in some of the more technically sophisticated organizations. This reconciliation took place in fall 2000.

The second important task was to set priorities for its work. It turned out to be more difficult and time consuming to separate operations functions from the city than most had thought at the beginning of The Master Plan's implementation. BCPSS managers decided that they could not fix all the problems at once, so they established priorities. Procurement, for example, was an early focus for reform, while payroll and benefits were made a low priority.

That does not mean that BCPSS managers regarded the payroll and benefits functions to be of lesser importance or problem free. They thought neither. They judged, however, that the City of Baltimore was doing a reasonably good job with both. The city's payroll system is not fancy, but it is functional, and while there were some noncrucial problems pointed out in the Towers Perrin/Cresap report, the city agreed to deal with them, and it has.

Likewise, the benefits package is not sophisticated or inexpensive, and BCPSS would like to move to a system with more choice for both employee and employer; they feel that they could save a substantial amount of money by doing so. But again, the program is being run well enough, there is no problem of mismanagement, and there is little legal exposure from any such problems. It represents a problem that needs to be fixed, but not a crisis, so other problems that were in crisis have been given more immediate attention. BCPSS plans to take over the payroll and benefits functions eventually, after they have completed the full transition to the new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system.

BCPSS Finance Office Activities and Accomplishments to Date

Other aspects of the separation of the BCPSS finance function from the City of Baltimore have not gone as smoothly as some had assumed they would, nor as quickly. Despite the intention of some that the changeover take place immediately following the passage of SB 795, it simply was not possible with financial records. As it turned out, a changeover was not feasible until fall 1999, after a new IT system and software were up and running at BCPSS and the staff was trained to understand them.

This does not mean that the changeover has not been successful, but it has taken longer than some might have anticipated. Indeed, BCPSS and the city are still working through some of the details. Some matters still not yet resolved include:

- Whether BCPSS can or should have title to their real estate, which would help them financially in some ways (e.g., could be collateral for loans and bonds), but not in others (e.g., legal liability);
- Who should pay for the services that BCPSS provides itself to keep up the infrastructure that it does not own (e.g., grounds keeping, maintenance); and
- How to resolve issues raised by the city's providing BCPSS funding based on 2-year-old enrollment figures, so BCPSS gets several million dollars extra per year that it is not legally obligated to repay.

In addition, BCPSS Finance Office managers argue that there were many mistakes in the financial data they started with and in the initial data entry into the new Oracle Financials system. Months were spent cleaning data in FY 2000 and 2001, but they still occasionally find errors stemming from the old data sets.

BCPSS has made some changes in its organizational structure since SB 795 that affect the finance function. Procurement has been moved into the Finance Office, and a new Office of Grants Management has just been formed. The disposition of several of the requirements or suggestions of SB 795, the Towers Perrin/Cresap report, and The Master Plan follow:

- BCPSS modified the position of Chief Financial Officer, and the transition to the new managerial structure seems to have been smooth and successful.
- BCPSS has published an annual report every year, and each one has included a financial statement, as specified in SB 795.
- BCPSS did "expeditiously establish a new financial reporting system which adequately tracks and reports school and system expenditures by function and by program for each school site and the total system." It was not established as quickly as some had hoped, but it is now in place, and still improving. The Oracle Financials were installed in fall 1999 and used to close out the BCPSS accounts for the first time in years in fall 2000.
- BCPSS has gotten a financial audit each year of The Master Plan's existence, and each year, that audit did "reconcile the financial accounts of the school system," as SB 795 required. Indeed, BCPSS has undergone still more audits at special time periods or for certain areas of activity.
- With its new emphasis on tying revenues to programs and organizing the budget by program, BCPSS has addressed much of the set of recommendations in the 1992 Towers

Perrin/Cresap report for new budgeting approaches—"a vehicle for setting and communicating priorities, apportioning resources, making investment decisions, …"

- In a few short years, BCPSS has written several comprehensive operating procedures manuals for various aspects of the functions of or closely related to the Finance Office, in keeping with one of the strategies of Objective 4.

Throughout FY 2000, the management consulting firm PriceWaterhouseCoopers conducted monitoring activities in BCPSS related to information technology, financial management and procurement, and school administration. Their monitoring activities coincided with the installation and first use of new information technology equipment and software, described in more detail in the IT section of this report. As PriceWaterhouseCoopers described their role,

> Activities undertaken during the provision of these services include technology and stakeholder personnel interviews, review of system and operations documentation, review of financial reports, reviews of BCPSS internal procedures and policies, system and process walkthroughs, visits to area schools and an Area Executive Office, and attendance at IT/USER meetings. Information obtained was provided to MSDE via the generation of reports, graphics, financial and metrics spreadsheets and oral presentations.

PriceWaterhouseCoopers witnessed considerable change in these systems in BCPSS over the course of that year. Regarding financial management, they observed several changes:

- At the start, manual information systems were used, with data sent physically from offices throughout BCPSS to North Avenue, then to Baltimore City to be processed, and the output was then sent back to BCPSS.

  At the end, all data were being processed within BCPSS with "automatic system interface" (i.e., networked computer) updates for accounts payable, general ledger, asset management, and so on.

- At the start, financial information was usually 30–60 days old (for collection and for dissemination), just because of all the steps and the technology used in the process.

  At the end, financial information collected and generated "in a timely fashion,…[with] improved effectiveness and efficiency.

- At the start, the legacy (computer) system was paper intensive.

  At the end, the new system supported most business functions electronically.

- At the start, BCPSS was forced to use City account codes.

  At the end, BCPSS using state account codes, helping it to report to MSDE more easily and quickly.

- At the start, all computerized financial management processing done in COBOL on a mainframe computer in batch mode.

  At the end, BCPSS was using proprietary, customized, modern software, installed in August 1999.

- At the start, all financial reports were "canned" and had to be started by special request and routed through the IT Division.

  At the end, the new system made it much easier to adjust requests and customize data, and requesters could work directly with the Finance Office.

PriceWaterhouseCoopers also provides a convenient summary of another financial management review, Bert Smith and Company's *Report on the Baltimore City Public School System Reconstitution Grants* (1999). Based on their review, PriceWaterhouseCoopers noted four areas of common findings (Exhibit 7-2).

Exhibit 7-2.
Summary of four areas of common findings from two financial management reviewers of BCPSS

Problem area	Bert Smith and Co. Finding	PriceWaterhouseCoopers Finding
Financial statements do not agree with subsidiary records.	Financial reports do not agree with accounting records (BCPSS could not explain).	Agreed. BCPSS did not accurately record grant carryover amounts and reports to MSDE did not agree with BCPSS records. Problem has since been reconciled.
Financial reports processed by the City of Baltimore are received by BCPSS 2 months after the close of the month.	Untimely expenditure reports received by schools.	True.
Expenditures erroneously charged to grants are not corrected on a timely basis.	Unapproved expenditures (i.e., expenditures that do not agree to budget) BCPSS could not explain.	Yes, but only because BCPSS was behind on account reconciliations, when misplaced charges are found and correctly placed. Once accounts were reconciled, the problem disappeared.
Budget reports are not kept in Grant Accounting department.	Expand Budget Planning Report.	Not true. BCPSS prints 2 reports, showing expenditures by cost center monthly and YTD, and YTD encumbrances.

SOURCE: PriceWaterhouseCoopers. *Summary of PriceWaterhouseCoopers Monitoring Activities Within the Baltimore City Public School System: July 1999 through June 2000, 2000.*

In a summary statement, PriceWaterhouse-Coopers wrote that "While not totally without problems, the new financial system implementation was a reasonably smooth transition from the old processing environment to the new environment….The new system provides improved turnaround times and increased accuracy of the monthly reports due to the ability to process multiple correction cycles as needed."

PriceWaterhouseCoopers made several recommendations for continued success having to do with training programs for the new system, upgrades of auxiliary procedures to take advantage of new efficiencies, and continuous evaluation and monitoring. To our observations, most of these recommendations have been instituted in some substantial form.

For the immediate future, the Finance Office is focused on three efforts: cleaning up any problems that remain from the city-to-BCPSS changeover and outstanding liabilities; making information more timely; and continuing to upgrade their IT systems. At present, they are exploiting only certain aspects of a complete Enterprise Resource Program, but they are continuing to upgrade as they can, adding one module to the package at a time. The most recent module added to the Oracle Financials package is a grants manager, arriving contemporaneously with the new grants accounts manager.

They estimate that simply planning to take over the payroll function will take them a year, and they now aim for early 2003 as their startup date. They are currently negotiating with the city regarding benefits. BCPSS feels that it could get a much better deal from benefits providers going it alone for at least two reasons: BCPSS has a younger work force than does the city (average age is 10 years lower), and they would like to offer employees more lower cost options of health maintenance organizations and preferred provider networks in addition to the fee-for-service Blue Cross plan.

Budget

All the school administrators with whom we spoke seemed to feel strongly that the budget information they receive from North Avenue is now more user-friendly and accurate than it has been in the past, the budget process has been simplified and clarified, and they are better informed and more in control. Two general issues remain, however, both related to delays in getting financial information from North Avenue.

Some school administrators complained that even though North Avenue is now subsuming responsibility for some expenses charged to the schools in the past (e.g., maintenance and repair), schools are still charged for certain expenses and expected to pay for them out of their budgets. Unfortunately, the charges cannot always be anticipated and may arrive late in the year—two notable examples were telephone bills and substitute teacher charges. A few schools also said that they have outstanding issues regarding certain mistaken charges in the past, or they are awaiting the resolution of accounting mistakes made at their school the previous year. These lingering issues can take quite a long time to resolve, but school administrators cannot know what amount of funding they can count on until they are resolved.

The timeliness issue has a few different facets. First, the budget was delayed last year, and school principals did not receive their predicted funding allocations for this school year until May. That is late for school principals, because staff recruiting in the current tight labor market for school personnel starts in the winter preceding the academic year. Indeed, BCPSS held a recruiting fair in late winter, long before principals knew what their budget allocations would be and, thus, the principals were not able to make any job offers. Second, the federal government operates on a different fiscal calendar than the city and state (July to June), and a large proportion of BCPSS funding comes from federal grants. The problem for school administrators is that their programs are continuous, yet they cannot know how much money they will get from categorical aid programs until October. Because categorical aid represents an essential component of BCPSS funding, one principal asserted that she must tell some teachers that they do not have jobs for the next year, even though they probably will.

Several school administrators wondered why there cannot be "real time" budgeting and accounting, which would reduce delays. As it is now, they receive the latest data on their school's account every month, but the information is from the previous month.

We discussed each of these issues with Finance Office managers.

First, the problem of unanticipated charges and slow resolution of disputes are key issues for the Finance Office at present. They feel that they have made great progress in cleaning up outstanding issues from the past and are getting toward the end of that process. As for those charges that still get made to the schools, such as telephone bills and substitute teachers wages, these issues are under review.

Second, the May release of this past year's budget was an extraordinary event. Budget allocations cannot be calculated until the School Board approves the budget, and that decision was delayed this past year for reasons beyond Finance Office control. BCPSS officials have every expectation that the calendar will be back to normal this next year. While previous years' funding allocation projections may have been timely, they were sometimes not very accurate, making for rude surprises later on in the year.

Third, Finance Office managers feel the problem of the two fiscal calendars is far out of their control, but they would like to look into ways that they can ease the transition. They feel that the new grants accounts manager may be able to help out in this regard eventually and they plan to discuss the matter with her. As for "real time" budgeting and accounting, it will not happen this next year, but it should occur with the installation of the new Enterprise Resource Planning system.

Finally, the Finance Office seems very sensitive about another perceived problem—customer relations. They feel that school-level personnel have not always been treated in the most courteous and helpful manner in the past by Finance Office employees. They have tried to change this through training and persuasion and by establishing a help desk during budget season with someone available full time to help school administrators. Several school administrators with whom we spoke mentioned that they used that service and found it helpful.

The fact that we detected little sense from the school administrators with whom we spoke of

discourteous or unhelpful treatment from the Finance Office speaks well for their efforts. School-level personnel still complain that the information can be old, or delayed, or not available (if the computer network or software are not functioning), but they seem to genuinely appreciate the efforts of Finance Office staff.

Grants

According to BCPSS managers, fiscal personnel and grant recipients historically have not talked to each other well enough. There was no central authority for grants, whether they be federal, state, private competitive; anyone could write grants and anyone could receive and administer them. And those grants represented a sizable proportion of revenue that was, to some extent, not well accounted for. Out of a total budget of $850 million, about $300 million is grant money.

BCPSS hired a Chief Financial Officer with a great deal of experience in grants management and modeled a centralized grants management system after that of the University of Maryland Hospital System. BCPSS plans to strengthen its grants administration area by more actively monitoring and seeking grants. Schools can still find and win grants on their own—and, indeed, are encouraged to do so—but North Avenue now must be notified of all such activity, and the award must go through the Finance Office.

The school administrators with whom we spoke seemed very pleased with the activities of the new grants accounts manager, who had been hired only a month or so before our site visits. She sends frequent email messages notifying principals of grant opportunities, has already published a monthly newsletter, and is providing direct assistance to any school personnel who wish to pursue a grant, or need help administering one.

BCPSS hopes that by organizing grants activity and centralizing grants accounts management, they can prevent good programs dying out or useful equipment lying in disrepair simply because the grant ended and there was no contingency plan in place. BCPSS also hopes to prevent the reoccurrence of the situation in which no one centrally was directly responsible for managing a grant's calendar and cash flow, so that the schools are prompted to spend grant money in a hurry toward the end of the fiscal year (and perhaps not as wisely as it might have been spent with more planning), or funds are left unspent and lost.

Billing and Payments

According to BCPSS officials, they continue to work on a "carryover issue" with their books. The problem arises when they receive a bill for goods delivered or services rendered in the past that were never paid—the paperwork was lost by the city or by BCPSS—but the claim for payment is still valid and legally binding and must be paid. Unanticipated claims such as these still arrive, though much less frequently than a year ago. Indeed, the reason Food Services needed to raise its fees and reduce staff this year was to cover just such a carryover expense, from the period before the City-State Partnership.

These carryover problems should soon be a thing of the past. Now, virtually all financial obligations are made through the Finance Office, and school purchases of low-cost supplies are made on a BCPSS credit card, so Finance Office knows of those charges almost immediately. As for routine payments, BCPSS now makes check runs once a week. As Westat's survey of BCPSS vendors revealed, payments seem to be more timely than in the past.

Overall, the timeliness and yield of billing and payments have improved dramatically in just a few short years.

Benchmarking to Best Practice Processes and Procedures

There are many possible ways to benchmark one's financial processes and procedures. Even in the accounting profession, which endeavors to set clear, common standards, there still exist equally valid, different ways of doing things.

This is because no two organizations are exactly alike, even if they are both public school districts. Each resides in different political jurisdictions, with different laws and different customs, and each may have very different organizational structures and management styles.

Moreover, practices standards can be found along a wide range of detail. There are some very fine, technical, and legally binding standards that relate to how account books must be kept, for example. Moreover, there are strict laws pertaining to the ethical standards of auditors and accountants. But how a school district decides which functions go into which cost center or expenditure classification could be entirely up to that district. The state education department may have its own standard for some programs, as may the federal government, and that too can make for some discretion, and confusion, about how to classify, label, and attribute.

So, there is no one, single "best practice." Nonetheless, there do exist some basic, common, underlying principals in the law and in professional standards. We have reviewed standards for financial management processes and procedures from a variety of sources, including the Association of School Business Officers (ASBO), the American Educational Finance Association (AEFA), the U.S. Department of Education, and the Council of Great City Schools. (The Council does not provide its own set of standards, but, rather, asks for member school districts to submit their own, which it then reviews.)

The Council's set of best practices reports from member school districts is quite an attractive resource for several reasons. Most important, it is a "peer" resource, and so is more likely to be realistic in scale, sympathetic to the genuine challenges, and so on.

The following, for example, is a list of financial management best practices put together by Florida school districts:

Internal Auditing
Goal: The district has an adequate internal auditing function.
Best Practice:
1. The district has established an internal audit function with its primary mission to (1) provide assurance that the internal control processes in the organization are adequately designed and functioning effectively, and (2) where appropriate, offer recommendations and counsel to management that improve their performance.

Financial Auditing
Goal: The district ensures that it receives an annual external audit and uses the audit to improve its operations.
Best Practices:
1. The district obtains an external audit in accordance with government auditing standards.
2. The district provides for timely follow-up to findings identified in the external audit.

Asset Management
Goal: District management has established controls to provide for effective management of capital assets.
Best Practices:
1. The district segregates responsibilities for custody of assets from recordkeeping responsibilities for those assets.
2. The district has established controls that provide for proper authorization of asset acquisitions.
3. The district has established records that accumulate project costs and other relevant data to facilitate reporting construction and maintenance activities to the board, public, and grantors.
4. The district provides recorded accountability for capitalized assets.

Risk Management
Goal: The district has established procedures that identify various risks and provide for a comprehensive approach to reducing the impact of losses.
Best Practices:
1. The district has an adequate process to set objectives for risk management activities,

identify and evaluate risks, and design a comprehensive program to protect the district at a reasonable cost.
2. The district has comprehensive policies and procedures relating to purchasing and reviewing insurance coverage.
3. The district regularly monitors and evaluates its self-insurance program to ensure the feasibility of its self-insured coverages.

Financial Management
Goal: The district has established controls to ensure its financial resources are properly managed.
Best Practices:
1. District management communicates its commitment and support of strong internal controls.
2. The district records and reports financial transactions in accordance with prescribed standards.
3. The district prepares and distributes its financial reports timely.
4. The district has a financial plan serving as an estimate of and control over operations and expenditures.
5. The district has adequate controls to provide recorded accountability for cash resources.
6. The district has an investment plan that includes investment objectives and performance criteria, and specifies the types of financial products approved for investment.
7. The district has established controls for recording, collecting, adjusting, and reporting receivables.
8. The district has established controls that provide accountability for employees' compensation and benefits pursuant to an approved compensation plan.
9. The district has procedures for analyzing, evaluating, monitoring, and reporting debt financing alternatives.
10. The district adequately monitors and reports grants activities.

Purchasing
Goal: The district has established a defined purchasing function with controls over requisitioning, authorizing, and receiving activities.
Best Practices:
1. The district segregates purchasing responsibilities from the requisitioning and receiving functions.
2. The district has established controls for authorizing purchase requisitions.
3. The district has established controls to ensure that goods and services are acquired at prices that are fair, competitive, and reasonable, consistent with acceptable quality and performance.
4. The district has established controls to ensure that goods are received and meet quality standards.
5. The district has established controls for processing invoices to ensure that quantities, prices, and terms coincide with purchase orders and receiving reports.
6. The district has established controls to ensure disbursements are properly authorized, documented, and recorded.
7. The district has established controls to ensure payables/encumbrances (obligations) are properly authorized, documented, and recorded.

Information Systems
Goal: The district maintains an information system to provide quality data.
Best Practices:
1. The district segregates duties to prevent unauthorized transactions by appropriately limiting access to data systems processes and functions.
2. The district's user controls ensure authorization prior to processing transactions and ensure all output represents authorized and valid transactions.
3. The district has established appropriate data controls between the user and the data system department.
4. The district has established general controls designed to provide physical security over terminals, limit access to data programs and data files, and to control risk in systems development and maintenance.

As concise at it may be, this is still a long list of best practices. To summarize them, we employ Florida's seven categories of financial management and relate each to BCPSS:

Internal Auditing—Clearly BCPSS now has in place a properly functioning financial office that advises management as to its own functionality. Internal financial statements for senior management are now timely and much more informative than they used to be.

Financial Auditing—BCPSS employs the services of outside auditors. It always has, actually, but the outside auditors have been used in quite a different capacity in the past few years. They have been used to dig a lot deeper than auditors normally do, give much more advice on more topics than auditors normally give, and monitor activities on an ongoing basis, which auditors do not normally do. BCPSS has contracted for these extra services because it felt that it needed them and, when practicable, they have adhered to the advice and recommendations of the auditors soon afterwards.

Asset Management and Risk Management—These are areas still in limbo between the city and BCPSS, as discussed above. BCPSS has little control over most assets, since the city owns all the real estate that BCPSS uses.

Financial Management—This area is still unsettled, particularly with regard to timeliness and grants management. Also, some of the more basic accounting still has kinks because of unknown outstanding liabilities. Benefits and debt financing, moreover, are still controlled by the city or the state, and are not yet BCPSS' responsibility. However, we believe that BCPSS is making a strong, sincere effort to improve timeliness, grants management, and cash management. We further believe that BCPSS should be considered to be, if not already there, certainly on the right track to meeting best practice standards for the other items in this category.

Purchasing—With the exception of some of the historical, outstanding liabilities, we believe that BCPSS meets these best practice standards for purchasing, as described in our separate section on the Procurement Department.

Information Systems—These standards for IT have only to do with security and financial system controls, and we believe that BCPSS meets them with regard to its administrative computers and its financial software systems. Florida's IT-specific best practices standards are listed in another section of its school district practices standards guide. Perhaps it goes without saying that BCPSS has not yet reached best practices standards in the IT substructure of its financial management systems. But, a reasonable plan is functioning that will get them there shortly.

Near-Term Plans—Finance Office

Plans suggest that the rapid pace of improvement in the Finance Office will continue. Plans for the future include:

1. Align the long-term strategic plan and budget planning processes. Assign budget representative(s) to work with strategic plan workgroups. Develop FY 2003 budget calendar and obtain School Board approval.

2. Review and update overall system priority initiatives for funding considerations and determine which programs will drive the budget. (This step will be conducted with all senior management and School Board input.)

3. Deliver the first full drafts of both budget and strategic plan. The strategic plan will include provisional budget targets for priority initiatives. Budget will reflect programmatic costs by priority initiative. Budget will also include related performance measures for each priority and departmental budget.

4. Develop efficiency and effectiveness audits for each resource area providing services to schools and administrative buildings

5. Based on the findings of ongoing studies, determine whether functions should remain under the domain of BCPSS or be out-sourced. Based on the outcomes of the studies, develop business plan to carry out

quality, cost-effective and customer-focused services. Review with Facilities Committee and present to Chief Executive Officer and School Board for approval.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our study and observations lead to similar general conclusions about BCPSS' progress in financial management as in IT. The level of sophistication and efficiency is not yet where anyone, including the employees in the Finance Office, want it to be. But progress has been substantial in just a few short years. One cannot appreciate how far the Finance Office has come without knowing how badly off it was several years ago. The previous discussion about how expenditure classifications during the mid- to late 1990s were too volatile to be trusted illustrates the severity of the problem. One can see evidence of that progress simply by comparing documents from several years ago to those most current. The current budget and financial statements may not yet be state-of-the-art, but they are comprehensive, reasonably accurate, and functional.

Thus, we believe that the financial management and budgeting process has improved since the Interim Evaluation, that that improvement has been substantial, and that the new governance structure may, indeed, be one of the key factors responsible for the improvement. Indeed, one financial analyst who privately confided to us a worry about the continued volativity of the bottom line and the size of the cash reserves from year to year nonetheless expressed high praise for a substantial improvement in financial management within a brief time frame.

The Finance Office still has plenty of work to do, particularly in providing information in a timely fashion, but it has reasonable plans and goals and has, so far, met those that it has set. The next step could be making financial information more timely, convenient, and useful to school-level personnel.

Finally, separating out the grants function and moving the procurement function to the Finance Office appear to have worked very well. The Procurement Department already has a good record, and the grant accounts manager's role has been very well received by everyone who was familiar with her work. We would also like to suggest a full-time analyst dedicated just to IT grants, since they are a bit different, require a special expertise, often are obtained from a different type of organization, and seem to be plentiful. Other school districts have established such a position, apparently with much success.

Procurement

Since the passage of SB 795, responsibility for procurement has shifted from the City of Baltimore to the district and individual schools. The current policies specify threshold amounts that determine the level of authorization needed for the procurement: any purchase under $5,000 can be authorized at the school level, purchases between $5,000 and $15,000 must be authorized by the Procurement Department, and those greater than $15,000 must be authorized by the Board and be put out for bid.

Interview and survey findings point to widespread appreciation of the new process. While school personnel recognize that the change has placed additional burden on the schools, they believe that the benefits are more significant. Vendors that serve the district also noted positive effects of the changed policies.

Procurement involves the acquisition of materials or services. In a school system, the same professionals that buy books and supplies usually are also to some degree responsible for purchasing services—so they need to understand contracting—and larger items, such as school buses or boilers. Originally, the procurement function was just another part of the Finance Office's work. A few years ago, however, BCPSS decided to devote particular attention to the function and separate it somewhat in the organizational structure.

SB 795 referred to the Procurement Department's responsibility directly:

> Develop an effective financial management and budgeting system….Develop an effective system of providing instructional materials and support services.
>
> …the Board shall adopt rules and regulations governing the procurement of goods and services by the Baltimore City Public School System in accordance with Section 5-112 of this Article.[73]

SB 795 also instructed the Board to implement the key provisions of the Towers Perrins/Cresap report of 1992. Report recommendations for the procurement function generally fell within the recommendation for a shift in the entire system's organization toward site-based management, making school principals more autonomous and accountable for managing their purchases. Two recommendations specific to the Procurement Department's work concerned transferring textbook ordering to the schools and providing the schools with software to track their orders and inventory of texts.

The work of the Procurement Department fits into The Master Plan's Objective 4: Design and implement effective and cost-effective management systems and practices to improve the support to instruction. Within Objective 4, Focus Area 3: Management Practices and Central Office Restructuring, is most pertinent. It specifies two strategies:

- Prepare and adopt a standard operating procedures manual.
- Improve the BCPSS management systems and practices.

At the start of our evaluation, we detected a great deal of concern about the performance of the procurement function in BCPSS. This level of concern is reflected in the length and detail of the questions listed below.

- How clear and efficient is the procurement process? Is it easy to use?
- Are vendors satisfied with the procurement process? Do they find the process to be straightforward, simple, and transparent? Are they paid on time? Have any vendors ended their efforts to sell products to BCPSS and, if so, why? Are there potential vendors who do not try to sell their products to BCPSS and, if so, why?
- Are BCPSS employees satisfied with the procurement process? Do they find the process to be straightforward, simple, and transparent? Do they get requisitions out promptly? Do they pay vendors on time? Are supplies delivered to the schools promptly?
- Does the procurement system support and enhance BCPSS' classroom instruction? Are school personnel satisfied with the procurement process? Do they find the process to be straightforward, simple, and transparent? Do they get the supplies they need promptly?
- Are the account books for procurements kept orderly and up to date? Are they understandable, clear, straightforward, and transparent?
- Has the procurement process improved since the Interim Evaluation? If there is improvement, is it modest or substantial in bringing BCPSS closer to the standard of best practices? Explain how it compares to the experience of other similarly situated school districts. Judging by the standards of best practice, to what extent is BCPSS' practice supportive of student instruction?
- What are the key factors responsible for improvement or lack of improvement? Are new governance structures responsible?

Our evaluation included interviews with managers in the Procurement Department and a

[73] Section 5-112 concerns changing rules for procurement at certain threshold purchase amounts, advertising rules; and contract award criteria. These stipulations hold for all Maryland school districts.

survey of 20 vendors who currently do business with the school district. In addition, questions on the parent, teacher, and principal surveys addressed issues of books and supplies, and principals answered three questions focused on the BCPSS procurement process. We also posed several questions of school-level administrative personnel regarding changes in the procurement process during our 10 management-focused site visits. We did not attempt to trace vendors who no longer conducted business with BCPSS.

Procurement—Recent History

Before SB 795 was enacted in 1997, the Procurement Department was under the jurisdiction of the Baltimore City government, and the school system had no purchasing authority. The procurement office was a conduit for submitting requisitions and authorizing payment—an inherently slow process. Individual schools could not buy anything. The legislative action enabled the school district to establish its own purchasing system. As new procurement policies were developed, thresholds that defined appropriate action levels were adjusted. At present, any purchase greater than $5,000 must go through the procurement process, and those greater than $15,000 must have Board approval and be put out for bid. Purchases of less than $5,000 may be made directly by individual schools. The Accounting Office now handles accounts payable and individual school secretaries deal with that office directly. All payments made by BCPSS are now centralized in a single office.

In 1999, the new Oracle-based financial management system was installed at BCPSS (although it has not yet been rolled out to the schools). The new system made several procurement process innovations possible, including "requirements contracts" (i.e., "blanket" purchase orders) with credit card privileges from suppliers who agree to provide supplies to schools on demand at set discount prices.

The new financial management system requires more administrative work at the school level, but provides better information to managers and speeds up the process greatly. Where every department used to have its own custom procurement procedures, all the information is now collected in one central place in real time. For BCPSS, the amount of money saved with the new procurement process has proved to be substantial for repetitive purchases, which account for most things bought by a school system.

BCPSS engaged PriceWaterhouseCoopers to conduct a few procurement process reviews. The firm produced two stand-alone reports on the process and also reviewed procurement practices as part of their monitoring activities from July 1999 through June 2000.[74]

BCPSS already has implemented, or is in the process of implementing, many of the PWC procurement process recommendations. Indeed, BCPSS has completed a number of innovations to the procurement process in just the past couple of years. They include:

- Creating a Procurement Review Committee, with a broad-based membership of BCPSS employees, to filter proposals before they reach the Board (in order to help reduce the workload of the Board);
- Establishing a new protest process (for vendors);
- Establishing provisions for emergency procurements;
- Sending out letters of intent to procure to vendors who put themselves on a bidders list;
- Producing a periodic listing of intended procurements and award announcements entitled, "Procurement Agenda, Professional Services, M.O.U., Grants, Awards."

In addition, a year ago, BCPSS produced a 44-page document, *Procurement Policies and*

[74]BCPSS Review of Procurement Process for Professional Services >$15,000, May 8, 2000; BCPSS Budget and Purchasing Process Overview, May 31, 2000; Summary of PriceWaterhouseCoopers Monitoring Activities Within the Baltimore City Public School System, July 1999 through June 2000.

Procedures. It is a well-organized and comprehensive reference guide, available to everyone on the Web.

Site Visit Results

We included questions about the procurement process in our 10 school site visits that focused on management issues. We spoke with principals and other school administrators, asking their opinion of the current procurement process and their impression of the degree and quality of the change in the process over the previous few years.

The responses were uniformly positive. Though there was some reference to an increased amount of record keeping given the structure of the new financial management system, our respondents seemed to think that the enormous increase in their freedom to purchase what they need when they need it was worth the extra effort. In addition, we heard strong, universal approval of the recent changes in the textbook adoption process.

Indeed, the only strong reservations we heard had to do with BCPSS' move toward unique, citywide, deep discount suppliers. Some school administrators like having suppliers from their own communities. They feel that they are supporting their own community that way and feel that the service can be faster (since the supplier is nearby) and more personal.

Formal Survey Results

Principals addressed three questionnaire items directly related to the procurement process, as well as the issue of whether there were sufficient material resources for their school (Table 7-4).

Table 7-4.
Percentage of principals agreeing with various statements about the BCPSS procurement process

School/principal characteristic	School has sufficient material resources	It is easy to order new items	We have no difficulty getting vendors to supply us	The procurement process has improved over the last 2 years
Total	71	83	73	76
Instructional level				
Elementary	73	84	78	76
Elementary/middle	86	95	81	85
Middle	62	76	71	75
High	56	63	47	63
Other	63	100	63	88
School status				
Regular schools	66	80	69	76
AF/DI schools	83	90	90	79
Alternative schools	100	86	71	100
Special education schools	57	100	57	83
Citywide schools	43	63	50	38
School size				
Less than 400	74	86	76	81
400—599	67	82	72	72
600 or more	70	80	71	73

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

While their responses were not extreme (there were other issues of greater concern to them), they certainly indicate there is room for continued improvement in the BCPSS procurement process. In particular, principals of high school and citywide schools were less likely to be satisfied with the procurement process than were the principals of the other schools. School size was also a factor in the rating of the procurement process, with principals of smaller schools tending to be more satisfied. Still, the results are very encouraging and should be particularly heartening set against the backdrop of a procurement process with a very poor reputation just a few years ago. Eighty-three percent of principals now agree that it is easy to order new items, and 76 percent agree that the procurement process has improved over the past 2 years.

If it could be said that there is discouraging news in the survey results, it would be in the responses of high school and citywide school principals, with much lower proportions of them in agreement. But, their responses seem to be less enthusiastic across many survey items, not just those regarding procurement.

BCPSS Vendor Survey

Westat conducted a systematic telephone survey of 20 vendors currently doing business with BCPSS. The purpose of this survey was to verify the information provided the audit team by the Procurement Department, specifically, to determine whether vendors had detected any change in the past 4 years in the ease by which Requests for Bids were obtained and processed, the manner that purchase orders were handled, and the length of time BCPSS took to pay for the goods and services it obtained.

Research Plan. Initially, the procurement department provided the audit team with a list of suppliers and their addresses. The first list (obtained February 27, 2001) was augmented by their second list and a shorter list of architectural and construction firms provided by the school systems' CEO. Initially, 20 vendors (and a number of alternate vendors) were randomly selected from the list, and their phone numbers were obtained from directory assistance and Internet sources.

Westat drafted a basic and straightforward phone survey script. The respondent was asked how long his/her firm had been a supplier to BCPSS, and, compared to other clients,

- How easy was it to respond to Requests for Bids,
- How easy to process purchase orders,
- What was the average length of time for payments to be received, and (if the respondent's firm had been a supplier for more than 4 years) had there been any observed change in the bidding process, the quality of purchase orders, and the length of time for payments to be received.

Following the script, the caller asked the initial respondent if he/she (shown below) could speak with someone at the firm who was familiar with the business that the respondent's firm had with BCPSS. Once the appropriate person was located, he/she was informed that:

- Westat was conducting an evaluation of the partnership between BCPSS and MSDE,
- The respondent's firm was identified by the school district as being one with whom they do business,
- Westat wanted to find out about the respondent's experience with BCPSS as one of their clients, and
- The few questions would not take more than 5 minutes to answer.

Results. Phone calls began on May 31, 2001, and continued until 20 completed surveys were obtained (July 11). To reach that number, calls were placed to 40 vendors (Table 7-5).

Table 7-5.
Vendor survey contacts

Result	Number
Completed	20
Not completed	
Bad telephone number	3
Not a current vendor	5
Not interested/refused	6
Did not answer/did not return message	6
Total	40

Vendor Telephone Survey Instrument

How long have you been a supplier for the Baltimore City Public School System?

Compared with your other clients . . .

How easy is it to respond to Requests for Bids? (Is it clear what is being requested?)

Are purchase orders easy to process? (Is it clear what is being ordered?)

What is the average length of time it takes for you to receive payment from the school system?

(If vendor has been a supplier for more than four years . . .)

Has there been change in the bidding process? If so, what changes have these been?

Has there been change in the quality of purchase orders? If so, what changes have these been?

Has there been change in the length of time to receive payment? If so, have payments been made more quickly or more slowly?

Additional comments/suggestions:

Of the 20 vendors surveyed, five had serviced the school district for 3 years or less, and seven had business contacts with the school district for 7 years or more—"forever" is how one vendor described it.

Briefly, these vendors substantiated the information and impressions provided by the Procurement Department. At present, vendors consider dealing with the Baltimore City Public School System as they would any other school district: there will be appropriate and necessary paperwork, and manageable delays in receiving payment. There is awareness that this is a district of 180 schools where a number of principals, business managers, and administrative assistants are involved in the processing of purchase orders and invoices. Inevitably, some paperwork gets misplaced in the process. However, many of these vendors noticed an improvement from the past. Following are more detailed results:

How easy is it to respond to Requests for Bids? Most of the respondents indicated that it was clear what was being requested in BCPSS Requests for Bids. Of the 13 vendors who responded to this item, 10 gave positive evaluations:

> *We bid on a project two years ago—it was easy and simple.*
>
> ***
>
> *It was very easy, but they don't publicize their bids well.*
>
> ***
>
> *It's a lot of work, but "do-able." It wasn't as bad as doing the bid for the DC Public Schools.*
>
> ***
>
> *Generally in line with other public school systems.*
>
> ***
>
> *It's pretty easy—just a form to fill out.*

There were two negative responses:

> *It's not very easy, the boilerplate is not consistent—each school is different.*
>
> ***
>
> *It's not easy—very hard. There's all sort of documentation needed for the board.*

Another respondent complained that the bid that had been awarded to his company was later rescinded by the school district.

Are purchase orders easy to process? Most of the respondents felt that there were no problems in processing purchase orders from BCPSS. Of the 14 vendors who responded to this item, 12 responded positively, and the other 2 were not particularly negative in their replies:

> *It sometimes takes a while—it could be easier.*

What is the average length of time to receive payment? There was a wide disparity in the length of time vendors reported that it took the school district to pay their invoices. Of the 18 vendors who responded, only 4 considered their payment to have been received on time (30 days or fewer). Four reported the average length of time for receiving payment to be between 30 and 45 days, three indicated it took between 45 and 60 days, three indicated between 60 and 90 days ("Pretty rough!"), one reported 120 days, and one said, "It takes a while. Sometimes it gets lost."

> *It took 60 to 90 days initially, but now is about 30 to 45 days. This is not out of line.*
>
> ***
>
> *Sometimes they're very current, but if they're late, they're really late!*

Has there been a change over the past 4 years? Many vendors were unable to answer questions dealing with the change (if any) that has occurred over the past 4 years. In some cases, the vendor had not been doing business that long with the school system, and in other cases, the person responding had not been involved with the account for that many years and had no evidence of his/her company's previous business with BCPSS.

Has there been a change in the bidding process? Of the six vendors who responded, two indicated that the process was now easier, and the other four had not observed any change. One vendor noted that the person in charge now is more likely to go out to a school site to see what is needed.

Has there been a change in the quality of the purchase orders? Of the five vendors who responded, two indicated that the purchase orders were now easier to process, and three had not observed any change.

Has there been a change in the length of time to receive payment? Of the 11 vendors who responded, 4 had not observed a change, 1 had not considered the district's payment history to have been a problem, and 6 had observed an improvement.

> *We had a lot of problems in the past . . .*
>
> ***
>
> *Yes and no—overall yes, but it's still a problem. Thirty days is the expected time (they reported that it took two months on average to receive payment)—you just know you're not going to be paid on time!*
>
> ***
>
> *They take longer than other vendors, but they've been a little better in the last two years.*
>
> ***
>
> *Actually, yes—I've noticed an improvement. But they're still very slow.*
>
> ***
>
> *It's better now—there's been a change from having the city process invoices to having the school do them.*

Conclusions—Vendor Survey

The small sample of vendors surveyed provided evidence that substantiated the information provided by the Procurement Department. To these vendors, the district's purchasing process appears to be similar to that of other school

districts, and does not seem to impose an onerous burden on vendors. The district still has a problem with the payment of its bills, with very few vendors receiving payment in the customary 30 days. Part of this may be due to the wide area covered by the district (180 schools) and the number of principals, business managers, and administrative assistants necessary to process purchase orders and invoices. However, many of these vendors had noticed an improvement from the past, when the school system was part of the city bureaucracy. From the evidence gathered by this survey, it appears that the school district has improved but has room to make additional improvements and provide more satisfactory relationships with their vendors.

Benchmarking to Best Practice Procurement Procedures

As with the financial management function, it was requested that we compare BCPSS procurement function to a set of best practices. We tapped the same source for the list of purchasing (i.e., procurement) best practices below:

Purchasing: **The district has an effective purchasing function that ensures goods and services of acceptable quality and performance are acquired at prices that are fair, competitive, and reasonable.**

1. **Segregation of Duties: The district segregates purchasing responsibilities from the requisitioning, authorizing, and receiving functions.**

    a. Responsibilities for the requisitioning, purchasing, and receiving functions are segregated from the invoice processing, accounts payable, and general ledger functions.

    b. Responsibilities for the purchasing function are segregated from the requisitioning and receiving functions.

    c. Responsibilities for the invoice processing and accounts payable functions are segregated from the general ledger functions.

    d. Responsibilities for the disbursement preparation and disbursement approval functions are segregated from those for recording cash disbursements and general ledger entries.

    e. Responsibilities for the disbursement approval function are segregated from those for the disbursement preparation function.

    f. Responsibilities for entries in the cash disbursement records are segregated from those for general ledger entries.

2. **Requisitioning: The district has established controls for authorizing purchase requisitions.**

    a. Purchases of goods and services are initiated by properly authorized requisitions bearing the approval of officials designated to authorize requisitions.

    b. Requisitions are pre-numbered and those numbers are controlled.

    c. The appropriation to be charged is indicated on the purchase requisition by the person requesting the purchase.

    d. Before commitment, un-obligated funds remaining under the appropriation are verified by the accounting or budget department as sufficient to meet the proposed expenditure.

    e. Requests for special purpose (non-shelf item) materials or personal services are accompanied by technical specifications.

3. **Purchasing: The district has established authorization controls over purchasing.**

   a. Purchasing authorizations are structured to give appropriate recognition to the nature and size of purchases and the experience of purchasing personnel.

   b. Procedures are in place to coordinate and consolidate planned purchases.

   c. Approval procedures exist for purchase order and contract issuance.

   d. Purchase prices are periodically reviewed by a responsible employee independent of the purchasing department.

   e. Procedures are in place to consider competitive bids by other agencies (i.e., state contracts, purchasing consortiums, and other districts) in making purchasing decisions.

   f. Procedures are in place to provide for requesting, receiving, and evaluating competitive bids on the basis of price and quality.

   g. When practicable, contract or purchasing officer's areas of responsibility are rotated on a regular basis.

   h. Procedures exist for public advertisement of non-shelf item procurements in accordance with legal requirements.

   i. Recurring purchases and documentation of the justification for informal rather than competitive bids are periodically reviewed.

   j. Policies regarding conflicts of interest and business practice policies are established, documented, and distributed.

   k. Purchase orders and contracts are issued under numerical or some other suitable control.

   l. An appropriate number of price quotations are obtained before placing orders not subject to competitive bidding.

   m. Splitting orders is prohibited to avoid higher levels of approval.

   n. Price lists and other appropriate records of price quotations are maintained by the purchasing department.

   o. A record of suppliers who have not met quality or other performance standards by the purchasing department is maintained.

   p. Procedures are modified when funds disbursed under grant or loan agreements and related regulations impose requirements that differ from the organization's normal policies.

   q. Procedures are instituted to identify, before order entry, costs and expenditures not allowable under grant (federal/state) programs.

   r. An adequate record of open purchase orders and agreements is maintained.

   s. Purchases made for accommodating employees are prohibited or adequately controlled.

   t. Predetermined selection criteria exist for awarding personal service or construction contracts and the award process is sufficiently documented.

   u. Changes to contracts or purchase orders are subjected to the same controls and approvals as the original agreement.

4. **Receiving: The district has established controls to ensure that goods are received and meet quality standards.**

   a. Receiving reports are prepared for all purchased goods.

b. Procedures exist for filing claims against carriers or vendors for shortages or damaged materials.

c. Steps are taken to ensure that goods received are accurately counted and examined to see that they meet quality standards.

d. A permanent record of material received by the receiving department is maintained.

e. Receiving reports are numerically accounted for or otherwise controlled to ensure that all receipts are reported to the accounting department.

f. Copies of receiving reports are sent directly (hard copy or electronically transferred) to purchasing, accounting, and, if appropriate, inventory record keeping.

g. A government technical representative is assigned to monitor and evaluate contractor performance and approve receipt of services with respect to procurements of special purpose materials, services, or facilities.

h. In those instances in which a receiving department is not used, procedures exist to ensure that goods for which payment is made have been received and are verified by someone other than the individual approving payment that goods have been received and meet quality standards.

Summarizing by the four categories:

- **Segregation of duties**. This group of practices probably represents the most fundamental and profound BCPSS innovation with the procurement process. In the course of our study, we learned that BCPSS has, by now, completed all the suggested separations, a through f.

- **Requisitioning**. After some considerable effort, BCPSS has now implemented a complete system that incorporates all of these suggested practices, a through e.

- **Purchasing**. BCPSS has successfully implemented 18 of the 21 suggested purchasing controls, in our judgement. One of the three unimplemented practices—(g) rotation of the purchasing officer's areas of responsibility—may not really be appropriate to BCPSS' situation. The remaining two unimplemented, practices—(d) periodic outside review of prices paid, and (o) record of poor providers—may be useful suggestions for BCPSS to consider adopting in the future.

- **Receiving**. BCPSS has managed to implement all of those suggested practices but one—(g) special-purpose item monitoring. This is a rather obscure and ambiguous suggestion, however. The others, all of which BCPSS has put in place, are clearly basic and important.

All in all, it would appear that BCPSS has completed a rather far-reaching and thorough transformation in the procurement function. BCPSS' process is not state-of-the-art technologically, but it is functional and transparent, and its clients, generally, seem very pleased with it.

Conclusions—Procurement Department

The evolution of the procurement function at BCPSS over the past few years must certainly be considered a success story. The procurement process of several years ago was considered so problematic, and so potentially dangerous financially, that it was given high priority for fixing a few years ago.

No one would assert that all the problems have been fixed, and the new system is not even entirely in place. Likewise, some individual problem legacies remain from the old system. But, given the "heads up" we felt at the outset of our study, we were surprised by how little the

procurement process seemed still to be an issue at the school level. Teachers and parents remain unhappy with the *amount* of supplies available to them, but that is not a problem of the procurement *process*. In fact, most stakeholders feel that the process is substantially improved, more transparent, and easier to use; that supplies and payments arrive more quickly; and that accounts are kept more transparently and are more up to date. Moreover, most attribute the improvement to changes in management and management structure within the past few years.

While we found evidence that the procurement process was functioning at a more efficient level than it had under the previous city-based structure, there is still room for improvement. A computer-based Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Program that was not yet implemented at the time of our visits, offers the promise of providing still more efficiency in the ordering of supplies and materials, and in tracking the process flow from requisition to delivery to payment.

Information Technology

The Information Technology Department[75] and IT function are improving, but still do not fully meet users' needs. Substantive changes have been made in the management, planning, staffing, and use of technology in the IT functions at BCPSS. These changes have facilitated system management and led to better utilization of resources. Based on the analyses performed, we conclude that:

- *The users of IT feel that the delivery of IT services is improving.*
- *The IT Department has established good management practices.*
- *The IT Department has improved the dissemination of management information.*
- *The new management team in IT has developed thoughtful plans for correcting the current shortcomings in the department.*

Recognizing these accomplishments, significant challenges remain. While there is considerably more satisfaction with services and information provided to schools, access to email for staff other than principals and other administrators is limited. Many schools still need to be wired, and supports for instruction need to be enhanced. Professional development for teachers, especially with regard to instruction, warrants continuing attention and expansion.

Major recommendations including hiring a full time grants person, providing more teacher productivity tools, enhancing the web site and continuing with all current plans.

Introduction

SB 795 cited poor management practices as a major area of concern with BCPSS and called for development of actions to address the following:

- The key recommendations of the 1991 Cresap Report and the 1994 and 1995 MGT of America, Inc. reports;
- Providing effective management information systems, including the capacity to accurately track student enrollment, attendance, academic records, discipline records, and compliance with the provisions of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; and
- Providing an effective financial management and budgeting system.

These reports cited problems with the management systems in place, especially the quality and structure of the MIS systems. Succinctly put, these reports noted that:

- Legacy systems and software did not reflect current technology and were not adequate.
- There was no adequate planning for improving MIS support.
- Valuable resources were being used to perform manual operations that could be easily automated.

[75] In our proposal to BCPSS, Westat used the terms "Management Information System (MIS)" and "MIS Department." BCPSS now uses Information Technology (IT) and IT Department, so those are the terms we use in this report.

- Systems to track critical student, financial, budgetary, and special education data were lacking.
- The placement of the IT function in the organizational hierarchy was inadequate to ensure that IT was accountable for mission-critical initiatives.

These reports made four major recommendations for the BCPSS IT Department:

- BCPSS should develop an automated transportation system routing system to replace the current manual system.
- BCPSS should ensure all managers have appropriate access to management information.
- BCPSS should provide information systems that support decentralized decisionmaking.
- BCPSS should move away from a mainframe environment to a server environment.

The purpose of this evaluation is to answer two basic questions in the context of the problems identified and recommendations offered by the Cresap Report and codified by SB 795:

1. Have substantive changes in management, planning, staffing, and use of technology been made in the IT function at BCPSS? And is it consistent with the original recommendations?
2. Have the changes made facilitated improved management and led to either direct improvements in student education or better utilized resources?

Specifically, Westat has endeavored to answer the following questions:

- Has the IT planning process been implemented or improved?
- What initiatives have been identified and/or implemented to automate manual operations?
- Has the school transportation system been completed?
- Has the tracking of staff and student attendance improved?
- Has the tracking of school enrollment improved?
- Has IT improved the required legal and regulatory reporting?
- Have the accuracy, timing, and security of records improved?
- Has the accuracy of student academic records improved?
- Has the distribution of management information improved?
- Has the IT Department organization improved?
- Has email service been implemented in every school?
- Have the recommendations from the interim evaluation been completed and implemented?
- Have implementation benchmarks 4.21 and 4.22 from The Master Plan been completed and implemented?

BCPSS has used The Master Plan as a guiding document for addressing issues related to IT. There have been two updates and status reports of the current Master Plan. The first was published in November 2000, and the second in June 2001. BCPSS has issued a Master Plan Update dated July 1, 2001, which covers the fiscal year July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002.[76]

Two major strategies concern the IT Department:

- Strategy 4.2.1: Implement and improve management strategies that will enhance

[76] In reviewing the tasks that make up the 2002 Master Plan, it is noted that some of the tasks are new to this version, while others existed in previous versions. All previous recommendations from the earlier reviews and the main shortcomings identified in the original report have been or are being addressed.

communications and ensure data integrity across platforms.

- Strategy 4.2.2: Implement management strategies that enhance finance and operations management.

Strategy 4.2.1 contains the following priority initiatives:

- Keep existing installed technology running,
- Support all levels of decisionmaking,
- Make information accessible to all,
- Make official records available to public,
- Develop technical capacity for technology transfer,
- Support local and wide area networks,
- Ensure authorized use of technology resources, and
- Set and enforce software support.

Strategy 4.2.2 contains the following priority initiatives:

- Complete implementation of a personnel and employee benefits system,
- Maintain legacy systems,
- Maintain FinApps, and
- Advance high priority systems to increase support for READ.

Each of these priority initiatives contains implementation benchmarks (tasks) with scheduled completion dates.

Approach

Our examination of the progress of the IT Department and delivery of IT services assesses functioning as of fall 2001.The approach we have taken to the evaluation of the IT function at BCPSS is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data collection approaches, including:

- BCPSS IT Department interviews,
- Documented progress against the BCPSS Master Plan,
- Site visits to eight wired and two nonwired schools,
- Results from IT-related questions in the principal and teacher surveys,
- Comparison of the BCPSS IT Department management practices to IT best practices,
- Review plans of the new IT management team, and
- Review of the current (FY 2002) budget and plans.

The data collected through these varied sources were analyzed and evaluated using two lenses: problems identified in the functioning prior to SB 795, and what is known about best practices in MIS management and service delivery. For this benchmarking analysis, we assessed BCPSS practice against nine key themes/practices identified by the work of the Gartner Group, and various state departments of education. These practices are:

- Develop long- and short-range plans and budgets,
- Create policies procedures and standards,
- Determine technology needs,
- Optimize funding with grants,
- Optimize compatibility,
- Provide adequate training,
- Communicate and cooperate,
- Provide adequate staffing and technical support, and
- Provide security and appropriate access.

Findings

Perceptions of School Staff—Site Visits. As part of our information collection activities, we visited 10 schools. The majority of these visits were made to school that had been "wired," that is, their infrastructure had been upgraded to support full network services at the school level. These wired schools had the greatest opportunity to use, and in some sense to evaluate, the IT Department's accomplishments from a stakeholder point of view.

In these schools, the sentiment was unanimous. Every principal interviewed felt that things overall were changing for the better in regard to information technology, and that this year's budget process was much improved. They also felt that the financial reports they were now receiving from the new system were much more timely and accurate. Other personnel added that the attitude of the IT Department was very positive and that whenever other staff experienced a problem or had a question, the IT Department staff were helpful in resolving it.

These visits also identified some lingering problems, including lack of compatibility between major student systems, connectivity problems, lack of teacher tools, unmet needs for repair and maintenance, and the desire for more training.

- One issue that surfaced consistently was the inability of the SASI (Student and Staff Information) and SETS (special education) systems to share information. This disconnect caused many problems.
- At every site visited, staff noted that Internet connections were slow, and the system was down frequently.
- The lack of repair service on end user devices was also a cause for concern, and there was a belief that the IT Department would no longer perform repair and maintenance on any administrative or instructional devices. This comments point up a communication problem between the schools and the IT Department. In fact, the IT Department is currently developing an RFP to contract out the maintenance and repair of all end user devices.
- Not surprisingly, principals, librarians, and classroom teachers all felt that they would like to have more technology available to them. Administrators are aware of the positive impact technology can have in their management roles, and teachers are aware of the potential positive impact instructional technology can have on student performance. Teachers noted the lack of such teacher tools as automated lesson plans or grading systems.
- Another frequently raised issue was the lack of adequate training provided. Most of the personnel interviewed at the schools visited felt that more training could be provided by the IT Department.

Perceptions of School Staff—Surveys. A broader view of IT functioning was obtained through the formal teacher and principal surveys. These surveys examined the perceptions of school-based staff with regard to email, IT professional development, accessibility of computers for instruction, adequacy of reporting, and overall service. We examined data for the schools overall and for wired and nonwired schools separately.[77]

Virtually all administrators have access to email, but only about a third of schools report access for some or all teachers (Table 7-6). As might be expected, access is significantly broader in schools that are wired. When asked about problems with email, such as interruptions in service, principals responding to our survey indicated that the email system is available the vast majority of the time. This finding contrasts with the reports of problems found on our site visits.

[77] Principal surveys were received from 21 schools that were wired and 147 schools that were not.

Table 7-6.
Principals' responses regarding email

Question	Percentage selecting response		
	All schools	Wired schools	Not wired schools
To what extent does your school have access to an adequate email system?			
Access is limited to administrators	63	52	64
Access includes administrators and some or all teachers.....	33	48	52
How often is the email system unavailable due to technical difficulties?			
Less than once a month.....	83	81	83
Once a week.....	13	10	11
More than twice a week.....	1	5	1

NOTE: Not all respondents answered these questions.

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Tables 7-7 and 7-8 present principals' and teachers' responses to questions regarding training for using computer technology. Overall, only 26 percent of principals believed that their teachers received adequate training in using computers for instructional purposes. Teachers' responses were somewhat more positive, with 52 percent indicating they had received training from BCPSS and 41 percent agreeing that the training in using computers for instructional purposes was adequate. Teachers generally reported that their professional development experiences have not enhanced student learning in technology/ computers. Overall, only 19 percent of teachers agreed that learning had been enhanced much or very much. Again, as the tables show, agreement was greater in wired than in nonwired schools.

A related question examined adequacy of computers for student instructional purposes. Two issues were considered: access and instructional time. Forty-two percent of principals and 38 percent of teachers agreed that students have adequate access to computers for instructional purposes (Tables 7-9 and 7-10). Fifty-four percent of principals and 36 percent of teachers indicated that their students use computers on at

Table 7-7.
Principals' responses regarding their teachers' training in use of computers for instructional purposes

Question	Percentage that agree or strongly agree		
	All schools	Wired schools	Not wired schools
How much do you agree with the following statements about computer resources?			
Our teachers have received adequate training for using computers for instructional purposes.....	26	52	19

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Table 7-8.
Teachers' responses regarding their training in use of computers for instructional purposes

Question	Percentage that answered agree/strongly agree, yes, or much very much		
	All schools	Wired schools	Not wired schools
How much do you agree with the following statements about computer resources?			
I have received adequate training for using computers for instructional purposes.	41	53	39
Have you received training from BCPSS in computer technology.....	52	65	49
To what extant have your professional development activities through BCPSS enhanced your student's learning in technology/ computers?	19	29	17

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Table 7-9.
Principals' responses regarding student access to computers

Question	Percentage that agree or strongly agree		
	All schools	Wired schools	Not wired schools
How much do you agree with the following statements about computer resources?			
Our students have sufficient access to computers for instructional purposes	42	76	37
Our students use computers for instructional purposes on at least a weekly basis..	54	76	50

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Table 7-10.
Teachers' responses regarding student access to computers

Question	Percentage that agree or strongly agree		
	All schools	Wired schools	Not wired schools
How much do you agree with the following statements about computer resources?			
My students have sufficient access to computers for instructional purposes	38	53	35
My students use computers for instructional purposes on at least a weekly basis..	36	45	34

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

least a weekly basis. Again, responses were higher in the wired than the not wired schools.

Principals were also asked to consider a series of reports and indicate both how useful they found them to be and whether or not there has been any improvement in their quality and accuracy over the last 4 years.[78] As Table 7-11 shows, the reports were generally seen to be useful to a good or great degree, with the exception of health reports and scheduling reports. Further, principals also indicated that many of these reports have improved moderately or substantially in the last 4 years. Table 7-12 shows the improvements were seen to be greatest for SETS reports, SASI reports, and student test scores. No differences were found between wired and nonwired schools. The least amount of improvement was reported for health reports and scheduling reports.

Table 7-11.
Principals' responses regarding usefulness of reports

Question	Useful to a good or great degree
Please evaluate the usefulness of the reports that central office provides to support school management and instructional services.	
Student test scores	81
SETS reports.....	82
Crime and incidence reports	50
Faculty attendance	78
Student attendance.....	85
Financial reports	57
Health reports	49
Scheduling.....	34
SASI reports	72

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Finally, we asked principals about the responsiveness of IT services in four areas: providing technical assistance when problems are encountered; researching and correcting errors in data; creating ad hoc reports; and providing assistance in strategic planning. Again, the majority of principals indicated that the IT Department was responsive to these needs, with wired schools responding more favorably than nonwired schools (Table 7-13).

[78]These reports are a product of collaboration between the IT Department and READ.

Table 7-12.
Principals' responses regarding quality of reports

Question	Has improved moderately or substantially
Do you perceive an improvement in quality and accuracy in the last 4 years for the following reports?	
Student test scores	74
SETS reports	82
Crime and incidence reports	68
Faculty attendance	63
Student attendance	65
Financial reports	56
Health reports	57
Scheduling	35
SASI reports	77

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Table 7-13.
Principals' responses regarding IT Department responsiveness

Question	Usually responsive or exceeds expectations		
	All schools	Wired schools	Not wired school
Please rate the responsiveness of MIS services in the following areas.			
Providing technical assistance when problems are encountered	65	81	63
Researching/correcting data errors	48	52	47
Creating ad hoc reports	35	33	35
Provide assistance in strategic planning	35	33	35

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Principal Survey, 2001.

Comparison Against Best Practices. Management practices at the BCPSS IT Department were compared to a set of best practices for school district IT departments. Exhibit 7-3 shows how BCPSS compares against these standards. While in many cases we are assessing plans and not products or services, it appears that the IT is moving into alignment with standards.

Review of Current (FY 2001) Budget and Plans. This section presents a summary and discussion of the tasks and plans IT is undertaking or continuing in fiscal year 2002, based on an indepth review of the budget. This is a critical aspect of the IT evaluation as a new budgeting process was put in place in IT for fiscal year 2002. One of the major differences in the new budgeting process is the establishment of individual cost centers for major projects in each of the six divisions in the IT Department.

The Office of the Chief Technology Officer is its own cost center, number 1200. This cost center contains funding for staffing and work environment, budget development and management, procurement and contract administration, quality assurance, E-Rate administration, project management, Student Intern Program, and Student Technology Leadership Program.

The Customer Services Division has developed four major cost centers. The first is cost center 1201, whose major task is to develop an RFP to cover all maintenance and repair for all end user devices, both in administrative systems and instructional technology systems. This cost center also contains funds to cover IT personnel performing the help desk function. The second major cost center in this division is 1202, i.e., funding for information services, which refers to the retention and storage of certain information that is required to be kept by both the U.S. Department of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education. The third major cost center is Web Services, cost center 1203. It is the intention of IT to eventually develop a website for every school in the BCPSS.

The Classroom Support Systems Division has developed three major cost centers. The first is cost center 1207, which contains funding for library technology. The second is 1208, which contains funding for technology and media. The third is 1209, which contains funding for staff development to train classroom teachers, librarians, and other school personnel in the use of instructional technology.

Exhibit 7-3.
Comparison of BCPSS IT practices with accepted best practices for school system IT departments

Best Practice	BCPSS status
Develop Long- and Short-Term Plans and Budgets	The IT Department has recently initiated a new results-based budgeting system, which should greatly improve the planning process. One of the highlights of this process is the connection of the cost centers in the IT budget to tasks in The Master Plan. Rather than using the previous year's expenditures as a starting point, the IT Department determined actual costs of achieving identified goals. The use of the new budgeting system and The Master Plan provides the IT Department at BCPSS with an adequate planning process.
Create Policies Procedures and Standards	A major task of the IT Department this year is the development of a policies and procedures manual. As of the time of this analysis, the task had been started and the outline had been developed and approved. Since the document is only in planning stages, it is impossible to comment on the detailed content, but it appears that it will be comprehensive.
Determine Technology Needs	The IT Department is, at the time of this writing, in the process of developing a policies and procedures manual. The long-term technological needs and requirements for the IT function at BCPSS are being addressed through that document.
Optimize Funding with Grants	BCPSS is taking advantage of a number of grants to supplement its funding for information technology. A large number of schools have been wired under the TIMSS grant program, and they have developed a schedule for the wiring of the remainder of the schools. Also, the IT Department is planning to enter an agreement with Verizon to provide network services and capabilities and manage and operate the entire network. Under the E-Rate Program, BCPSS will be reimbursed 80 percent of the costs of this contract. However, BCPSS may not be optimizing its funding through grants.
Optimize Compatibility	The IT Department has made great strides in promoting compatibility, and has plans for eventually making all systems compatible. The recently implemented financial systems are all based in Oracle, which allows all financial systems to talk to each other. The new human resource system will also be compatible with the current systems. However, the SETS (special education) and SASI (student and staff information) systems are incompatible and cannot communicate with each other. This lack of compatibility causes many problems for personnel in the central office and in individual schools.
Provide Adequate Training	The IT Department is attempting to provide adequate training to all the personnel and students in BCPSS. The IT Department has just developed a training plan that addresses all training requirements for all users. The plan will establish and implement a program to facilitate the training and certification of classroom, administrative, and IT Department personnel in order to improve the support of instruction.
Communicate and Cooperate	The IT Department has created an external IT Advisory Committee comprising CIOs/CTOs from the private sector, other government agencies, and higher education. This committee has allowed the IT Department to communicate its goals and aspirations outside BCPSS, and has also fostered relationships between the Department and the community. The IT Department also created an internal IT Steering Committee comprising senior executives from each aspect of the school system's operations.
Staffing and Technical Support	The IT Department is in the process of developing an RFP to contract out all maintenance and technical support for all its administrative and instructional end user devices. This action will relieve the IT Department from having to staff and maintain its own repair shop. However, the IT Department will have to closely monitor the execution of this contract to ensure that its users are receiving adequate technical support.
Provide Security and Appropriate Access	BCPSS has recently completed the development and installation of firewall software to protect the network from intrusion. In the future, if the proposed contract with Verizon for network services is completed, the responsibility for security and access will fall to a company that is in the business of managing networks.

The School Support Systems Division has three major cost centers. The first is for emerging technology; the second contains funding for special education support; the third contains funding for regular education support.

The Administrative Support Systems Division has developed three major cost centers. Cost center 1212 contains funding for the development of the new Human Resources Management System, a task that has been in The Master Plan since its inception. The second is cost center 1213, which contains monies for the maintenance and enhancements of the financial resources management systems. The third contains funds for business support functions.

The Infrastructure Support Division has three major cost centers. The first is cost center 1216, which contains funding for network operations. The second is 1217, which contains funds for technical support. The third major cost center contains funds for security and disaster recovery functions.

Accomplishments of the New Management Team. As with many other units within BCPSS, a new management team took over leadership of IT functions this year. From February 1999 to August 2000, IT functions were managed through an outside contractor, Information Control Systems, Inc., although staff were physically housed at North Avenue. This arrangement helped advance MIS services in BCPSS. However, for a variety of reasons, it was deemed prudent to return management to BCPSS staff. In doing so, the IT Department was reorganized into six functional units with work efforts organized into projects. Similar projects are organized into cost centers. Exhibit 7-4 presents the six units with a description of their major responsibilities.

Under the direction of the new management team, the IT Department this year replaced the incremental budgeting system with a results-based budget system. Rather than using the previous years' expenditures as a starting point, the IT Department determined actual costs of achieving identified goals. Goals and objectives were identified based on the following criteria:

Exhibit 7-4.
The IT Department's six functional units

- **Chief Technology Officer—**The Office of the Chief Technology Officer has responsibility for staffing and work environment, budget development and management, procurement and contract management, quality assurance, E-Rate project management, the Student Intern Program, the Student Technology Leadership Program, as well as the for SETS and SASI systems.
- **Customer Service—**The Customer Service Division has responsibility for the help desk function, information services, and web services, as well as responsibility for the records management function.
- **Classroom Support Systems—**The Education Technology Systems Division has responsibility for libraries, technical materials and media for classroom instruction, as well as staff development for instructional technology.
- **School Support Systems—**The School Support Systems has responsibility for emerging technology, special education support and regular education support.
- **Administrative Support Systems—**The Administrative Support Systems Division has responsibility for Human Resources Management Systems, Financial Resources Management Systems, and Business Support Systems.
- **Infrastructure Support—**The Infra-structure Support Division has responsibility for Internet operations, security services, application software, systems software, and emerging technology.

Maintenance of effort on already initiated undertakings;

- Implementation of the technology initiatives of The Master Plan;
- Implementation of specific systems identified through the IT Advisory and Steering Committee process; and
- Implementation of high-priority organization development initiatives. Individual projects were developed to ensure successful achievement of the identified goals and objectives and the resulting budget reflects

the realistic funding requirements for ensuring successful results on those projects.

The IT Department has also implemented a performance-based employee evaluation system wherein every employee's assignment will be defined by measurable outcomes drawn from the priorities established in the results-based department budget. Every employee will be evaluated against the expected progress on assigned outcomes each quarter of the year, with summary determination of the employee's performance reflecting progress and/or completion. Employees meeting or exceeding scheduled performance will be recommended for merit pay increases and/or promotion. Employees failing to meet scheduled performance goals will be provided appropriate training opportunities and given notice that improved performance on the next quarterly evaluation is a prerequisite for job retention.

Issues

During the course of our investigation, we also identified a number of concerns that pose a risk to continued improvement in IT functions.

Employee Burnout. The IT Department has undertaken a large number of ambitious tasks to upgrade the IT function. In attempting to reach the goals and objectives, IT management must be careful not to cause employee burnout in its urgency to complete all the tasks at hand. While no one interviewed ever said that they were being pushed too hard, more than one individual interviewed did mention how many overtime hours were required to complete their tasks on schedule. Burnout causes employee turnover, and high employee turnover makes it difficult for projects to remain on schedule and for an organization to be effective. The IT Department at BCPSS has experienced a large turnover rate over the last 3–4 years, and we believe that employee burnout has played a role in this situation.

Ambitious Plans. The IT Department has developed a large number of plans and projects to meet the needs of all its users and to support BCPSS in its main goals. But it may not be possible to accomplish all of the tasks and goals on schedule. Also, it is not clear that there is sufficient funding available for the IT Department to complete all the tasks as scheduled.

No User Groups or Chat Rooms. The IT Department has neither developed formal or informal user groups for any of the largest categories of user classes nor set up any chat rooms for them. It has been shown in many organizations that the proper use of user groups and chat rooms can enhance the productivity of the staff by encouraging users to exchange information regarding the use of the system.

IT Vision. At every school visited, a common theme came through from both principals and teachers: they were not aware of the direction, if any, the IT function at BCPSS was headed. This has made it difficult for principals and administrators to optimize their planning at a local level and for teachers to plan their continuing education.

Teacher Tools. There are a number of software tools available that would enable teachers to make better use of their time rather than performing manual administrative tasks. BCPSS does not currently provide such tools to its classroom teachers. Making teachers more productive at administrative tasks can certainly lead to teachers devoting more time to lesson preparation and/or classroom time.

Optimizing Grant Money. It is not clear that BCPSS is currently optimizing its IT grant money. Currently, individual schools can pursue IT grants without review or oversight by any personnel in the IT Department, and there is no individual who has sole responsibility for oversight of IT grants. This has the potential to lead to situations where individual schools may receive technology grants that require or use hardware or software not supported by the IT Department.

State Standards. Most teachers agree that instructional technology in the classroom cannot be optimized unless all students have

Exhibit 7-5.
Summary of IT Department Accomplishments

1. The IT planning process has improved. As a result of the new budgeting process introduced this year by the new IT management team, the budget has become a planning document as well, and it now ties much closer to the activities scheduled in The Master Plan.
2. The IT Department has initiated and completed a number of systems, which have replaced manual operations. The new budgeting and finance system, the SASI system, and ABACUS are examples of systems that reduce the amount of manual operations.
3. The development of a school transportation system has been dropped, and BCPSS is now utilizing the Baltimore public transportation system to transport its students.
4. The tracking of staff and student attendance has improved greatly through the use of the new SASI system. Every administrator in the schools visited stated that this system is a great improvement over previous ones.
5. The tracking of school enrollment has also improved greatly through the use of the new SASI system. This was also confirmed by the site visits and the formal surveys.
6. The legal and regulatory reporting has also improved through the use of the SASI system. Again, this was confirmed by principals through the site visits and surveys.
7. The accuracy, timing, and security of management information have improved. As stated earlier, all principals interviewed thought this last budget process was a great improvement over those in previous years.
8. The accuracy of student records has improved. The new SASI system is currently meeting all requirements for student records.
9. The distribution of management information has improved. For example, principals now receive monthly financial statements.
10. The IT Department organization has been improved and strengthened. The Department is much better positioned and organized. It has recently developed a proposed set of job descriptions, salary scales, and promotion ladder for all its employees. This plan is currently in review by the Department of Human Resources.
11. Email service has been installed in every school to some degree. While all principals and administrators have access to email, not all personnel do. It is the intention of the IT Department to eventually provide email and Internet access to all school staff. It will be possible to accomplish that once all schools are wired; the schedule for wiring the remaining schools is in The Master Plan.
12. Most of the recommendations from the interim evaluations have been implemented. Some are still in progress, while others are just being started. All recommendations from previous evaluations have been addressed in the current plans.

simultaneous access to the system, i.e., every student has a computer. At the present, however, it is cost prohibitive in most school districts to provide this capability. MSDE has certain standards for the use of information technology in the classroom, including a standard for the ratio of computers to students in the classroom. Currently, BCPSS does not meet this MSDE standard.

Website. As part of this evaluation, we visited the BCPSS website. The site was not found to be user friendly or high quality. The website is important as the one place where the public, stakeholders, and partners can go to get information regarding BCPSS. It is important that BCPSS promote a good public image of itself in order to maximize public support, and the website is one place where this can be accomplished.

Summary and Conclusions

Exhibit 7-5 presents a summary of the accomplishments of the IT Department. Based on information presented in previous sections, we can conclude that the IT function at BCPSS is improving. Many plans and projects have been initiated, but still there is a long way to go. Every recommendation contained in previous Master Plans or reports has been completed, is in progress, or is included for the current plans and/or budget for the IT Department.

Substantive changes have been made in the management, planning, staffing, and use of technology in the IT function at BCPSS. These changes are consistent with the original recommendations in the preliminary reports, and they should allow the IT function to better support the primary function of BCPSS—providing quality education to its students. The IT Department still falls short of meeting the basic needs of all its users, and supports for teachers and

instruction need to be increased. But they are certainly headed in the right direction.

The changes made in the IT function have facilitated improved management and led to improvements in the use of utilized resources. It is impossible to determine if a more efficient IT Department can directly impact student performance, but it certainly can help create an environment where better student performance can be achieved by maximizing and optimizing the use of technology by the entire staff of BCPSS.

Recommendations

As part of the IT evaluation, the following recommendations were developed and are presented to BCPSS for their consideration.

Finish the vision document. This is possibly the IT Department's most important task. It is imperative that the vision and long-range goals be specified to all the schools in BCPSS so principals and administrators can plan and budget for their schools. Unless schools are given insight to the direction and goals of IT, it will be impossible to optimize the funds the schools have available.

Develop better communication. The IT Department needs to better communicate its present and future plans to the schools, because most people interviewed were not familiar with the recent changes in IT. IT might consider developing a monthly newsletter or some other informational vehicle; administrators must be aware of the direction goals, policies, capabilities, etc., of the IT Department in order to perform rational and logical planning for their schools.

Continue with all plans. It is recommended that BCPSS continue with the initiatives they have planned. This includes the contract with Verizon, development of the RFP for maintenance and repair, the wiring of rest of the schools, the development of compatibility between SETS and SASI, completion of the payroll and Human Resources systems, the development of the technology policies and procedures, ongoing development and delivery of training courses, staff development and organization, email for every employee, and all other tasks defined in the budget and Master Plan. All of these tasks are worthwhile and will enhance the performance of the IT Department, the management of the schools, and performance in the classroom.

Form user groups and chat rooms. Currently there are no formal user groups or chat rooms for either administrative systems or instructional systems in the IT Department. It is recommended that the IT Department develop and administer user groups and chat rooms for all major user groups. This would facilitate the staff's learning to better utilize the technology, provide a forum for users to air problems or suggestions, foster better relations between the IT Department and its customers, and increase user productivity.

Identify or hire a full-time grants person. As previously stated, there are a very large number of IT grants available to school systems. However, BCPSS may not be currently identifying and capturing these grants to the optimum extent possible. All schools are now free to pursue any and all IT grants on their own, without having any review by anyone in the IT Department. BCPSS should consider naming a full-time IT grants person. The two main responsibilities of this person would be to identify and pursue all IT grants and to oversee and review any potential grants individual schools are pursuing. It is important that the grants process be centralized to some degree.

Provide more teacher tools. A number of available software packages, such as Easy Grade, are known to make classroom teachers more productive. These packages automate many of the administrative tasks teachers now perform manually. The use of such software could lessen the time classroom teachers spend on administrative tasks, thereby freeing them to spend more time on activities directly related to classroom instruction and planning. We therefore recommend that the IT Department look into the use of these tools, which might favorably impact student performance.

Enhance the website. We recommend that the IT Department improve the website to improve BCPSS relationship with the public, stakeholders, and partners. In the future, more of the public will be accessing the BCPSS website, and they must not be left with a negative impression.

Supports Provided by READ[79]

The evaluation finds that until very recently. READ, the unit charged by SB 795 with monitoring progress and increasing understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the reform effort, has provided minimal data of educational or policy relevance. In part, this failure is linked to the system's failure to establish consistent indicators of progress. However, beyond this failure of management, the unit itself failed to provide timely, quality data for program improvement. With the appointment of a new officer, there are signs of improvement. Continuing attention is needed in establishing a system wherein 1) progress can be monitored against established targets, and 2) data to inform program improvement are systematically collected and disseminated.

Background

SB 795 recognized the need for a strong accountability system to monitor and support the City-State Partnership. To reinforce the importance of this function, the legislation called for the establishment of a research and evaluation unit, headed by an officer who

> shall report directly to the Chief Executive Officer and shall be held accountable for the effective and efficient management of the unit.....the unit shall perform ongoing research and evaluation regarding systemic reform and student achievement (Section 4-307).

Our evaluation examined the functioning of this unit and the extent to which its performance has been responsive to the requirements presented above. The examination was guided by the following question and subquestions:

Are adequate accountability measures in place and functioning as desired?

- Have indicators of progress been established for key areas of The Master Plan?
- Are data on these indicators being collected?
- Are data on these indicators being reported in a useful manner?
- Are the reports timely?
- Are the data from the reports being used to examine progress and fine-tune programs?

To address these questions, we examined The Master Plan, reports from the Division of Research, Evaluation, and Accountability (READ), and quarterly progress reports on system accomplishments. We also built on information about the functioning of READ gathered as part of an assessment that Westat conducted in the summer of 2000. In addition, we drew on, and learned from, experiences in requesting data from READ for conducting the present evaluation of the City-State Partnership.

Findings

The bulk of our assessment addressed the functioning of this division from the time of passage of SB 795 to early spring 2001. However, as with many other areas of school system support and management, significant changes have occurred only recently. In discussing our findings, therefore, our examination will be divided into two sections: findings through spring 2001, and indications for the future.

Findings Through Spring 2001. Overall, our examination shows that the accountability system did not meet the word or the intent of SB 795. Indicators of success were largely been absent or inconsistent, and The Master Plan for the school year 2000–2001 failed to include standards against which progress could be assessed. While areas of functioning, i.e., student achievement,

[79]The name of this office has recently been changed to Division of Research, Evaluation, and Testing.

student attendance, instructional coherence, and inclusion, were identified, no indicators of progress were established. READ did attempt to work with stakeholder groups to review previous indicators and establish new ones, but ultimately, agreement was not reached and no functioning indicators existed in 2000–2001.

Work undertaken by READ provided minimal information used to assess the system's progress. On the positive side, reports on progress in student achievement were provided annually, in accordance with the requirements of the state's testing program. However, little was done to use these or other outcome measures to assess the reform effort and monitor the efficacy of the specific reforms undertaken. The data show that the system is making progress and that some schools appear to be progressing more rapidly than others, but they do not adequately address the question of why that is so.

One exception may be the initial work carried out to evaluate the accomplishments of the summer school program. Although limited, the analyses of this program provide important initial data on the short-term impacts of summer school participation and raise a number of questions about the operation of this program.

Monitoring of The Master Plan has been accomplished mainly through a tracking of activities and strategies, and quarterly reports to the New Board show progress on each of those strategies. While these reports are useful in assessing the extent to which activities are being undertaken on time and on schedule, they are only a first step toward a full-fledged accountability effort. These reports have provided little in the way of *outcome* or *impact* information essential for accountability to be effective.

Overall, substantive evaluations of systemic reform have been lacking. Neither formative data for program improvement (for example, examination of the implementation of the new curriculum to assess fidelity to plans, appropriateness for different student populations, or efficacy of professional development) nor rigorous assessments of the outcomes of different treatments (for example, comparisons of performance of students using different curricula) have resulted in reports that can and have been used for program improvement.[80] Further, despite many requests for a comprehensive plan for research and evaluation that coordinates internal and external activities, no plan exists.

Admittedly, READ does not stand alone as the cause for the shortcomings. The problem stems from multiple causes, some related to overall system management, others to READ itself. They include management's failure to establish targets and indicators of progress; management's failure to demand a rigorous system of program monitoring and evaluation, focused on outcomes and the linkage between interventions and outcomes; and READ's failure to provide leadership and guidance to BCPSS in accordance with its expected role. Indeed, we have been surprised, frustrated, and dismayed at READ's inability to provide achievement data that should be routinely available to a system of this kind in an accurate and timely manner. And, our requests for data for this evaluation have repeatedly been met with no response or with partial or inaccurate data. Looking at the evidence available through spring of 2001, our conclusions echo those of the Westat report issued in August 2000. Specifically,

> Our assessment shows that READ is able to fulfill its stated functions to only a limited extent, and that the data produced by READ are of very minimal assistance in helping to assess the system's status to inform instructional decisionmaking and program improvement. By and large, those we interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the services that READ is currently providing....Second, data to monitor progress in implementing The Master Plan, the core of the BCPSS reform and renewal effort, are not available. BCPSS has gone through two iterations of the development of performance indicators for this purpose

[80]Some studies of whole-school reform programs are being carried out by outside agencies such as Johns Hopkins University. However, these are guided by external research agencies, which may or may not have the same set of interests as BCPSS. Further, the system for disseminating these data and using them within BCPSS has not been established.

and is now engaged in a third. Without these indicators and a consistent set of indicators over time, measuring the success of the system's initiatives is impossible. While the lack in this area must be shared well outside of READ—this is a system problem, as well as a READ problem—the prominence of READ in guiding The Master Plan and the expectation that READ will produce the data to assess it, leads to significant dissatisfaction (pp. 5–6).

Indications for the Future

Activities that have occurred in only the last few months provide hope that monitoring and accountability will improve in the year ahead and that READ will cast off its current image of ineffectuality. First, building on the work initiated previously, The Master Plan for the school year 2001–02 contains a detailed set of indicators of progress not only for the upcoming year, but through 2002 or 2004, depending on the particular objective. These indicators, if left unchanged, will provide a foundation against which progress can be measured over the coming years. Second, the new CEO has taken significant steps to improve the functioning of this office and demand a unit that can support the instructional process. After having an interim READ Officer for the last several years, she appointed an experienced and well-respected permanent Chief Officer who began her service in July 2001. Both the CEO and the Officer understand the importance of a sound accountability system and have committed to instituting a plan for research, evaluation, and assessment that can truly inform the program improvement and provide measurable indicators of change. The system has begun to produce assessment reports that are timely and comprehensive. Plans for further evaluation activities are being developed, and activities are underway to examine the soundness of the local assessment program. The direction taken by the new leadership is promising.

Section 3. Role of The Master Plan

The Master Plan is in many ways the centerpiece of the planning and management structure. The plan, which has evolved over time, is based on a set of goals and objectives clearly in line with the requirements of SB 795. Originally one of several plans governing school operations, The Master Plan has evolved into a single framework for integrating and guiding the system's functions and activities. While previous iterations of the plan have not adequately explicated standards for success and indicators of progress, and accountability provisions have been incomplete, the 2001–02 version appears to be correcting this shortcoming and establishing a framework for monitoring and accountability. Additional work is needed to fully synchronize this plan with budget development, a step that has not yet been completed.

Within the school community, there is broad-based awareness of the plan, although not all staff are truly knowledgeable about its contents. School administrators are well aware of the stipulations of the plan and have used them as a guide for developing school improvement plans. Teachers and staff other than leadership team members are less knowledgeable about the details of The Master Plan, but they know that it exists and will impact plans for their school's operation.

The vast majority feel the plan is having a beneficial impact on their own schools and BCPSS overall. Principal support is especially strong, with 99 percent being aware of and agreeing with the plan and 92 percent feeling that it is having a beneficial impact. Not surprisingly, parents are less knowledgeable about the plan, with less than half being aware of its contents.

Background

SB 795 recognized the importance of a cohesive Master Plan to guide the reform effort. It required the development of a Transition Plan on or before September 1, 1997, and a comprehensive Master Plan on or before January 1, 1998. SB 795 required that the Generally Assembly receives and considers both plans, and that the State Board of Education and State Superintendent of Schools review and approve them. The BCPSS budget for

FY 1999 was contingent on this review and approval process.

SB 795 also provided a detailed blueprint for the content of the plan (Section 4-309, C and D). It required that the plan focus on two areas: student achievement, and management and accountability. Further, it required attention to the following activities:

- Complete incorporation of the *key* recommendations of the 1992 Towers Perrin/Cresap Management Report and the 1994 and 1995 MST of America, Inc. reports;
- Incorporation of the requirements of *Vaughn G.* v *Amprey et al*.;
- Reorganization of the central office of the BCPSS;
- Provision of effective curriculum and instruction programs for BCPSS, including a citywide curriculum framework reflecting state standards, an effective program of professional development, systemwide Performance-Based Evaluation System, and an effective educational program for meeting the needs of students at risk of educational failure;
- Provision of effective management information systems, including the capacity to accurately track student enrollment, attendance, academic records, discipline records, and compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
- Provision of an effective financial management and budgeting system;
- Provision of effective staff hiring and assignment;
- Development of an effective system of providing instructional materials and supports;
- Provision of appropriate methods for student assessment and remediation;
- Development and implementation of a student code of discipline;
- Development of an effective system for planning and provision of construction, repair, and maintenance activities;
- Increasing parental participation;
- Inclusion of measurable outcomes and timelines for the implementation and evaluation of the reforms made in accordance with The Master Plan;
- Improvement of the status of schools that are subject to state reconstitution; and
- Development of an effective system of teacher input regarding the implementation of school reform initiatives.

Approach

Our examination of The Master Plan addresses the following issues:

- Has The Master Plan provided a management tool to guide program planning and implementation as directed by SB 795? Does it address the issues required by the legislation?
- Is the plan providing a comprehensive framework for integrating across programmatic activities? What is the relationship between The Master Plan and the budgeting process?
- What is the impact of The Master Plan on planning and goal setting in the schools? Is the BCPSS school community aware of the plan and in accord with its content? What do they see as its impact?

A variety of data collection techniques were used. First, we carefully reviewed the legislation, the Transition Plan, and a sample of The Master Plan. Second, questions about the role of The Master Plan were included in our site visits and surveys. Third, we gathered data through interviews with key stakeholders on the strengths and weaknesses of this document.

Findings

Responsiveness to SB 795

Examination of The Master Plan indicates that it has been responsive to requirements of SB 795. The annual plans, especially the most recent one, have developed a focus on the critical areas highlighted in the legislation. While some strategies have been modified, dropped, or reorganized over the years, the plan has kept a constant focus on the priority outcomes and activities specified in the legislation.

The plan is focused on two goals, one addressing improving achievement, the second establishing effective management in support of quality instruction. There are six supporting objectives:

- Increase student achievement in prekindergarten through grade 12.
- Provide students with teachers and principals who are qualified and competent.
- Comply fully with federal and state laws governing the education of students with disabilities.
- Design and implement effective and cost-efficient management systems and practices to improve the support to instruction.
- Increase the level of parent, family, community, and business support and involvement.
- Provide secure, civil, and orderly learning environments.

Some aspects of the 1992 Towers Perrin/Cresap Management Report and the 1994 and 1995 MST of America, Inc., reports, specifically those related to enterprise schools and the establishment of site-based management, have not been fully addressed. These recommendations have not been ignored, but their merit has been assessed and found unconvincing for the present situation.[81]

One criticism of the plan is that it does not consistently address issues related to accountability. While offices responsible for implementation of a strategy have been identified, indicators of progress and targets for success have been inconsistently defined and constantly changing. To some extent, each person has been able to develop his or her own definition of what it means to be successful. While shortfalls in student performance have been clearly recognized, expectations for increasing performance have been imprecise. Over the years, indicators of progress have been established, modified, dropped, and reinstated. Without a clear and consistent set of measurable indicators of progress, success has come to be defined in terms of activities undertaken, rather than results achieved. The latest Master Plan, however, has incorporated significant steps toward establishing a true outcome-oriented accountability system with both near-term and long-term goals. For most of the indicators addressed, the plan identifies current or baseline conditions and lays out targets for improvement. Interestingly, targets have been established even for some indicators for which current data do not exist.

The hope is that this plan will lay the groundwork for improved monitoring and accountability. Maintaining a clear statement of expectations is critical if the reform is to be seen as focused and credible. Most of all, it is important to communicate the message that BCPSS is expecting to make significant progress and is willing to commit to a set of clearly defined goals.

The Master Plan as a Comprehensive Framework

Increasingly, The Master Plan has come to be a comprehensive organizer for the activities undertaken to support the reform effort and improve teaching and learning. While the earlier plans could be described as "one among many," with The Master Plan joining plans for reconstituting schools, meeting the needs of Title

[81] It should be noted that at the time these reports were written, decentralization and site-based management were very popular strategies and assumed the status of "the silver bullet du jour" of educational reform. Since then, the concept has become less popular, and many systems have found it beneficial to recentralize a number of functions.

I students, and serving students with disabilities or language needs, the plans for 2000–2001 and 2001–02 have significantly integrated efforts under a single document. For example, the 2001–02 Master Plan is quite explicit in pointing out the integration of SAFE Program Initiatives and activities to address the need of reconstitution-eligible schools into the plan. In a complementary way, the 2001 plan for the CEO's District, a district composed mainly of schools newly identified as RE, explicitly links special initiatives that will be undertaken in these schools to the six Master Plan objectives. The Remedy Plan for 2003 carefully ties initiatives to Master Plan objectives.

Needed steps have also been taken to provide linkages between and among objectives, recognizing the existence of important interconnections. Critical among these are movements toward integrating the varied activities relating to students with disabilities with activities intended for the entire school population. While Objective 3 still signals the attention that will be paid to making sure BCPSS is in compliance with federal and state laws, the needs of this population are also recognized in other objectives, especially Objective 1 concerning achievement and Objective 4 concerning management.

One area that still needs to be improved is the coordination between the processes of developing the budget and developing The Master Plan. To date, there has been a lag time between release of the budget plan for an upcoming year and release of the strategic plan guiding the school system's activities. While The Master Plan has included budgetary information linking resources to priority initiatives, this linkage occurs after the fact, when the budget already has been submitted and approved. It is important to install a process in which the two activities are more effectively synchronized in order to provide stakeholders within and external to the system much needed information that is currently unavailable in a timely manner. BCPSS has recognized this problem, including in its 2001–02 Master Plan a priority initiative that specifically addresses this need for coordination to improve the process for budgetary and strategic planning.

Impact of The Master Plan on the Schools and the System

The Master Plan provides guidance to the schools, impacting programs through the school improvement plans. Among the 25 schools that hosted site visits, only one said that the plan had no impact; the rest indicated that the plan provided a framework for planning or reinforced goals and strategies already adopted. While teachers and parents were aware of The Master Plan, the schools were fairly divided in the extent to which they believed the plan to be widely available or widely read. A few schools indicated that teachers had copies of the plan and were aware of its contents. The majority said that while there was general awareness of the plan and its focus, only those staff and parents who participated on the leadership teams were familiar with it. Nonetheless, reaction to the plan was overwhelmingly positive, with many interviewees indicating it provided a strong framework for planning. Only a limited number of negative comments were heard, and those focused on the lack of resources for carrying out activities or a perceived micromanaging of day-to-day operations by the New Board of School Commissions.

Inspection of actual school improvement plans for the schools visited indicates that of 23 plans reviewed, all but one referenced The Master Plan and linked individual school plans to its objectives. The most common linkage was made in the "Action Plan" section where crosswalks were presented between the schools' goals, objectives, and strategies with Master Plan objectives. However, many schools plans also referred to The Master Plan objectives in "SIP" sections on evidence of need, management and budget systems, and working within the local school system.

Data from the teacher survey also provide insight into the perception and perceived impact of the plan on individual schools and the system (Table 7-14). Overall, 85 percent of teachers indicated that they are aware of The Master Plan objectives and agree with them. When asked whether or not they feel The Master Plan is having a beneficial impact on their own school or the system overall,

teachers were still positive, although the proportion stating agreement dropped to 70 percent.

Table 7-14.
Teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of The Master Plan

School/teacher characteristic	Percent agreeing or strongly agreeing
A. Aware of objectives	
Total	86
Change in SPI over 3 years	
No change or decline in scores	78
Increase of 1 to 5 points	86
Increase of 6 to 10 points	87
Increase over 10 points	91
Length of tenure at school	
2 years or less	77
3-5 years	87
6-10 years	95
More than 10 years	93
B. Agree with objectives	
Total	88
Instructional level	
Elementary	86
Elementary/middle	83
Middle	86.
High	80
Change in SPI over 3 years	
No change or decline in scores	74
Increase of 1 to 5 points	83
Increase of 6 to 10 points	85
Increase over 10 points	92
Length of tenure at school	
2 years or less	75
3-5 years	85
6-10 years	92
More than 10 years	91
Teacher certification	
Provisional	79
Not provisional	88

Table 7-14.
Teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of The Master Plan (continued)

School/teacher characteristic	Percent agreeing or strongly agreeing
C. Plan is having a beneficial effect on school	
Total	70
Instructional level	
Elementary	74
Elementary/middle	69
Middle	65
High	56
Free/reduced lunch	
Less than 75 percent	63
75 percent or more	73
SPI performance	
Low scores	57
Medium scores	71
High scores	74
Change in SPI over 3 years	
No change or decline in scores	48
Increase of 1 to 5 points	65
Increase of 6 to 10 points	68
Increase over 10 points	84
Length of tenure at school	
2 years or less	59
3-5 years	69
6-10 years	70
More than 10 years	74
D. Plan is having a beneficial effect on BCPSS	
Total	69
School status	
Regular schools	69
AF/DI schools	75
Alternative schools	67
Special education schools	76
Citywide schools	51
Free/reduced lunch	
Less than 75 percent	74
75 percent or more	81
Change in SPI over 3 years	
No change or decline in scores	56
Increase of 1 to 5 points	66
Increase of 6 to 10 points	68
Increase over 10 points	62
Length of tenure at school	
2 years or less	62
3-5 years	69
6-10 years	74
More than 10 years	76

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Teacher Survey, 2001.

Although high ratings of agreement with the plan and its perceived benefits were found for all categories of schools and teachers, some interesting differences did emerge. Specifically,

- High school teachers showed less agreement with the objectives and had significantly lower opinions of the benefit of the plan on their school than elementary teachers.
- Citywide schools have significantly lower opinions of the benefit of the plan on the BCPSS overall.
- Schools with less than 75 percent of students receiving free and reduced-price lunch saw less of impact on themselves and the system than schools with percentages greater than 75 percent.
- Schools with higher SPIs and increasing SPIs were more favorable regarding the benefit of the plan to their school or the system than those with lower SPIs or SPIs that are unchanged or decreasing.
- Teachers with greater tenure at a school showed greater awareness, agreement, and perceived greater benefits for their school and the system overall than those with 2 or less years of tenure.
- Certified teachers were more in agreement with the plan than noncertified teachers

Principal support was even stronger. Ninety-nine percent of the principals said they are aware of and agree with the objectives of The Master Plan. There is very little variation in response among school type, school levels, or schools with different characteristics. Ninety-two percent said they feel that the plan is having a beneficial impact on their school and the system. Principals at alternative schools and citywide schools were somewhat less positive. At citywide schools, 88 percent feel the plan is benefiting their school and the system. At alternative schools, the comparable percentages are 86 percent and 71 percent. These figures clearly indicate a strong endorsement.

As might be expected, parental awareness of the plan is substantially lower. Approximately 42 percent of parents indicated that they were aware of the effort to improve schools in the BCPSS Master Plan. Very few differences by school characteristics were found (Table 7-15). Specifically,

- Parents in Achievement First schools showed greater awareness of The Master Plan than parents in other schools; and
- Parents in schools in which 75 percent or more of students were eligible for free and reduced-price lunch showed greater awareness than parents of students in schools with lower percentages of poverty.

Table 7-15.
Percentage of parents indicating awareness of efforts to improve schools in The Master Plan

School/principal characteristic	Aware of effort
Total	42
AF/DI status	
AF	56
DI	35
Others	41
Free/reduced lunch	
Less than 75 percent	39
75 percent or more	46

SOURCE: Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public School System, How is BCPSS Doing? An Evaluation of the City-State Partnership, Parent Survey, 2001.

Section 4.
The New Board of School Commissioners

The establishment of the New Board of School Commissioners and the City-State Partnership was a bold and innovative component of SB 795. Judging by what we have seen, it was a well-reasoned one, and we find no basis on which to argue that BCPSS should returned to its previous status of being controlled by the City of Baltimore. The Board and the state have played a major role in the progress that has been seen to date. Indeed, given the turnover in staff in key leadership positions, the Board has filled a number of roles not typically adopted by a policymaking body. This is not to say that there haven't been missteps, but the end result is that change has occurred, and it is the kind of change that was sorely needed. It is hard to imagine that without this partnership, BCPSS would have gained the ground that it has.

Background

A central feature of SB 795 was the establishment of the City-State Partnership and a New Board of School Commissioners. This Board, replacing the previous one appointed by the mayor, was boldly constructed, breaking new ground in function, in the manner of selecting members, and in the specifications for its membership. Indeed, in its design and operation, the New Board of School Commissioners stands out from others in Maryland and across the nation.

The charge to this Board was simple and direct, reflecting the concerns prompting the legislation. SB 795 states that the purpose of the Board is to:

- Raise the level of academic achievement of the students in the Baltimore City Public School System; and
- Improve the management and administration of the public school system in Baltimore City (SB 795, Section 4-303 B).

In addition, the law gave the Board both significant accountability and responsibility. Specifically, SB 795 stated that:

- The Board shall be held accountable for the academic achievement of the public school students in Baltimore City.
- The Board shall have the authority and be responsible for all functions relating to the Baltimore Public School System.

Article 3-108.1 states that the Board will consist of:

- Nine voting members jointly appointed by the Mayor of Baltimore City and the Governor (from a list of qualified individuals submitted to the Mayor and the Governor by the State Board.
- One nonvoting student member.

Further,

- Each member of the Board shall be a resident of Baltimore City.
- To the extent possible, the membership of the Board shall reflect the demographic composition of Baltimore City.
- At least four of the voting members shall possess a high level of knowledge and expertise in business and management.
- At least three of the voting members shall possesses a high level of knowledge and expertise concerning education.
- At least one of the voting members shall also possess knowledge or experience in the education of children with disabilities.

In line with the legislation, our examination of the functioning of the New Board has been guided by two overarching questions.

- To what extent have the actions of the New Board resulted in increased achievement?
- To what extent have the actions of the New Board resulted in improved management and administration?

Role Played Since the Enactment of SB 795

Since its creation, the New Board of School Commissioners has played a very active and unusual role. Rather than primarily being policymakers and agenda setters, this New Board has taken a major role in day-to-day operations of BCPSS and has had almost unprecedented engagement with all aspects of the system's functioning. Indeed, with the turnover in each of the key positions required by SB 795—including three CEOs in 4 years—the responsibility for carrying out the legislative mandate has fallen in substantial measure on the Board and its individual members. The requirements for membership established through SB 795 have provided a cadre of professionals with outstanding experience and expertise to guide reform.

SB 795 directly charges the Board with the following specific activities:

- Development of a Transition Plan, including indicators and timelines for implementing key recommendations of the 1992 Towers Perrin/ Cresap Management Study Report and the 1995 and 1995 MGT of America, Inc., Reports.
- Approval and implementation of a Master Plan that includes strategies and timelines for improving student achievement, management, and accountability.

Review of documents and discussions with key informants indicates that by and large the Board has carried out these requirements, although not all are fully in place or functioning as well as they need to be.

There have been steady and substantial gains in student achievement, although current levels of performance continue to fall far short of adequate. A wide variety of curricular changes have been put in place, extended, or reinforced. The emphasis on a systemwide curriculum seems to be paying off, and retention and recruitment efforts have whittled away at the problem of an underprepared and transient teaching force. The new promotion and retention policy is a step in the right direction, although there are a number of signs that this policy and the services established to support it need some refinement and rethinking.

The picture with regard to management and accountability has had a much rockier history, but now seems to be moving in the right direction. Two areas of special concern should be noted here.

First, the mandate for establishing a comprehensive system of accountability has not been fully realized. While the new Performance-Based Evaluation System has been built with a strong accountability thrust in mind, it is at present only partially implemented. Early Master Plans contained measurable indicators of success, but these indicators have changed across years and The Master Plan for 2000–2001 fails to include any quantitative indicators against which success can be measured. The Master Plan for 2001–2002 does incorporate such indicators; however, the extent to which these indicators will be adopted and used to guide decisionmaking has yet to be proven. And READ, which is expected to provide research and evaluation data for assessing progress and modifying programs, has been only partially effective. While test-based data on student progress have been collected and released on an annual basis, comprehensive program evaluations have not occurred.

Second, while a number of important steps have been taken in establishing an effective management structure, progress has been interrupted by staff turnover at the highest levels. This situation could be described as one in which the glass is either half empty or half full, depending on one's point of view. Those who see the glass half empty will focus on the turnover in key positions such as the CEO, CFO, and most recently, the CAO. The changes that were needed in management of procurement and management information services will also be considered the result of faulty judgment on the part of the Board in their initial decision making. However, those who see the glass as half full will read history differently. They will focus on the changes that have been made in reporting relationships as

being responsive to SB 795 (key staff reporting directly to the CEO, reorganization of the scope and focus of the area offices, establishment of the CEO's District), and applaud the extent to which BCPSS has moved forward in aligning both administrative and instructional units in service of educational outcomes. They will highlight improvement in the financial and student reporting systems that have been achieved despite staffing and organizational adjustments. They will say that decisions regarding key leadership positions were made wisely, given the status of BCPSS at the time, and worked swiftly to correct problems when deficiencies were noted (for example, the appointment of Carmen Russo was made when the Board recognized the need for a person with strong instructional credentials, especially at the high school level).

Steps Toward the Future

It was noted earlier that the New Board of School Commissioners has assumed an unusual set of duties for a typically policymaking organization. Involvement in day-to-day operations has been significant. Drawing on the expertise in education, business, and working with students with disabilities of its specifically selected members, the Board has established issue-specific committees that work directly with staff members in both solving immediate problems and developing a strategic plan to address longer term issues. To some extent, these committees have filled gaps in what should be considered BCPSS' internal management structure, providing direction and oversight as positions have become vacant or incumbents have failed to provide satisfactory administration and support. While the strength of these committees has waxed and waned depending on the Board's perceptions of the adequacy of top management, committees continue to function and the Board members are very active in administration and management.

While the energy and passion of the Board members is to be commended, it is unlikely, and perhaps unreasonable, to expect this level of involvement in the long run. By and large, the original Board members, and those who have replaced them, have professions and responsibilities outside the school system. Further, if an effective management and administrative structure is established, the need for this level of involvement should also diminish. If the system has turned a corner, an opinion held by many, it should be time for the Board to rethink its role and step back from direct management. While it is never easy to decide when the "baby is ready to walk on its own" (an analogy used by the Board members themselves), the ultimate success of the City-State Partnership requires the establishment of a strong cadre of chief officers who can assume full responsibility for management and oversight. We hope that the New Board of School Commissioners can begin to undertaken this role change in the near future.

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8. Findings on Sufficiency of Funding

Adequacy of Funding for BCPSS

An area of considerable debate has been whether or not BCPSS is funded "adequately." Several studies have identified significant needs for additional funds to support the system. Deferred maintenance and capital renewal are two areas where such needs have been identified and remain.

Recent reports from two groups of consultants on school funding in the State of Maryland provide recommendations for funding standards at the school level that also suggest the current levels of support to BCPSS are inadequate (as are supports to other jurisdictions). Our analysis confirms that based on current staffing profiles, BCPSS falls far short of the standards these consultants propose, and that extra resources would be needed to bring schools in line with the quality standards they have recommended. While we have some concerns about the methods used in these analyses, we recognize that they represent accepted practice in much of today's school finance world. Given the consultants' recommendations and our analyses of the current BCPSS situation, we feel that more funding is definitely needed to bring school staffing up to quality standards.

BCPSS has made good use of additional funds provided through the City-State Partnership. Proposals contained in the Remedy Plan for 2003 also seem well thought out and target areas in which extra resources are likely to bring continued improvements.

This section is somewhat different from the others in two respects. First, it contains much discussion of funding levels and how funds are or should be allocated, but it does not evaluate BCPSS management or its progress in achieving its goals.

Second, it addresses an issue that has been something of a moving target throughout the duration of our evaluation. Contemporaneously with some other U.S. states, Maryland has decided to undertake a thorough evaluation of its statewide education funding system. The evaluation has included assessing the formula for efficiency, functionality, and fairness; and conducting some detailed, informed studies of what things cost and how much funding is needed to achieve certain outcomes.

Specifically, two groups sponsored education funding adequacy studies in Maryland. They are the ad hoc executive Maryland Commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence, also known as the Thornton Commission after its chairperson, Howard University Professor Alvin Thornton. The Thornton Commission is composed of local and state elected officials and others appointed by the governor. They hired the education finance consulting firm Augenblick & Myers (A&M).

The second sponsoring group, the New Maryland Education Coalition, consists largely of well-known civic leaders from the private, nonprofit, and public sectors. They hired another prominent education consulting firm, Management Analysis & Planning (MAP), headed by James Guthrie and Richard Rothstein.

Though these are Maryland-wide studies and their recommendations, if implemented, would affect the entire state, the impact on Baltimore City would likely be among the most profound across Maryland school districts. Baltimore City is more dependent on state funding than any other district; it contains, by far, the state's largest concentration of poor and special needs students, who are most affected (because of separate, larger multipliers in the state allocation formula for them) by any changes in state funding.

The MAP and A&M studies were conducted throughout the academic year 2000–2001 and their final reports presented to respective clients just this past summer. The Thornton Commission has completed most of its analyses, but continues its deliberations and public hearings into November 2001. Hereafter, the Commission will make recommendations to the Maryland General Assembly for how the state education funding system should be changed, if at all, and which

revenue sources should be used to cover any expenditure increases.

As this report is being written in November 2001, not all the Thornton Commission or Maryland General Assembly deliberations on the topic have been concluded.

Study Questions and Evaluation Design

Before the Westat evaluation began, we assumed that we would be conducting a stand-alone study of BCPSS funding issues. We began with this set of questions that apply to funding issues as well as others from our Statement of Work.

1. Are the fiscal resources available to BCPSS (including the additional funding under SB 795) sufficient to achieve overall reform goals and objectives?
2. Compare the areas of need identified in the funding Remedy Plans developed by BCPSS for FY 2001 and 2002 to our findings concerning the sufficiency for funding for BCPSS.
3. Analyze the expenditures of BCPSS from the additional funding provided pursuant to SB 795 and determine the extent to which those expenditures have contributed to the success or specific initiatives under The Master Plan, including those relating to management performance.
4. Identify any expenditures from the additional funding that have not had a positive impact on the System's reform efforts.
5. Compare the prioritization of expenditures from the additional funding provided under SB 795 to the prioritization of expenditures in the rest of the System's annual budget.
6. Based on analysis of the overall funds available to BCPSS and BCPSS' expenditure of those funds, including expenditure of the funds provided pursuant to SB 795, make recommendations concerning the levels, use and sufficiency of funding for BCPSS.

Even before we began our study, however, the MAP and A&M funding adequacy studies were gearing up, and client interest shifted somewhat more toward an evaluation that paralleled, evaluated, and encompassed those studies and their recommendations. The thought was that those studies were likely to be setting the funding agenda in the state and, particularly, in Baltimore City and should be incorporated into our analysis. It was first suggested that Westat link its evaluation with the MAP and A&M studies, but subsequent discussions settled on a more separate, but still parallel, analysis.

By the start of the evaluation, among other changes in focus, Westat had agreed:

- To evaluate the "adequacy" of BCPSS' funding through "benchmarking and simple detective work on prices."
- To acknowledge that it is not analytically sensible to attribute outcomes to particular revenue sources (individual expenditures cannot be individually and separately linked to individual performance outcomes, no matter what the intent of the reform plan to link them and no matter how they may appear linked in the minds of government or budget officials. An individual expenditure increase may induce additional outcomes other than that intended, or none at all), or priorities to relative dollar amounts.
- To evaluate the A&M and MAP studies in order to help our clients prepare for the day when they will be asked about the other studies.
- To make the larger funding picture clear. In order to do that, we would need to go beyond considering only the expenditures provided pursuant to SB 795. This could possibly involve consideration of equity and adequacy comparisons across Maryland school systems.

Instruments/Analyses

To conduct this rather wide-ranging evaluation of education funding and funding adequacy as they

pertain to BCPSS, Westat conducted the following activities:

- Review of the literature on funding adequacy;
- Review of documents from the MAP and A&M studies, and the Maryland Commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence (the Thornton Commission);
- Attendance at two Commission Hearings (Annapolis, Urbana);
- Review of the literature on funding equity;
- Review of BCPSS and MSDE financial documents (data assembly and calculations derived from those documents);
- Review of popular press reports on funding equity or adequacy in Maryland and the Thornton Commission;
- Consultations with Margaret Goertz, education finance expert;
- Comparisons to New Jersey's *Abbot* court case and ruling and its implications; and
- Calculations of the impact on a sample of BCPSS schools of the MAP and A&M recommendations.

Legislative and Judicial History

Maryland's Constitution requires the General Assembly to establish and maintain a "thorough and efficient System of Free Public Schools." In *Hornbeck* v. *Somerset* (1983), the State Court of Appeals upheld the state's system of financing schools. Uniformity of spending among schools districts was not essential, the court ruled, "so long as efforts are made…to minimize the impact of undeniable and inevitable demographic and environmental disadvantages of any given child."[82]

The General Assembly in 1984 strengthened the state's role in "equalizing" funding to offset local wealth disparities. In 1987, Governor Schaefer recommended and the General Assembly passed the Action Plan for Educational Excellence (APEX), the largest 5-year increase in state aid to public schools, and concerns about the results achieved for students have persisted since then.

1989—The Sondheim Commission

To assure that state appropriations were used effectively, the Governor's Commission on School Performance (Sondheim Commission) in 1989 recommended "the establishment of a comprehensive system of public accountability in which each school, each school system and the state are held responsible for student performance." Accountability, the Commission stressed, must be based on three fundamental principles:

- All children can learn.
- All children have the right to attend schools in which they can progress and learn.
- All children shall have a real opportunity to learn equally rigorous content.

In the years since the publication of the Sondheim Commission Report, Maryland has built an accountability system focused on improving school attendance, academic performance, and academic or occupational program completion. Through the Maryland School Performance Program, standards have been set to measure the progress of schools. MSPP requires school systems and schools to analyze their results and carry out long-range plans to improve them.

The problems of disparate results achieved across Maryland school systems and schools, the generally poor performance of schools with high

[82]In 1983, the Task force to Study Funding of Public Education (Civiletti Commission) identified eight principles to guide state education funding: (1) equality of education opportunity, (2) adequacy, (3) funding fairness, (4) special needs, (5) effectiveness and efficiency, (6) local control, (7) accountability, and (8) simplification. Maryland has a long history of attempting to provide equal educational opportunities for all its children, including the initiation of one of the first funding equalization programs in the nation in 1922.

proportions of poor children, the heavy concentrations of Maryland's minority children served by the lowest achieving metropolitan area school systems, remained, however. Furthermore, local jurisdictions still varied in their ability and willingness to support public education, and state funding programs were not adjusted for the varying costs among jurisdictions of providing services.

Good schools usually have strong local support. While 55.3 percent of the money spend on public school operations in fiscal year 1992 was provided by local jurisdictions (40.6 percent came from the state and 4.1 percent came from the federal government), several factors affected the abilities of school systems to meet the needs of their students:

1. **Wealth, or the concentration of students who live in poverty.** Repeatedly, educators have acknowledged that poverty, and the factors associated with it, has a tremendous impact on schooling and the services needed to provide students with an adequate education. Of all predictors of student outcomes, poverty stands out as the single most important, and most consistent, correlate of academic achievement. Baltimore, with its high concentration of students who live in poverty, as well as students with other special needs, faces special challenges in providing a quality education for all its students.[83]

2. **The fiscal capacity,** or ability of local jurisdictions to raise revenues, varied among local jurisdictions. With the highest taxable wealth base, Worcester County could collect nearly four times more property and income taxes than could Somerset County, with the lowest tax base at the same tax rate. Although the state used an "equalization formula" to offset local taxable wealth disparities in foundation aid, the Teachers' Retirement Program, which was 19 percent of total state aid to education in fiscal year 1994, reduced the impact of the foundation equalization formula.

3. **Tax effort,** or the extent to which local governments generate revenue for public services from their fiscal resources, varied. Only Baltimore City and Prince George's County made a tax effort above the state average, and Talbot County's effort, the lowest in the state, was less than half the state average.

4. **Education effort,** or willingness of local jurisdictions to fund schools, varied. Some devoted resources to education beyond their apparent means and others, most notably Talbot County, fell well short of what would be expected, given their wealth.

5. **Competing demands** among public services for a share of local appropriations exacerbated funding disparities and inadequacies in some school systems. For example, despite Baltimore City's high tax effort and near average education effort, it devoted the highest percentage of locally raised funds to public safety in the state and the lowest percentage of locally raised funds to elementary and secondary education.

1994—The Hutchinson Commission

In light of the data showing successes or failures as well as the obstacles facing Maryland school systems and schools, the Governor's Commission on School Funding (the Hutchinson Commission) in 1994 proposed a new model for school funding. Among the principles suggested for making funding decisions were:

- **Adequacy—**Each school system and school in the state must have the resources and staff competencies, along with the professional and community will, to provide each student with a rigorous, fundamental education. State and local governments must share the responsibility for meeting this commitment, with the local share proportionate to the jurisdiction's capacity to collect the funds

[83]For an extended discussion of the deleterious effects that geographic concentration of poverty has on individuals, even beyond the usual effects of poverty, see Paul. A. Jargowski, *Poverty and Place: Ghettos, Barrios, and the American City*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1997; and Jens Ludwig, et al., "The Effects of Urban Poverty on Educational outcomes," Mimeo, 2001.

needed through property, income, and other taxes.

- **Educational opportunity—**Because of the profound effect education has on an individual's future as well as Maryland's social and economic heath, the state must devote addition resources to children with special needs so they can progress and learn equally rigorous content. To break the generational cycle of poverty, particular attention must be paid o ensuring that children living in poverty succeed in school.

- **Results—**Each school system and school must continuously improve the education it provides to students, and must ultimately be responsible to the state for the results it achieves. Flexibility to meet the needs of unique populations in each school and school system must be coupled with a clear, strong accountability system that provides incentives for improvement and imposes sanctions on failing schools. All state and local policies should reflect this emphasis on results.

- **Integrated services—**Education can no longer be viewed as an entity distinct from other public services. With a clear emphasis on addressing the needs of children, educational and other services for children and families must be integrated through schools.

Central to these principles was the guiding belief that all children were capable of high levels of learning and that money well spent to overcome barriers to learning could make a real difference in the life of a child.

Traditionally, the funding Maryland and other states provided for children was based on what school districts spent, regardless of whether that spending had achieved results. The Hutchinson Commission felt that the quality and usefulness of school data were improving such that the main challenge facing policymakers was determining *what it costs to achieve success* for each and every student.

The Commission argued that achieving success becomes more complicated and more costly for students facing significant barriers to learning. Among these barriers are poverty, disabilities, and limited proficiency in English. Some national and local studies of academic performance argued that poverty was the greatest obstacle to participation and academic success in school. That did not mean that poor children can not learn as well as their more advantaged peers. However, to assure that each child living in poverty has a real opportunity to learn rigorous content, a continuum of services would need to exist in the school and community from birth through secondary school to reduce or eliminate the barriers to their learning.

The Hutchinson Commission recommended the following:

1. Provide foundation funding that is adequate for school systems to provide a rigorous, fundamental education.

2. Require local jurisdictions to provide funding necessary for high-quality education.

3. Increase and target funding for children living in or near poverty.

4. Mandate the integration of existing and additional resources and services for families and children beginning at birth and extending through secondary school to address problems that interfere with learning.

5. Provide additional funding for special education services.

6. Provide additional funding for limited English proficiency services.

7. Provide additional funding for services to highly able students.

8. Freeze at the fiscal year 1995 level the state's contribution to the Teachers' Retirement Program and continue funding at that level.

9. Create incentives for school performance that reward success and improvement, assist schools needing to improve, and impose

sanctions for consistent failure in schools and school systems.

10. Require school systems to utilize fully the expertise of principals, teachers, parents, and other members of school communities in assuring the success of all students.

11. Require staff development for teachers and principals that is cost-effective, focused on school improvement, and firmly linked to the Maryland School Performance Program.

12. Require the State Board of Education to review all collective bargaining agreements between school systems and employees to determine if any provisions conflict with State Board case decisions.

13. Require the State Board of Education to review the exemptions from state law afforded to individual jurisdictions to determine if they inhibit a school system's ability to provide adequate educational programs.

14. Under current law, state aid to public schools will continue to increase $634 million over the next 5 fiscal years, due primarily to enrollment growth. To fully implement these recommendations, and thus achieve the principles of adequacy, opportunity, results, and integrated services, overall state funding by fiscal year 1999 should increase by an additional $571 million, raising the total increase over that time period to approximately $1.2 billion by fiscal year 1999.

The Hutchinson Commission Report was not delivered unanimously, however. Four of the approximately 20 members wrote a dissent, which included:

> All commissioners share the same goal: to ensure that Maryland's public school students receive a thorough and efficient education based on sound educational policies with attention to the individual child. Unfortunately, the majority report is fundamentally flawed because it is not premised on either fiscal or educational realities.
>
> Make no mistake about it, the substantive long-term recommendations of the majority are not affordable and necessarily will translate into a major tax increase. We need to use our existing educational resources better before we embark on a course that will lead to increased taxes for our citizens without ascertainable and corresponding benefits.

1995—*Bradford, et al.* v *Maryland Board of Education, et al.*

Six years ago, Keith A. Bradford, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, and others filed two separate suits in the State Circuit Court for Baltimore City, both alleging that the state was failing to provide the students of Baltimore City with the constitutionally required "thorough and efficient" education. The Bradford plaintiffs are parents of children attending Baltimore City public schools who are at risk of educational failure, meaning that they live in poverty or otherwise are subject to economic, social, or educational circumstances increasing the odds that they will not receive an adequate education. The Bradford plaintiffs sued the Maryland State Board of Education, the Governor, the State Superintendent of Schools, and the State Comptroller of the Treasury in December 1994. The city case, filed on September 15, 1995, was brought by the mayor, the City Council of Baltimore, and the Board of School Commissioners of Baltimore City and its president against the same state defendants. The Governor and the Comptroller of the Treasury were dismissed from both suits after the court found that "relief can be granted without the Governor being a party to the litigation." The suits were consolidated for trial.

In October 1996, the court entered partial summary judgment for the city and for the Bradford plaintiffs and held that BCPSS school-children were not receiving the constitutionally required "thorough and efficient" education. The court first affirmed the relevant legal standard,

holding that the "thorough and efficient" language of Article VIII requires that "all students in Maryland be provided with an education that is adequate when measured by contemporary standards" (10/18/96 Order ¶ 1). Next, the court held:

> There is no genuine material factual dispute in these cases as to whether the public school children in Baltimore City are being provided with an education that is adequate when measured by contemporary educational standards. This Court finds, based on the evidence submitted by the parties …that the public schoolchildren in Baltimore City are not being provided with an education that is adequate when measured by contemporary educational standards.

The court's partial summary judgment decision did not resolve the parties' disputes over the cause of that inadequate education and the appropriate remedy. During the 1996 proceedings, the state contended that the city was to blame for failing to manage the BCPSS adequately. The city contended that the state was not providing funding sufficient to support a constitutionally adequate educational system. The Bradford plaintiffs contended that the combination of factors was involved, and that a remedy would need to address both inadequate funding and management problems. The court set the case for trial to resolve these issues.

After numerous court-assisted negotiations, the parties reached a settlement and signed the 5-year consent decree, which imposed two primary obligations on the parties. First, it addressed the state's concerns with management of the Baltimore City schools by setting up the City-State Partnership, embodied in the New Board of School Commissioners jointly appointed by the Governor and the Mayor, to manage the schools. Second, it provided additional funds for the schools, $30 million in FY 1998 and $50 million in each of FYs 1999 through 2002 for operating funds, plus $10 million annually for capital improvements. (Consent Decree ¶¶ 47-48). In April 1997, the General Assembly of Maryland codified the principal terms of the decree at SB 795. (See SB 795, 1997 Reg. Session.)

Because the parties were aware in 1996 that $230 million over 5 years was not enough to provide an adequate education to Baltimore City's unique population of disadvantaged children, the consent decree provided a mechanism for the New Board to request additional funds from the state throughout the term of the decree. It also provided that, after June 1, 2000, if the state failed to satisfy the New Board's request for additional funds, the New Board could go back to court for a determination of whether additional funding was needed in order for the BCPSS to provide a constitutionally adequate education.

Thus, in any year during the decree's 5-year term (from FY 1998 through FY 2002), the New Board could ask the state for additional funds necessary to run the schools. If the Board presented the state with a detailed plan setting out why it needed more money and what it would be used for, the state had an obligation to use its "best efforts" to satisfy the New Board's request for additional funds, subject only to the availability of funds (Consent Decree ¶ 52).

1997—The Consent Decrees in the *Vaughn G.* and *Bradford* Cases

As these legal cases, and the consent decrees that resulted from them, have been described elsewhere in this report, we include here only the "Financial Resources" section:

> As provided in this section, the State of Maryland shall provide BCPS with additional funds to assist the Board in implementing the City-State partnership, to improve the quality of public education in Baltimore City, and to raise the level of academic achievement in BCPS. This financial commitment shall be separate from established State funding pursuant to APEX and other current State funds provided to BCPS. The additional funds enumerated below may not be used to supplant funds

provided to or for the benefit of BCPS by the City, and may not be used to meet any statutory obligation of the City to maintain levels of local funding for education.

If new revenue becomes available to the State during FY 1998 through FY 2002, and if the State dedicates all or part of those new revenues to education generally, then BCPS shall receive its designated share of those revenues without reduction of the additional funds detailed in this Decree.

The additional funds provided by the State as described in this Decree shall not be provided by reducing any other State funds, provided to Baltimore City. Nothing in this Decree, however, shall prevent the Governor or the General Assembly from reducing local aid to Baltimore City as part of any general statewide reduction in local aid or from exercising executive and legislative discretion with respect to any local aid for special project or purpose.

The $12 million in additional State discretionary funds appropriated for reconstitution eligible schools and teacher salary parity in the FY 1997 State budget bill shall be released as provided by the terms of that bill. For purposes of implementing this provision, the phrase "creation of and progress in implementation of a City-State Partnership" shall mean the date upon which this Decree shall become fully effective in accordance with paragraph 4 of this Decree. Upon implementation and approval of the performance-based evaluation system required by the terms of the FY 1997 State Budget Bill, the Board in FY 1998 may request payment of the $2 million withheld in the FY 1997 State Budget Bill.

The State shall provide to the Baltimore City Public Schools the following additional funds subject to appropriation by the General Assembly:

FY 1998	$30 million
FY 1999	$50 million
FY 2000	$50 million
FY 2001	$50 million
FY 2002	$50 million

If these additional funds are not appropriated in any of the designated fiscal years, this entire Decree shall become null and void as of the end of the last fiscal year for which these additional funds were appropriated.

In each of Fiscal Years 1998 through 2002, the State shall also provide at least $10 million to BCPS through the Maryland School Construction Program ("Program"). These funds shall be made available in the proportion of 90 percent State funds to 10 percent City funds. The State shall provide the funds before the City is required to provide its share. Any additional funds requested by the Board under the Program in excess of $10 million per year, if granted, shall be provided subject to the formula applicable to the City for matching funds in the Program.

In Fiscal Years 1998 through 2002, if BCPS' actual audited enrollment for any fiscal year is less than BCPS' current enrollment projections for those fiscal years, BCPS will not be required to return to the State APEX funds to the extent of the difference between the current enrollment projections and the audited enrollment for each fiscal year. For purposes of the Decree, "BCPS current enrollment projections" means the following:

FY 1998	101,748.0 FTE
FY 1999	97,842.5 FTE
FY 2000	94,616.5 FTE
FY 2001	91,479.0 FTE
FY 2002	89,197.5 FTE

The additional funds described in paragraph 47 are provided (a) to improve educational performance of schools having a high percentage of students living in poverty, (b) to improve the educational performance of reconstitution eligible schools and other schools that are both failing to meet MSPP standards and failing to show progress toward meeting those standards: (c) to make progress toward meeting teacher salary parity with Baltimore County; and (d) to implement other improvements bearing a direct relationship to classroom instruction, such as investments in technology, management information systems, professional development and evaluation, and curriculum. A substantial proportion of the additional funds shall be utilized for programs, services, and/or resources that have a direct and substantial effect on improving academic achievement.

The dispute between the State and the BCPS related to the legislative audit of the 1994-95 school enrollment count is resolved by this Decree with not further action to be taken.

For Fiscal Years 1999 through 2002 the Board may request funds in amounts greater than those described above from the State through the currently established State budget process, if the Board presents a detailed plan showing why such funds are needed and how they would be spent. The State will use best efforts to satisfy any such request, subject to the availability of funds.

For Fiscal Years 2001 and 2002, the Board may also request funds in amounts greater than those described above, after completion of the interim evaluation of the City-State Partnership. If the Board requests such funds, the *Bradford* and *Vaughn G.* Plaintiffs will be offered an opportunity to present to the Board and to the State in writing their views on the request for such funds. The State and the Board may negotiate from April 30, 2000 through June 1, 2000 regarding such requests, and the State and the Board shall consider the views of the independent consultant and the Plaintiffs in the *Bradford* and *Vaughn G.* cases. If the State and the Board do not reach agreement, the Board, on or after June 1, 2000, may seek relief from the Circuit Court of Baltimore City for funding amounts greater than those described above.

2000—*Bradford, et al.* v *Maryland Board of Education, et al.*

The consent decree permitted the New Board to request additional funds from the state based on the results of the intermediate evaluation (Consent Decree ¶ 53). The independent expert's report, issued in February 2000, asserted a need for substantial additional funding. The state and New Board of Baltimore City School Commissioners had until June 1, 2000, to negotiate over the request. In June 2000, the New Board and the Bradford plaintiffs filed a Petition for Further Relief Pursuant to the Consent Decree. In this petition, the plaintiffs sought additional funding from the state.

The court held a hearing on the New Board and the Bradford plaintiffs' petition. According to the evidence presented to the court, the state had provided BCPSS a list of state funds for FY 2001 and FY 2002 to be directly tied to the BCPSS' $49.7 million Remedy Plan for FY 2001. In examining this list, the court declared that there were items that could not be expended on the Remedy Plan in either FY 2001 or FY 2002.

Based on the evidence, the court indicated that $1.1 million of the $33.8 million promised by the State could not be expended on BCPSS' FY 2001 plan because BCPSS did not meet requirements to qualify for these funds, and $12.8 million was the funding BCPSS would have otherwise received. Therefore, the court declared, the state was only providing $19.9 million in additional monies to fund the $49.7 million Remedy Plan.

The court further declared that of the $49.7 million that the State asserted was to be allocated to the FY 2002 Remedy Plan, $1.1 million could not be expended on the plan and $24.7 million would have otherwise been received by the BCPSS. Therefore, the court declared, the state was only providing $23.9 million in additional monies for the FY 2002 plan.

Finally, the court declared that, in light of the constitutional mandate of "thorough and efficient" education, the allocation of $19.9 million for 2001 and the allocation of $23.9 million for 2002 out of a $940 million budget surplus in FY 2001 was not making a "best effort" out of the available funds.

As the court recognized in 1996 during proceeding on plaintiffs' motion for partial summary judgment, an education is not only of paramount importance to children and society, it is also a constitution right of every Maryland schoolchild. This conclusion is mandated by the Maryland Court of Appeals' direction in *Hornbeck* v *Somerset County Board of Education*, 295 Md. 597, 638-39 (1983). In Hornbeck, the Court of Appeals held that the right to an adequate education is guaranteed by Article VIII of the Maryland Constitution. That is,

> The General Assembly …shall by Law establish throughout the State a thorough and efficient System of free Public Schools; and shall provide by taxation or otherwise, for their maintenance. (Md. Const. Art. VIII § 1.)

Consistent with Hornbeck, the court previously held that "the thorough and efficient language of Article VIII requires that all students in Maryland's public schools be provided with an education that is adequate when measured by contemporary education standards." In granting partial summary judgment to the Bradford plaintiffs and the city, the court in its order of October 18, 1996, determined that the state's own educational standards, as well as other contemporary education standards, established that Baltimore City schoolchildren were not receiving a constitutionally adequate education.

On June 26, 2000, the court declared that, although the management changes and new funding brought about by the consent decree have resulted in improvements to both the management and instructional programs of the Baltimore City public schools, the public schoolchildren in Baltimore City still are not being provided with an education that is adequate when measured by contemporary education standards. The court also declared that additional funds provided for the Baltimore City public schools in the state budget for FY 2001 fell far short of these levels and would not enable the New Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners to provide the city's school children with a constitutionally adequate education when measured by contemporary educational standards during FYs 2001 and 2002. The level of new operating funds provided by the state budget also fell substantially short of the $49.7 million sought by the New Board as an initial first step in implementing its comprehensive remedy plan. Given the substantial budget surplus and new sources of revenue available in FY 2001, the state had not made its "best efforts" to fund the Remedy Plan and to make a reasonable down payment on the additional funding of approximately $2,000 to $2,500 per pupil that is needed to meet those standards.

The Court declared that while additional funding was required, the amount of funding required could not be determined with absolute precision. The court determined, however, that BCPSS needed additional funding of approximately $2,000 to $2,600 per pupil for educational operating expenses for FYs 2001 and 2001, based on (a) the findings of the independent evaluator jointly hired by the Maryland State Board of Education and the New Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners: (b) the comprehensive Remedy Plan developed by the New Board; (c) the amount the funds the state has provided to reconstitute the three Baltimore City schools discussed previously; and (d) all of the other evidence presented by the parties.

Recent Studies with Funding Implications

Since 1997, other studies, specific to BCPSS, have been conducted that recommend changes or improvements that can only be made at a price. Some of these studies were commissioned specifically to address Master Plan objectives and City-State Partnership agreements.

For example, 3/D International's December 2000 report, *Facility Utilization Study: Initial Recommendations*, asserted:

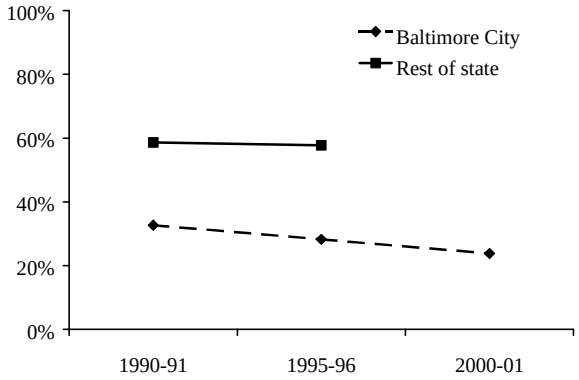
> Approximately $604 million in deficiencies were identified in 1997 for schools related to deferred maintenance and capital renewal items. Even with the ongoing capital improvement expenditures since then, the amount of accumulated deficiency costs are estimated to have grown to approximately $680 million (p. 8).

Current and Recent Funding Levels

Per-pupil total expenditures in BCPSS are now approaching $10,000. Of this amount, about one-quarter is provided by local sources (i.e., City of Baltimore residents). The rest comes from the state and federal governments. BCPSS has one of the lowest local revenue shares among Maryland school districts. This is to be expected because state and federal revenues are provided in larger proportions to school districts of relatively lower wealth, with relatively lower tax bases. Moreover, BCPSS' local share has declined in recent years (Figure 8-1).

Included in the funds BCPSS receives are some types unique to Baltimore—direct or indirect products of the Consent Decrees, SB 795, and subsequent agreements (Table 8-1). City/State Partnership Funds come from the state and account for about 6 percent of BCPSS' revenue. Remedy Plan funds, which also come from the state, accounted for about 3 percent of BCPSS revenues last year. Finally, because of the "hold harmless" clause in the state funding mechanism, both the City of Baltimore and the State of Maryland provide funding to BCPSS based on 1999–2000 year enrollments, disregarding the decline in BCPSS enrollments since. This accounts for another 3 to 6 percent of BCPSS revenues.

Figure 8-1.
Local share of current revenues provided by BCPSS and the rest of state: Various years



SOURCE: MSDE and BCPSS FY2002 budget.

Table 8-1.
BCPSS revenues from various sources (in $millions)

Source	FY 1998	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002
City/State Partnership Funds (SB795)	$30	$50	$50	$50	$50
Remedy Plan				33	55
FTE nonadjustment from city				6	12
FTE nonadjustment from state				11	22
Total		50	50	100	134

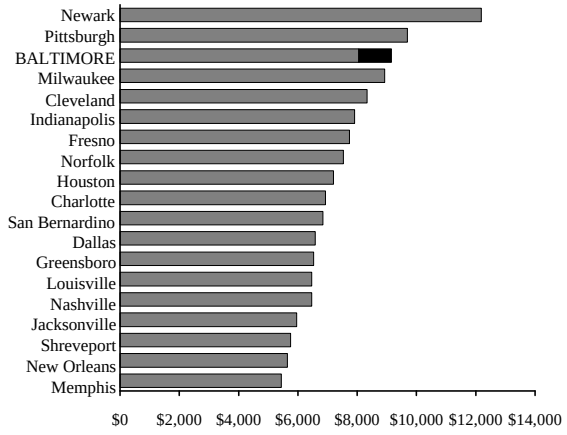
SOURCE: BCPSS, Proposed Uses of City-State Partnership Funds, FY 1998–2002, and Westat calculations.

Comparing Baltimore's Expenditures to Other Districts'

How does Baltimore's level of public school spending compare to that of other school districts? Naturally, the response to that question depends on the choice of comparison group. Figure 8-2 employs data from the Educational Research Service (ERS) on per-pupil expenditure for the academic year 2000-2001 for 18 large,

central-city school districts, and adds the same for BCPSS, as derived from system budgets. Baltimore's level of spending this past year ranked high in this group, below Newark, close to the same level as Pittsburgh and Milwaukee, and above the rest of the districts in the group. But 12 percent of Baltimore's expenditure derives from the supplemental funds emanating from the City-State Partnership.

Figure 8-2.
Per-pupil total current expenditure in 19 large urban school districts: 2000–2001



NOTE: The black portion of the Baltimore line indicates funds from the City-State Partnership.

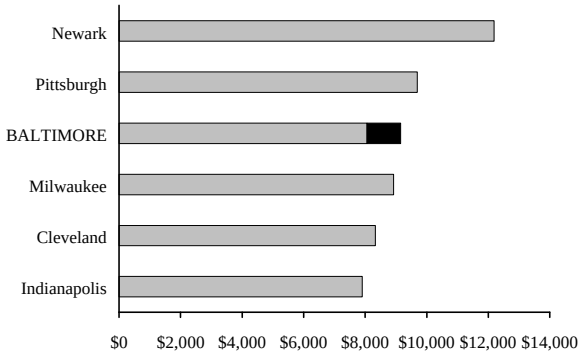
SOURCE: Educational Research Service, Local School Budget Profile prepared for BCPSS, 2000–01; and BCPSS proposed fiscal 2001–02 budget.

These districts face a variety of different circumstances, however, and some might argue that this unrepresentative national sample of city districts that provide data to ERS is not the most appropriate comparison group for BCPSS. The Council of Great City Schools has recommended using Milwaukee and New Orleans as benchmarks for Baltimore, based on similar size, age, and demographic structure. As one can see from Figure 8-2, BCPSS' per-pupil expenditure is very close to Milwaukee's and about 50 percent higher than New Orleans'.

These comparisons, of course, show only spending amounts, and not relative needs, adequacy, or efficiency of that spending.

Another appropriate comparison group might be regionally bounded, as that assumes a similar city age, demographic structure, and cost of living. Figure 8-3 compares BCPSS' per-pupil spending to the other Northeast-Midwest cities in the ERS sample. In this comparison, Baltimore's level of spending appears to lie in the middle of the pack, below Newark, close to the same level as Pittsburgh and Milwaukee, and above Indianapolis. If the Partnership Funds were excluded, however, Baltimore's spending would rank near the bottom of this group's, similar to the spending levels of Cleveland and Indianapolis.

Figure 8-3.
Per-pupil total current expenditure in 6 large urban Northeast-Midwest school districts: 2000–2001

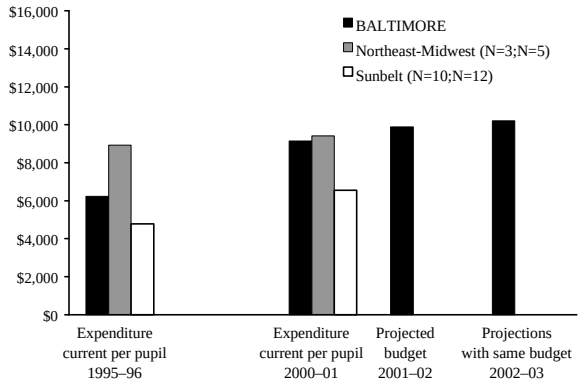


SOURCE: Educational Research Service, Local School Budget Profile prepared for BCPSS, 2000–01; and BCPSS proposed fiscal 2001–02 budget.

This relative parity achieved by 2000–2001 for BCPSS is a result of increased spending over the course of the City-State Partnership. Adding data from ERS for the 1995–96 academic year, and adding BCPSS budget numbers for that year, as well as the current and next projected years, we produce Figure 8-4 below. The Northeast-Midwest estimate is sketchier for 1995–96, because Cleveland and Indianapolis were not included in the ERS data for that year (probably, the 1995–96 "Northeast-Midwest" bar would be shorter if those two cities had been included), but the rise in BCPSS per-pupil spending appears large, nonetheless. These figures are not adjusted for inflation, but the level of inflation was low over this time period.

Partnership Funds probably represent about 15 percent of BCPSS spending in the year 2001–02.

Figure 8-4.
Per-pupil total current expenditures for BCPSS and two groups of large urban school districts: Various years



SOURCE: Educational Research Service, Local School Budget Profile for BCPSS, 1995–96, and Local School Budget Profile prepared for BCPSS, 2000–01; and BCPSS annual budgets.

As of November 19, 2001, the Thornton Commission has made preliminary recommendations to restructure Maryland's school finance system by enhancing the foundation program and establishing three categorical programs for students with special needs: 1) special education students; 2) students with limited English proficiency; and 3) students from situations of economic disadvantage (based on free and reduced-price lunch counts). The preliminary recommendations provide for a 5-year phase-in beginning in FY 2003 (July 1, 2002). When fully phased-in (FY 2007), Baltimore City would receive approximately $14,552 per pupil, including $11,229 in state-mandated aid. (Local and federal aid to BCPSS is estimated based on historical growth.)

How BCPSS Has Spent Additional Monies Provided Through the Partnership and Remedy Plan

We looked briefly at how BCPSS has spent the extra money provided in the past by General Assembly to see if the evidence suggests that this money is being spent wisely or poorly. We looked at both the extra funds provided through the partnership monies, starting with transition year funds of approximately $30 million through the yearly supplements of $50 million, and the funds provided through the Remedy Plan for 2001 and 2002, as well as the plan proposed for 2003. We looked at how funds were distributed on a macro level, examining the extent to which funds appear to be directed toward areas of documented need. To the extent possible we have also compared investments with outcomes. That is, we have looked to see if there is evidence of progress in areas to which the funds have been directed. The discussion presented here draws on BCPSS reports for information on funds allocation and on findings from previous chapters of this evaluation for outcome data. The analyses are, however, somewhat limited. And it is important to note that we cannot say whether or not the funds were used *optimally*. Our goal is to provide a general assessment of whether BCPSS' use of the additional monies seems well directed. Table 8-2 presents an overview of how these monies were spent.

City-State Partnership Funds

City-State Partnership funds were specifically mentioned and the uses of these funds prescribed in SB 795. Specifically, as stated earlier, in line with the consent decrees, a commitment was made to appropriate additional funds for BCPSS in the amount of $30 million in FY 1998 and $50 million in each of the years FY 1999 through 2001. Section 22 provides some very explicit direction regarding the ways in which the initial $30 million should be spent. Purposes highlighted include:

- Having a direct and substantial impact on improving academic achievement;
- Improving the educational performance of schools having a high percentage of students living in poverty;
- Improving the education performance of RE schools and other schools that are both failing to meet state standards and failing to show progress toward meeting these standards;

Table 8-2.
BCPSS' proposed uses of City-State Remedy Plan funds (in $ thousands)

	City-State Partnership*				Remedy Plan	
	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2001	FY 2002
Objective 1						
Focus Area 1: Instructional Programs	$10,200	$11,000	$5,333	$9,824	$6,594	$11,560
Focus Area 2: Instructional Time	—	—	401	—	5,500	9,945
Focus Area 3: Assessment	790	1,360	1,360	704	350	400
Focus Area 4: Secondary Grades	1,405	1,970	1,479	1,519	10,984	10,165
Focus Area 5: Structural Supports for Achievement	10,000	4,240	8,682	9,467	350	—
Objective 2						
Focus Area 1: Recruitment and Retention	20,100	20,623	21,299	21,346	7,990	20,439
Focus Area 2: Development of Teachers and Principals	830	1,290	1,835	1,346	943	1,718
Focus Area 3: Evaluation of Teachers and Principals	500	449	193	—	—	—
Objective 4						
Focus Area 2: Information Technology Systems	4,825	5,991	7,503	—	—	—
Focus Area 3: Management Practices and Central Office Restructuring	1,150	1,527	1,762	—	—	—
Objective 5						
Focus Area 1: Parental, Family, Community, and Business Involvement	100	50	50	50	—	—
Other						
Professional Development capacity	100	100	103	595	—	—
Master Plan evaluation	—	400	—	—	—	—
Comprehensive rezoning	—	1,000	—	—	—	—

*FY98 City-State Partnership monies are not categorized in the same way, as consistent objectives and strategies had not been developed.

SOURCE: Baltimore City Public School System.

- Beginning to implement a new performance-based systemwide evaluation system for teachers, principals, and administrators;
- Making progress toward meeting teacher salary parity with Baltimore County; and
- Implementing other improvements that directly support improved classroom instruction, including technology enhancements, individual professional development, and curriculum development.

Examination of the data presented by BCPSS [84] indicates that the system has respected the preliminary directives in allocating funds and has, over the years, maintained a continuous investment of funds in the areas highlighted for attention.

- Substantial investments of approximately $34 million have been made in enhancing and reforming the curriculum including purchasing textbooks and other materials, principally mathematics and science textbooks that would support the new citywide curricula. As indicated in our earlier discussion, citywide curricula are being phased-in and effectively used, and the previous lack of adequate textbooks has now been overcome, at least for in-school use.
- Over $83 million in Partnership funds have been used to increase teacher salaries and provide teachers with summer professional development. While our analyses suggest that some changes might be needed in BCPSS approach to professional development to make these services more useful to teachers, the summer programs for new teachers and for introducing other teachers to the new curricula have been beneficial.

[84]The 1999 Remedy Plan, The Master Plan 2000-2001 Update, and the FY2002 Operating budget provide data on the allocation of partnership funds.

- Reduction in class size has also received support through these funds. Over $42 million have been allocated for this purpose.

- Another use of funds has been to develop student assessments. Since 1998, over $4 million has been spent in this area. These assessments are to be used to monitor student performance at regular intervals to catch potential problems and address them before they lead to a student falling too far behind. This usage clearly seems to support improving academic achievement. [85]

- Funds have also been used to support the development of alternative programs. Since 1998, over $11 million in City-State Partnership monies have been used for the development of alternative programs. Our analyses indicate that even more resources might be devoted to this area.

- Finally, historical data also show substantial investment (over $22 million) in improving management services and reporting, especially the financial and management reports that are produced. Again, this is an area that previous reports have identified as greatly in need of allocation.

The most recent plan for use of the City-State Partnership funds continues and builds on the earlier budgets. Major investments from the Partnership monies are directed toward reducing class size to promote learning ($9.5 million); providing competitive teacher salaries ($20.6 million); continuing to improve the financial/ human resources/budget system; enhancing science curriculum ($7.8 million); supporting the Baltimore Alternative Learning Center ($1.4 million); and providing new teacher development and mentoring ($1.3 million). As the chapters in this report show, these are areas where progress has been made, but there is more that needs to be done.

[85]We would question, however, the wisdom of undertaking this kind of development effort, rather than using other sources of assessment.

Remedy Plan Funds

Under the consent decrees that form the basis for the City-State Partnership, BCPSS was permitted to return to the General Assembly to request additional funds to support Master Plan initiatives. BCPSS has done so three times, starting with the request in FY 2001. Examination of the Remedy Plans for 2001 and 2002 shows that the largest share of the funds has gone to student academic interventions and recruiting and retaining quality teachers.

- In the 2001 plan, teacher recruitment/ retaining quality teachers received $8.0 million and student academic interventions received $10.3 million, out of a total of approximately $34 million.[86]

- In this same plan, nearly $1 million additional was also spent on professional development, with the majority of the funds directed at instructional staff.

- In the 2002 plan, nearly $20 million out of approximately $50 million went to teacher recruitment/retaining quality teachers and over $10 million was spent on student academic interventions.[87] The documents also state that part of the monies for teachers was targeted at increasing salaries to make BCPSS more competitive.

As our previous discussions confirm, these are the areas that SB 795 clearly identified as needing attention and giving priority to them seems warranted. The investment in teacher salaries is certainly one that would be endorsed widely, as are the funds devoted to enhancing supports for recruiting and retaining teachers. The added funds for student academic interventions have been used to support before- and after-school programs, as well as expanded summer school programs. The emphasis in these efforts has been at the elementary and middle school levels.

[86]These data were reported in the BCPSS Remedy Plan for FY 2003.

[87]These data were reported in the Chief Executive Officer's Proposed Fiscal 2001-2001 Budget, dated April 24, 2001.

Our analyses presented earlier in this report show that progress has been made in areas to which the extra funds have been targeted. Specifically, some improvements have been made in the area of human resources, including recruiting, retention, and professional development, although a substantial and significant need remains. Achievement has shown progress, with the greatest gains occurring at the elementary grades. While we strongly recommend that the particular strategies that have been adopted for supporting students at risk be carefully evaluated, absent necessary impact information, we still feel comfortable saying the investments are in line with documented need.

The Remedy Plans also include increased funds for improvements in information technology, including hardware and software purchase. All indicators are that significant improvements have been made in the IT function, despite some concerns about procedures used to guide this investment.[88]

The plans also provide money for the early childhood years and middle and high school supports such as special academies. As indicated earlier, many of the activities in these areas are fairly new and not fully implemented. The areas need greater attention and, as will be seen in below, are receiving continued attention in the Remedy Plan proposed for FY 2003.

The 2003 Remedy Plan is still at the proposal request stage, so we cannot address it in the same way as the plans for 2001 and 2002. However, there are some important things to note about the priorities represented.

- First, there is continued investment in elementary school reform, information technology, and teacher recruitment and retention.
- Second, professional development supports address the needs not only of continuing teachers, but also provide expanded services for new teachers and new/aspiring principals.
- Third, increased funds are requested for middle and high school reform. These funds are directed toward building upon and expanding the more modest investments that have been made to date.
- Fourth, increased attention seems to be placed on student support programs, programs that address students' mental and physical health.
- Limited, but much needed funds, are also allocated to what is called "Overview of Reform Efforts." These are funds directed toward monitoring and evaluating selected reforms such as the reading and mathematics curricula, student assessments, and remedy plan initiatives. We strongly recommend that some of these monies be used to put in place a system for evaluating the effects of one of the centerpieces of the CEO's new initiatives, the new high school reform, starting with a solid collection of baseline data.

Adding the findings together, we feel that BCPSS has, in fact, used the additional monies received through the City-State Partnership and the Remedy Plans to good ends. The priorities clearly match system needs and are aimed at remedying deficiencies identified through management studies and SB 795. There is also some evidence that where the monies have been spent, such as in the early elementary grades and RE schools, progress has been made. Where monies have been more scarce, such as at the high school level, less progress is seen.

Is BCPSS' Funding Adequate and What Difference has the City-State Partnership Made?

Having chronicled the history of funding in BCPSS and the use to which funds have been put, it is time to return to the present and current assessments of funding adequacy. "Adequacy" and "sufficiency" are relative terms and do not suggest precise amounts. As we suggested at the

[88] There has been considerable controversy about the procurement procedures used to select an outside vendor for IT support and whether or not the funds invested in this area have been spent as well as they could be.

outset of our evaluation, "the oft-used term 'sufficiency' (or, 'adequacy') does not have a fixed meaning in education finance debates." So, as general terms, they are vague, and as precise terms, they are volatile. We will wrestle with what level of funding is "adequate" throughout the rest of this chapter.

We have previously examined how well funding is *allocated* in BCPSS. Here, however, we can probably quickly dispatch with the question about the benefits of the City-State Partnership on BCPSS funding levels. The answer should be an unequivocal positive. Some may wish that there were more state funds flowing to BCPSS, but there is no question that BCPSS receives more funding than it would without the Partnership.

Moreover, the state maintains a stellar reputation on Wall Street, which BCPSS has used to obtain bonds at a repayment rate that it could not have hoped to get on its own (the bond revenue has been used primarily to wire schools for computer connections). Moody's Investors Services wrote in its analysis of the BCPSS bond offering:

> The Baltimore school system has demonstrated increasing financial strength in the short time since it has been a quasi-independent entity. General Fund balances grew from a negative position in fiscal 1997 to $15 million, or 2.4 percent of General Fund revenues, in fiscal 1999….Moody's expects that improved financial management and anticipated increases in state revenues will result in stronger financial operations in the near future….Because the state aid payments securing these bonds are appropriated by the state, the AAA rating of the State of Maryland has a direct positive impact on the credit quality of these bonds.[89]

BCPSS was unlikely to get a good rating going it alone in the bond market as it has essentially no collateral or taxing authority. Having the City of Baltimore back the bond, as in the past, would likely have garnered a lower rating, too, because those bonds, on average, are rated lower than State of Maryland bonds, and lower ratings mean higher repayment rates.

Adequacy (or Sufficiency) of Public School Funding

For the general reader unfamiliar with the terminology of education finance, some explanation seems in order. The terms "adequacy," "sufficiency," and even "equity" have meanings in education finance very different from the standard dictionary definitions.[90] Moreover, those meanings keep changing, buffeted about by three dynamic processes: the efforts of advocacy groups to establish a use of the term favorable to their interests; the efforts of technicians to construct workable quantitative measures for the terms with available data and analytic techniques; and a growing number of court cases with judges struggling to find workable legal definitions.[91]

Left alone, perhaps the three processes could finally result in three dramatically different definitions of "adequacy" and "sufficiency," if only the processes each had means of coming to a single definition. Short of a U.S. Supreme Court or congressional mandate, they do not, and the range of opinion as to what adequacy and sufficiency should mean is just as wide within the groups of advocates, technicians, and judges as it is across the three groups.

Within the parameters of current practice for such studies, however, it can accurately be declared that the A&M and MAP adequacy studies fit.

[89] Moody's Investors Services, Moody's Assigns A1 Rating to New Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners' School system Revenue Bonds," Series 2000, Municipal Credit Research New Issue, September 26, 2000, p. 2.

[90] According to *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, 1997 edition, "adequate" means 1. sufficient to meet a need; 2. Barely satisfactory or sufficient. "Sufficient" means being as much as is needed.

[91] See Robert Berne and Leanna Stiefel, "Concepts of School Finance Equity: 1970 to the Present," Chapter 1 in National Research Council, Committee on Education Finance, *Equity and Adequacy in Education Finance: Issues and Perspectives*, 1999. See also, National Research Council, Committee on Education Finance, "Equity II—The Adequacy of Education," Chapter 4 in *Making Money Matter: Financing America's Schools*, 1999.

They use techniques that have been used before and accepted as valid by some experts and in some state courts, and the techniques have been employed competently in the Maryland case. To be complete, however, it must also be said that not all state judges have been equally persuaded by educational adequacy arguments. Indeed, court decisions range from almost complete acceptance of the adequacy arguments, with strong, very directive decisions (e.g., Wyoming, Kentucky, North Carolina) to complete rejections of the claims, on the grounds that such matters were legislative, not judicial, business (e.g., Illinois, Rhode Island, Florida). Other courts have given plaintiffs partial victories (e.g., Arizona applied the argument to school buildings, not programs). Still others have affirmed that education should be "adequate," without offering much direction or definition.[92]

Adequacy Versus Equity

One explanation for the existence of funding adequacy studies can be found in their historical genesis. Some advocates of increased public spending for poor children had labored for years arguing an "equity" case in state courts, without success. Specifically, many cases in state courts argued that children residing in school districts in poor communities, funded largely from a local tax base (usually a local property tax), were being treated in an inequitable manner. They argued for more state funding of education and for more equitable state funding.[93]

State judges have, for the most part, decided that these plaintiffs have no constitutional grounds for expecting "equitable" fiscal treatment, as there is no specific language in the constitution that addresses educational equity. In many states, however, there are constitutional grounds for expecting "an adequate education." So, some advocates for the poor, seeing greater prospects for success with "adequacy" cases, have shifted their arguments and strategies.[94]

The standards movement in education also plays a role in the background to funding equity studies and arguments. If states are requiring that students and schools meet specific performance targets, they need to be given an "adequate" or "sufficient" amount of resources. An adequate amount of resources can be defined as that which is necessary to achieve the performance targets.

In Maryland, there is such a performance target: an index score of 100 on the Maryland State Department of Education's School Performance Index (SPI). Each school's SPI is calculated from a simple formula that varies somewhat by level of education but is based, primarily, on average student statewide test scores. Thus, in the Maryland discussions, an "adequate amount of funding" is that amount judged necessary for a school to achieve an SPI of 100.

The Two Approaches: Successful Schools and Professional Judgment

A variety of methods exist for conducting a funding adequacy study. The two consultants for Maryland chose specific versions of two of the general types, the successful schools and professional judgment approaches. Although the consultants could have performed their tasks in other ways, there are only a small number of consulting firms in the United States that do this type of work, and comparisons to how adequacy studies were conducted in other states are likely to include other studies conducted by A&M and MAP. The small number of firms and their experience with the process has, at this point,

[92]See Paul A. Minorini and Stephen D. Sugarman, "School Finance Litigation in the Name of Educational Equity: Its Evolution, Impact, and Future," Chapter 2 in National Research Council, Committee on Education Finance, *Equity and Adequacy in Education Finance: Issues and Perspectives*, 1999, pp. 41-62. See also, National Research Council, Committee on Education Finance, "Equity II—The Adequacy of Education," Chapter 4 in *Making Money Matter: Financing America's Schools*, 1999, pp. 107-110.

[93]See Paul A. Minorini and Stephen D. Sugarman, "Educational Adequacy and the Courts: The Promise and Problems of Moving to a New Paradigm," Chapter 6 in National Research Council, Committee on Education Finance, *Equity and Adequacy in Education Finance: Issues and Perspectives*, 1999.

[94]See Melissa C. Carr and Susan H. Fuhrman, "The Politics of School Finance in the 1990s," Chapter 5 in National Research Council, Committee on Education Finance, *Equity and Adequacy in Education Finance: Issues and Perspectives*, 1999.

produced some consensus regarding techniques and results.[95]

At their base, the two approaches are fairly straightforward. The successful schools approach identifies schools that have met the relevant performance standard. In the case of Maryland, again, that standard is an SPI index of 100, and A&M found Maryland schools with SPI indexes at close to or over 100. They attempted to find some of these schools in a number of Maryland school districts, but according to the criterion used, successful schools are more plentiful in some districts than others.

A&M assembled a list of successful schools for each level of education (i.e., primary, middle, and high school) and then looked in detail at those schools' expenses. Their goal was to determine how much each of these schools spend on each of the variety of ingredients that, collectively, make up the total product—a per-student expenditure.

The professional judgment approach, utilized by both A&M and MAP, is a bit different. With it, a panel of professional judges are assembled, and they estimate what resources are needed, and in what quantity, for a school to achieve the relevant performance level. The groups of professional judges recruited in the A&M and MAP studies were virtually all public school affiliated, either administrators, teachers, board members, or members of associations of these three groups.

A&M used a two-step process but eventually arrived at one set of estimates for what their professional judges deemed to be adequate funding amounts, given different circumstances (e.g., different mixes of poor, special education, and limited English proficient children). MAP employed three different panels to make estimates, one of which arrived at quite a different estimate for an adequate funding amount than did the other two.

[95]See, for example, James W. Guthrie and Richard Rothstein, "Enabling "Adequacy" to Achieve Reality: Translating Adequacy into State School Finance Distribution Arrangements," Chapter 7 in National Research Council, Committee on Education Finance, *Equity and Adequacy in Education Finance: Issues and Perspectives*, 1999.

Summaries of the Maryland Adequacy Studies

Augenblick & Myers, Inc., *Calculation of the Cost of an Adequate Education in Maryland in 1999–2000 Using Two Different Analytical Approaches, June 2001.*

Maryland, like many other states, is implementing a standards-based approach as part of the effort to improve student performance. The approach requires a state to specify its expectations for student performance, develop procedures to measure how well students are meeting expectations, and hold providers of education services accountable for student performance. The logic of the approach implies that states will assure that sufficient resources are available to school districts so that schools can reasonably be expected to meet state standards. In effect, this means that the "foundation level," a constant amount per student, should reflect the per-pupil spending required for students without special needs to meet state performance expectations.

The Thornton Commission asked A&M to pursue both the professional judgment and the successful school approaches to estimate the cost of an adequate education. Using the resources identified by the professional judgment approach, A&M calculated a base per-pupil cost for elementary and secondary schools of $6,612. (This figure excludes transportation costs.) In addition, A&M developed average pupil weights of 1.17 for special education students ($7,748); 1.368 for low-income students ($9,165); and 1.0 for LEP students ($6,612). A&M added these weighted adjustments to the base costs for students with special needs. The statewide total cost that results from using a base figure of $6,612 and the supplemental pupil weights is $8.796 billion, approximately $2.9 billion more than the resources available for public elementary and secondary education in 1999–2000. This figure should be considered an "order of magnitude" of the difference between current funding and the amount that is needed to meet state standards. Further analysis is needed to reconcile the recommendations based on current enrollment and existing resources.

A&M also calculated the base per-pupil cost for elementary and secondary schools using the successful schools approach. The base cost figure derived from the successful school approach was $5,969, about 10 percent below the professional judgment approach. Using this base cost and the weights determined in the professional judgment approach, the total cost of an adequate public education system in Maryland is $7.232 billion. The gap identified by this analysis is about $1.33 billion (i.e., the difference between current spending and the estimated adequate amount).

Dr. Augenblick noted that the 1.386 per pupil weight for low-income students was extraordinarily high when compared to the pupil weights that have been used in other states. He suggested a more reasonable per-pupil weight for low-income students would be 0.9, an adjustment that would reduce the gap by over $600 million.

A&M also noted that there are a variety of ways to apply pupil weights other than using a single number for a particular group of pupils. For example, assuming that the costs of serving pupils with different disabilities varies and that the proportions of pupils with different disabilities differs from district to district, it might make sense to use several weights for special education, the average of which should be 1.17. Also, assuming that the per-pupil cost of providing supplemental services to pupils from low-income families rises as their concentration in a district rises, it may make sense to use a "concentration" factor in applying that weight.

A&M also surveyed its 59 successful schools to determine whether they received supplemental resources, in the form of money, material, or contributed time, that would not have been reflected in their fiscal accounting. A&M found that:

1. Almost all schools received monetary contributions, ranging from $33 to $97 per pupil, on average, depending on the level of the school.

2. Over two-thirds of the schools received contributions of material, which had a value of between $6 and $24 per pupil, on average, depending on the level of the school.

3. All schools obtained contributions of time, mostly from parents of pupils attending the schools, which ranged from 1 hour to 13 hours per student, on average, depending on the level of the school. These contributions are not reflected in the $5,969 base cost figure developed by the successful schools approach.

The authors of the A&M study suggested that the above figures fulfill the objective of setting rational parameters so that an adequate amount of revenue is available to all school districts in Maryland. They are not, however, set in stone. Policymakers should evaluate the figures and make adjustments based on a variety of components subject to legitimate modification, not just lowering cost.

Management Analysis & Planning, Inc., *A Professional Judgment Approach to Determining Adequate Funding in Maryland*, June 2001

At the request of the *New* Maryland Education Coalition (MEC), MAP used a professional judgment model to estimate an adequate level of school funding for Maryland. This method, as previously discussed, relies on an established foundation, or base amount of funding per student, and adjustments according to controllable and uncontrollable district factors.

MAP worked with three professional judgment panels. Each panel identified adequate resources for a prototype school with statewide average characteristics of low-income students, special education students, and LEP students. The per-student cost of resources identified by the MAP teams ranged from $7,461 to $9,313, including the costs of preschool programs. The teams also identified additional resources needed to serve students in a high-poverty district. Two teams added additional resources of about $285 per student for high-poverty districts, while the third felt that the resources identified for the prototype school were sufficient.

The statewide cost of an adequate education based on the analysis of the MAP professional judgment panels ranged from $6.4 billion to $8.5 billion. An additional $65 million would be needed to provide supplemental resources to schools with over 45 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The gap in resources relative to 1999–2000 statewide resources is $500 million to $2.6 billion.

It is important to note that the MAP analysis teams were asked to make assumptions about school facilities, technology, and teacher salaries based on certain criteria. These important elements, and the costs associated with each, should be examined on a closer level by policymakers before any implementation to reflect true costs.

Benchmarking the Maryland Funding Adequacy Studies: Comparing Maryland's Professional Judgment Personnel Resources to Other States

One way of benchmarking the results of the two Maryland professional judgment studies is to compare their outcomes with those of other studies based on the professional judgment model. The A&M report does this, comparing the level of personnel resources generated by their professional judgment methodology with the level and type of personnel resources that emerged from professional judgment studies conducted in Oregon, South Carolina, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. As shown in their Tables 14–16 (our Tables 8-3–8-5), the number and mix of personnel vary across the five states. At the elementary level, the total number of classroom teachers considered adequate is similar in all but Oregon (about 33 teachers for a school of 500), but the models generated different levels of staffing in the other categories, particularly other instructional staff and pupil support services.

At the middle school level, the professional judgment models in Maryland and Oregon project much lower numbers of classroom teachers than the other three states, but higher levels of pupil support staff. There is considerable variation in the number of projected other instructional staff. At the high school level, the total of classroom teachers and other instructional staff is similar across all states except Oregon; the number of pupil support staff varies little across the five states.

- Augenblick and Myers write, however, that "it is almost impossible to do an 'apples to apples' comparison of these kinds of figures across states." They argue that professional judgment models can yield different staffing levels and patterns due to differences in (1) the demographic characteristics of the prototype schools, (2) the ways states provide services for special needs students (e.g., special education), (3) the standards that students are expected to achieve, (4) how far students are from meeting their state standards, (5) the number, size, and wealth of school districts, and (6) cost of living, teacher salary levels, and the structure of state aid systems.

Another way of benchmarking the Maryland professional judgment studies is to compare their results with the level and type of resources that the New Jersey Supreme Court has determined are necessary to ensure that students in poor urban school districts are guaranteed a "thorough and efficient" education. In 1990, the court ordered both parity in funding between the poor urban and wealthy suburban districts, and additional funds to address the special educational needs of the urban districts.[96]

The New Jersey Supreme Court defined the nature and scope of these programs more specifically in subsequent decisions, most recently requiring the implementation of:

- Proven, research-based whole school reform (WSR) designs in all 450 schools in the 30 poor, urban "Abbott" districts (with Success for All the presumptive model for elementary schools);

[96] *Abbott* v. *Burke*, 119 N.J. 287, 575 A.2d 359 (1990).

Table 8-3.
Comparison of number of personnel assigned to prototype elementary schools (at 500 pupils) in Maryland, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Oregon

Personnel	Maryland	South Carolina	Wisconsin	Wyoming	Oregon
Classroom teachers	33.0	32.0	31.9	33.0	23.5
Other instructional staff	7.0	10.0	4.3	8.7	6.6
Special education and other teachers	4.5	6.0	—	—	2.9
Library and Media specialists	1.0	2.5	2.8	1.7	—
Pupil support	9.0	3.0	5.1	1.7	8.1
Subtotal	*54.5*	*53.5*	*44.1*	*45.1*	*41.1*
Principal and assistant principal	2.0	2.0	1.4	1.7	1.5
Teacher aide and para-professional	16.0	9.0	11.0	3.5	—
Permanent substitute	3.0	1.5	1.4	1.6	?

NOTE: The symbols "?" and "—" were included in the A&M tables without explanation.

SOURCE: Augenblick & Myers, Inc. (2001). *Calculation of the Cost of an Adequate Education in Maryland in 1999–2000 Using Two Different Analytic Approaches.*

Table 8-4.
Comparison of number of personnel assigned to prototype middle schools (at 800 pupils) in Maryland, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Oregon

Personnel	Maryland	South Carolina	Wisconsin	Wyoming	Oregon
Classroom teachers	36.0	41.6	50.7	50.7	36.0
Other instructional staff	9.0	12.8	7.2	8.7	1.6
Special education and other teachers	6.0	8.5	—	—	4.1
Library and Media specialists	2.0	2.1	4.8	2.6	3.2
Pupil support	13.0	5.3	7.2	7.8	13.6
Subtotal	*66.0*	*70.3*	*69.9*	*69.8*	*58.5*
Principal and assistant principal	4.0	4.3	3.2	2.6	3.2
Teacher aide and para-professional	10.0	10.7	11.2	7.8	2.4
Permanent substitute	3.0	2.1	1.6	2.6	?

NOTE: The symbols "?" and "—" were included in the A&M tables without explanation.

SOURCE: Augenblick & Myers, Inc. (2001). *Calculation of the Cost of an Adequate Education in Maryland in 1999–2000 Using Two Different Analytic Approaches.*

Table 8-5.
Comparison of number of personnel assigned to prototype high schools (at 1,000 pupils) in Maryland, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Oregon

Personnel	Maryland	South Carolina	Wisconsin	Wyoming	Oregon
Classroom teachers	69.0	52.2	63.3	68.7	49.0
Other instructional staff	—	18.9	3.8	8.7	3.5
Special education and other teachers	7.0	11.1	—	—	3.8
Library and Media specialists	2.0	3.3	2.5	5.0	1.0
Pupil support	8.0	8.	7.5	8.3	9.0
Subtotal	*86.0*	*94.4*	*77.1*	*90.7*	*66.3*
Principal and assistant principal	5.0	5.6	2.5	3.3	3.5
Teacher aide and para-professional	11.0	10.0	15.0	10.0	—
Permanent substitute	6.0	2.2	—	2.8	?

NOTE: The symbols "?" and "—" were included in the A&M tables without explanation.

SOURCE: Augenblick & Myers, Inc. (2001). *Calculation of the Cost of an Adequate Education in Maryland in 1999–2000 Using Two Different Analytic Approaches.*

- Full-day kindergarten;
- Half-day preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-olds;
- Offsite coordination and referral for social and health services; and
- Security, technology, alternative school, and school-to-work programs.

The court gave Abbott schools and school districts the right, *based on demonstrated need*, to request and obtain the resources necessary for them to provide school-based social services, more security personnel, and summer and after-school, nutrition, and other supplemental programs beyond those proposed by the New Jersey Department of Education. The court also ordered the state to fund the complete cost of addressing facilities deficiencies and the construction of additional classrooms needed to serve current and projected student populations.[97]

There are two reasons for comparing the Abbott remedy with the proposed adequacy models in Maryland. First, the Abbott districts, like Baltimore City, have large concentrations of poor students and students of color. Second, like Maryland, New Jersey has adopted challenging state standards and assessments, and has relatively low passing rates in urban school districts. Metis Associates used the Abbott remedy as one benchmark for evaluating the adequacy of the BCPSS 1998–99 Master Plan.[98]

As part of its implementation of the WSR requirement, the New Jersey Department of Education created illustrative budgets for each WSR model to guide school budget preparation. These budgets contain resources for both the WSR programs and positions identified in the 1998 *Abbott* v. *Burke* decision (e.g., technology coordinator, security guard, counselor, social workers).[99] In 2000–2001, the state limited the illustrative budgets to the regular education program in grades 1–5. Schools were to budget separately for their early childhood programs (kindergarten and programs for 4-year-olds), special education, and other categorical programs.[100]

Tables 8-6 through 8-8 compare the mix and level of staff contained in New Jersey's illustrative budgets for three WSR models—Success for All (SFA) at the elementary level, America's Choice (AC) at the middle school level, and Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) at the high school level–with the resources generated by MAP's three professional judgment teams for schools with 68 percent poverty and the basic A&M model (which assumes a poverty level of 31 percent).[101] For purposes of this analysis, the illustrative budgets have been adjusted to include staff for a full-day kindergarten program.

In an effort to obtain some level of comparability, these comparisons do *not* include staffing for pre-school, special education, or bilingual education programs. Nonetheless, the prototype school sizes at the middle or high school levels differ across the two states. The Maryland models assume middle schools of 800 and high schools of 1,000 students, while the New Jersey illustrative budgets are designed for middle schools of 675 and high schools of 900 students. One way to adjust for differences in student enrollment is to calculate and compare the ratio of students to staff.

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[97] *Abbott* v. *Burke*, 153 N.J. 480, 710 A.2d 450 (1998).

[98] Metis Associates, Inc. (February 2000). *Interim Evaluation of the Baltimore City Public School System. 198-1999 Master Plan Implementation and Related Issues.* NY: Author. See p. IV-11 ff.

[99] In *Abbott* v. *Burke*, the Court adopted the NJ Department of Education's plan for elementary schools, which included a Family Support Team composed of a social worker, counselor, school nurse, and parent liaison, and technology and security personnel. The justices also gave school districts the right to request and obtain other supplemental personnel if they demonstrated the need.

[100] In the first year of implementation, New Jersey "blended" funds from early childhood, special education, and bilingual education programs in the illustrative budgets. Thus, the budgets contained more staff (about 15 to 20 positions) and allocated the resources to all students in pre-K through 5th grade.

[101] Although WSR models differ considerably in their philosophy, content coverage, and pedagogical focus, the state illustrative budgets generally included similar kinds and levels of resources for each program. The budgets varied by grade span rather than model.

Table 8-6.
Comparison budgets for elementary schools

School and staff characteristic	MAP Professional judgment			A&M Professional judgment	Abbot (New Jersey) Budgets
	Elementary A	Elementary B	Elementary C	Elementary	Elementary
Enrollment	500	500	500	500	500
Grade span	K-5	K-5	K-5	K-5	K-5 (SFA)
Percent special education (SE)	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.5	—
Percent poverty*	68	68	68	31	High
Percent of limited English proficiency	0.5	0.5	0.5	2	—
Personnel					
Teaching Staff					
Classroom teachers	30	24	24	33	22
Other teachers	6.5	4	3	6	5
Read/TA teacher	6	1	6	1	5
ESL teacher	0.2	0	0	0	0
Substitutes	2.2	1.5	1	3	1.4
Instructional aides	9.5	12	15	15	7
Pupil Support					
Guidance	3	2	2	2	1
Nurse	2	1	1	1	1
Other health	0	1	1	1	0
Psychologist	0	1	0.5	2	0
Social worker	2	1	1	0	1
Parent liaison	1	1	1	1	1
Other Staff					
Library/media	1	1	1	1	1
Media/tech. aide	0	0	1	1	0
Technology	2	1	2	2	1
Administration					
Principal	1	1	1	1	1
Assistant principal	1	1	1	1	0
Curriculum specialists	2	0	1	0	2
Business manager	1	0	0	0	0
Clerical/data	2	2	2	4	2
Noninstructional aides	0	0	3	0	0
Security	0	0	0	0	1
Total without special education	72.4	55.5	67.5	75	52.4
Total certificated staff	60.9	40.5	45.5	54	42.4
Student/certificated teacher ratio	8.21	12.35	10.99	9.26	11.79
Per-pupil cost	$5,591	$3,962	$4,984	$6,726	$4,156

*Based on students eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch.

— These factors were not part of the Abbott analysis.

SOURCE: Management Analysis and Planning, Inc., *A Professional Judgment Approach To Determining Adequate Education Funding in Maryland*, 2001; Augenblick & Myers, Inc., *Calculation of the Cost of An Adequate Education in Maryland in 1999–2000 Using Two Different Analytic Approaches*, 2001; B.A. Erlichson and M.E. Goetz, *Implementing Whole School Reform in New Jersey: Year Two*, Rutgers University, 2001..

Table 8-7.
Comparison budgets for middle schools

School and staff characteristic	MAP Professional judgment			A&M Professional judgment	*Abbot* (New Jersey) Budgets
	Middle A	Middle B	Middle C	Middle	Middle
Enrollment	800	800	800	800	675
Grade span	G6-8	G6-8	G6-8	G6-8	G6-8 (AC)
Percent special education (SE)	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.5	—
Percent poverty*	68	68	68	31	High
Percent of limited English proficiency	0.5	0.5	0.5	2	—
Personnel					
Teaching Staff					
Classroom teachers	36	34	44	36	46.5
Other teachers	7	12	5	9	0
Read/TA teacher	3	1	1	0	0
ESL teacher	0	0	0	0	0
Substitutes	2.5	2.3	2.7	3	4
Instructional aides	3	2	6	10	1
Pupil Support					
Guidance	3	3	3	4	2
Nurse	1	1	1	1	1
Other health	1	1	1	1	0
Psychologist	0	1	1	1	0
Social worker	2	1	1	2	2
Parent liaison	0	0	0	1	1
Other support	0	0	0	0	1
Other Staff					
Library/media	1	1	2	2	1
Media/tech. aide	2	2	1	0	0
Technology	2	1	1	3	1
Administration					
Principal	1	1	1	1	1
Assistant principal	2	3	3	3	1
Curriculum specialists	2	1	1	0	2
Business manager	1	0	0	0	0
Clerical/data	4	5	5	6	4
Noninstructional aides	0	0	3	0	0
Security	0	0	1	0	3
Total without special education	73.5	72.3	83.7	83	71.5
Total certificated staff	63.5	62.3	66.7	66	63.5
Student/certificated teacher ratio	12.60	12.84	11.99	12.12	10.63
Per-pupil cost	$3,871	$3,833	$4,245	$6,160	$4,416

*Based on students eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch.

— These factors were not part of the Abbott analysis.

SOURCE: Management Analysis and Planning, Inc., *A Professional Judgment Approach To Determining Adequate Education Funding in Maryland*, 2001; Augenblick & Myers, Inc., *Calculation of the Cost of An Adequate Education in Maryland in 1999–2000 Using Two Different Analytic Approaches*, 2001; B.A. Erlichson and M.E. Goetz, *Implementing Whole School Reform in New Jersey: Year Two*, Rutgers University, 2001.

Table 8-8.
Comparison budgets for high schools

School and staff characteristic	MAP Professional judgment			A&M Professional judgment	*Abbot* (New Jersey) Budgets
	High A	High B	High C	High	High
Enrollment	1000	1000	1000	1000	900
Grade span	G9-12	G9-12	G9-12	G9-12	G9-12 (CES)
Percent special education (SE)	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.5	—
Percent poverty*	68	68	68	31	High
Percent of limited English proficiency	0.5	0.5	0.5	2	—
Personnel					
Teaching Staff					
Classroom teachers	62	60	68	69	53.5
Other teachers	0	0	0	0	0
Read/TA teacher	0	0	5	0	0
ESL teacher	0	0	0	0	0
Substitutes	3.3	3	4	6	4.5
Instructional aides	2	6	6	4	1
Pupil Support					
Guidance	5	4	5	5	4
Nurse	1	1	1	2	2
Other health	1	1	1	0	0
Psychologist	1	1	1.5	0	0
Social worker	2	1	1	1	2
Parent liaison	2	0	0	0	1
Other support	0	0	4	0	1
Other Staff					
Library/media	1	1	2	2	1
Media/tech. aide	4	0	2	0	0
Technology	0	0	3	4	1
Administration					
Principal	1	1	1	1	1
Assistant principal	3	4	4	4	2
Curriculum specialists	4	0	0	0	1.2
Business manager	1	0	1	1	0
Clerical/data	6	7	7	6	9
Noninstructional aides	0	0	0	0	0
Security	0	0	3	0	4
Total without special education	99.3	90	122.5	105	88.2
Total certificated staff	86.3	76	103.5	95	74.2
Student/certificated teacher ratio	11.59	13.16	9.66	10.53	12.13
Per-pupil Cost	$4,186	$3,773	$5,091	$6,791	$4,030

*Based on students eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch.

— These factors were not part of the Abbott analysis.

SOURCE: Management Analysis and Planning, Inc., *A Professional Judgment Approach To Determining Adequate Education Funding in Maryland*, 2001; Augenblick & Myers, Inc., *Calculation of the Cost of An Adequate Education in Maryland in 1999–2000 Using Two Different Analytic Approaches*, 2001; B.A. Erlichson and M.E. Goetz, *Implementing Whole School Reform in New Jersey: Year Two*, Rutgers University, 2001.

No clear pattern emerges from these analyses. At the elementary level, the Maryland professional judgment models generally generated higher levels of staffing than the New Jersey illustrative budget. Table 8-5 shows that the total number of staff in the New Jersey illustrative budget is lower than all three of the MAP elementary school teams (52.4 compared to 72.4, 55.5 and 67.5, respectively). The number of certificated staff is similar to two of the teams—B and C, however (42.4 in New Jersey compared to 40.5 and 45.5, respectively), but the MAP teams were more likely to propose larger numbers of pupil support staff. The A&M elementary school model and MAP team A proposed significantly higher levels of staffing, including more classroom teachers and pupil support staff. All the MAP teams and the A&M model proposed larger numbers of instructional aides than did the New Jersey illustrative budget.

In contrast, the illustrative budget for the America's Choice middle school program in New Jersey, the three MAP middle school teams and A&M generated similar numbers of certificated staff (ranging from 62.3 to 66.7), with similar numbers of both instructional and pupil support staff (Table 8-7). However, because the prototype New Jersey school is smaller (675 students compared to 800 students in the Maryland models), the student/certificated staff ratio in New Jersey is lower than those in the Maryland models (10.63 compared to 12 to 13 in the MAP and A&M models). At the high school level (Table 8-8), the New Jersey illustrative budget calls for a student/certificated staff ratio that is about the same as MAP Team A (around12:1), lower than MAP Team B (13:1), and higher than MAP Team C and A&M (about 10:1).

Another way to compare the level of resources across the different models is to calculate a per-pupil cost for each. We applied the average salaries presented in the MAP study to the staffing patterns in each model (including the New Jersey illustrative budget), and divided the total cost by the number of pupils in the prototypical school. At the elementary level, the per-pupil cost of three of the four Maryland professional judgment teams exceeded the cost of the New Jersey illustrative budget by $830 to $2,570 per pupil, or 20 percent to 62 percent (Table 8-5). The reverse was true at the middle school level, where the per-pupil cost of the New Jersey model exceeded the cost of three of the four Maryland models by $170 to $580 per pupil—a 4 percent to 13 percent difference (Table 8-6). The New Jersey illustrative high school budget was similar to one MAP team, higher than another MAP team, and lower than a third MAP team and the A&M team.

The purpose of this analysis is to compare the results of the professional judgment models in Maryland with the level of resources mandated by the court for high-poverty New Jersey urban school districts. However, as noted previously, the costs presented represent only *one* component of an adequate school and district budget. They do not include services to special education, bilingual/ESL, and preschool students; noninstructional costs, such as professional development, technology, and instructional materials; staff benefits; or transportation, building operation and maintenance, and other district costs, such as curricular and instructional support, assessment, etc. In New Jersey, for example, benefits increase the cost of the school model by 18 percent, or $700 to $800 per pupil. The illustrative budget includes an additional $600 for nonsalary instruction (e.g., technology, professional development, curricular support, extracurricular activities) and $200 per pupil for materials and purchased administrative services.[102] And, Abbott schools in New Jersey can request supplement resources in excess of the illustrative budgets (e.g., staff for after-school or summer school programs and additional health and social services) if they show demonstrated need.

[102]See Bari Anhalt Erlichson and Margaret E. Goertz (2001). *Implementing Whole School Reform in New Jersey: Year Two*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, Department of Public Policy and Center for Government Services. Available on-line at www.policy.rutgers.edu/cgs/. MAP's Team C estimated that the cost of non-instructional and administrative services at the school level would be about $800 per pupil as well.

Comparing Maryland's Professional Judgment Personnel Resources to Baltimore City Public Schools

The focus of this evaluation is whether and to what extent the BCPSS has an adequate level of resources. This section compares the level and mix of staffing in that subset of Baltimore elementary schools included in Westat's qualitative study with the resources that the MAP and A&M studies determined were needed to provide an adequate education. We first looked at the number and type of staff listed on each school's staffing list. Because some lists were more complete than others, we then looked at the total number of professional staff reported by the BCPSS.[103] The first data are for the 2000–2001 school year; the second are for the 1999–2000 year.

Table 8-9 shows staffing for eight elementary schools[104] compared to those generated by MAP Team C (the middle of the distribution of the three teams) and by A&M. Because most of the Baltimore elementary schools included in the Westat site visits are either larger or smaller than the prototype school used in the professional judgment model (500 students), we have "standardized" the staffing to reflect schools of 500 students.[105] We excluded special education and pre-K teachers from the analysis of school staffing lists to make this analysis comparable to the professional judgment reports. We assume that the pre-K teachers and some special educators are included in the BCPSS professional staff reports, however.

Using any number of measures, the study schools do not have adequate staffing levels as specified by the have professional judgment models. Looking first at the teaching staff, we find that only one of the eight schools has the minimum number of classroom teachers specified in the MAP Team C model (24 teachers for a school of 500 students); none begin to approach the 33 teachers deemed adequate in the A&M model.

While the professional judgment models call for three to six specialist teachers (e.g., for art, music, physical education), only two of the study schools have this level of staffing. The schools also have a limited number of reading specialists; three have none, and another four have only one, compared to the six recommended by the MAP Team C. Since schools may assign their teachers in different ways, we compared the total number of certificated instructional staff required in the MAP Team C model (33) and A&M model (40) with the total certificated instructional staff in the eight study schools.[106] None of the schools had more than 30 of these staff; staff numbers ranged from a low of 22 to a high of 30. The study schools also had few instructional aides, falling well below the 15 aides called for in both professional judgment models.

The two professional judgment models recommend that elementary schools have seven pupil support staff for a student body of 500. Again, the schools fall short of this goal. Four of the study schools have between five and six pupil support staff for a school this size; the other four schools report zero to three of these staff. Five of the eight schools have no library/media staff, and four have no technology staff, although the professional judgment models call for a librarian, a media technology aide, and two technology specialists.

Overall, the two professional judgment models call for 68 to 75 staff in an elementary school of 500; the study schools have, on average, only half this number of staff. If we focus on certificated staff, none of the study schools come close to having the 46 to 54 certificated staff the models call for. Using the staff roster data, most of the study schools have only 32 to 35 certificated staff

[103] *BCPSS, Enrollment by Race and Total Staff at School Level, 1999-2000.* Report ENRPR03.

[104] We did not include School #321 because it is a small academy (140 students), or School #13 because we had only partial staffing information.

[105] For example, School #145 enrolls 357 students, and has a certificated staff (excluding special education) of 27.9. If this school enrolled 500 students, we project that the staff size would be 39 (500/357*27.9). The actual staffing figures are shown in Appendix Table A.

[106] For purposes of this analysis, we have defined certificated instructional staff as the sum of classroom teachers, other teachers, reading/TA teachers/IST, and other instructional staff.

Table 8-9.
Staffing patterns in sample of Baltimore City public elementary schools compared to MAP and A&M professional judgment models standardized to school of 500 students

School and staff characteristic	Elementary								MAP Team C	A&M
School	#145	#164	#11	#206	#47	#89	#73	#236		
Enrollment	357	386	516	606	497	626	394	766	500	500
Grade span	PK-5	PK-6	PK-5	K-5	K-5	PK-8	PK-5	PK-8	K-5	K-5
Teaching Staff										
Classroom teachers	22	22	27	20	21	22	18	20	24	33
Other teachers	4	4	0	2	1	0	2	2	3	6
Read/TA teacher/ IST	1	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	6	1
ESL teacher	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Substitutes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
Instructional aides	3	1	0	0	2	3	5	0	15	15
Other instruction.	3	0	1	2	6	0	1	1	0	0
Pupil Support										
Guidance	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	2
Nurse	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Other health	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Psychologist	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0.5	2
Social worker	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Parent liaison	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Other support	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Other Staff										
Library/media	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
Media/tech aide	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Technology	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	2
Administration										
Principal	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Assistant principal	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Curriculum specialists	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
Business manager	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clerical/data	1	3	2	1	1	2	1	0	2	4
Noninstructional aides	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0
Security	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total staff without special education	42	39	32	35	36	33	41	29	67.5	75
Certificated staff (without special education)	38	35	30	34	33	27	32	28	45.5	54
Student/certificated teacher ratio	13.27	14.35	16.70	14.78	15.34	18.41	15.57	17.81	10.99	9.26
FTE professional staff (report)	37	34	30	28	34	34	30	30	—	—
Student/professional staff	13.42	14.79	16.65	17.82	14.88	14.56	16.42	16.47	—	—

NOTE: These figures do not include pre-K and special education teachers.

SOURCE: Based on materials collected from site visits to a sample of BCPSS schools.

(with a range of 27 to 38 staff). The numbers from the FTE professional staff report are similar: most study schools have 30 to 34 professional staff, with a range of 28 to 37. As a result, the student/professional staff ratios for the study schools are well above those found in the MAP Team C or A&M models. While these reports call for a student/staff ratio of 11:1 and 9.3:1, respectively, the ratios in the study schools hover in the 14.5:1 to 16.5:1 range. The lowest ratio is 13.4:1, still well above the target in the professional judgment studies. The student/ professional staff ratios in the study schools are also well above the ratio of 11.8:1 that is considered adequate in the New Jersey illustrative budget.

Overall, then, our analyses confirm that school level staffing in BCPSS is not in line with the standards recommended by these studies.

Putting Adequacy Studies in Their Larger Context: Evaluating Their Assumptions

Any analytic method is only as strong as the assumptions upon which it depends. The most basic assumption buttressing adequacy studies is that more spending produces improvements in student achievement. Moreover, it is assumed that the correlation between the two is rather strong. For example, if a 50 percent increase in spending produces even a 30 or 40 percent increase in student achievement, we might assuredly assert there to be a strong correlation between spending and achievement.

The literature on impact of funds on student achievement is replete with debate and contradictory findings. The research literature starts with what is now commonly referred to as "The Coleman Report," a statistical analysis of theretofore unprecedented size conducted in the 1960s. The sociologist James Coleman is said by Daniel Patrick Monyihan, then the U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, to have remarked astonishedly at the study's conclusion, "It's all family." By that, he meant that family background factors, such as parents' level of education, their reading habits at home, family cohesiveness, were strongly correlated with public school student achievement, and other factors, such as spending, were not.[107]

A few years later, Coleman compared student achievement in public and Catholic schools and, controlling for demographic and other background variables, found the Catholic schools producing higher achievement at lower cost. In the case of standard diocesan schools, Catholic schools spent half as much to educate a regular student as did their public counterparts. The results suggested that, perhaps, there was something about how schools were organized and operated that affected student achievement.[108]

It was still not certain, however, that more money could buy it, or that it could be found in the public schools. In the 1980s, the economist Eric Hanushek conducted his now famous survey of hundreds of achievement studies looking for a correlation between spending and achievement. He found none in the aggregate.[109] Hanushek and economists who concur with his analyses have, in more recent years, also criticized the methods and assumptions of funding adequacy studies.[110]

Coleman and Hanushek have both been criticized by education groups over the years. Some have produced their own studies purporting to reach an opposite result. One even used Hanushek's original set of studies and conducted a new meta-analysis with Hanushek's own data set.[111] Even

[107]James S. Coleman, *Equity of Educational Opportunity*. Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 1966.

[108]James S. Coleman, *Equality and Achievement in Education*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990.

[109] Eric Hanushek, "Throwing Money at the Schools," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, April 1994.

[110]See, for example, Lewis C. Solmon, "Fatally Flawed." *Education Week*, June 17, 1998; and "Inadequacy of Adequacy," Goldwater Institute, No. 98-07, Feb. 26, 1998.

[111]Larry V. Hedges, et al., "Does Money Matter?" *Educational Researcher*, Vol 1., No. 1, April 1994.

in that study, however, the authors found only a weak correlation between spending and achievement in the aggregate. Some more recent studies, then have attempted to study the spending issue more narrowly, in an effort to determine which specific types of programs and processes seem to be significantly correlated with improved academic achievement, and to measure the amount of money needed to fund them.[112]

The debate over the strength of the correlation between aggregate spending and student achievement continues unabated. One can find, for example, collections of essays presenting evidence and arguments from both sides published in the past several years.[113]

As Hanushek himself argues, however, just because no correlation can be found in the aggregate does not mean that more spending can never induce higher achievement. Hanuschek's results reflected the reality that extra money was spent as often in ways that had no effect on raising student academic achievement (e.g., building a new intermural sports facility; meeting certain provisions of a new labor contract).

Evaluating the Successful Schools Approach Assumptions

Given this background, it is probably not surprising to learn that the Maryland schools deemed successful by A&M stand out more because of the unusually high socioeconomic status and other favorable demographic characteristics of their local residents than because of anything the schools do programmatically. Indeed, A&M does not know what these schools do programmatically, but only that students exhibit high levels of achievement. Not controlling for background factors, which can have more influence on student achievement than school programs do, when they selected their group of schools, A&M does not have sufficient data with which to judge any school successful based on what it has done.

Just as A&M found successful schools in certain Maryland school districts, we easily found just as many "unsuccessful schools"—that is, schools with low levels of achievement—in all of those same school districts, with one exception.[114] These unsuccessful schools are likely to receive more money than the successful schools through the state school funding formula allocation (as they are likely to have large portions of poor, special education, and limited English proficient students). The state funding allocation (which distributes the state, and most federal, funds that go directly to the schools) is based primarily on a student headcount with supplements for disadvantaged groups. These schools can, however, have lower average staff salaries than the successful schools as salaries are based predominately on seniority and education degree status and those factors can vary across schools. Most school staff are paid directly by the school district, not out of school funds.

Teachers can choose where they work to a large degree, and some teachers choose to work in schools in wealthier communities. If enough teachers personally prefer to work in wealthier communities, and those communities can choose to hire more experienced teachers, they will end up with higher salaried teachers over time. Moreover, schools may receive direct donations of equipment, money, and time from parents or

[112]See, for example, Harold H. Wenglinsky, "How Money Matters." *Sociology of Education*, 70(3), 1997; David W. Grissmer et al., *Improving Student Achievement*. Rand Corporation, 2000; Ronald Ferguson, "Paying for Public Education; New Evidence on How and Why Money Matters," *Harvard Journal on Legislation*, 28, No. 2 (1991); Rob Greenwald et al., "The Effect of School Resources on Student Achievement," *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 66 (Fall 1996): 361-396.

[113]See for example, Gary Burtless (Ed.). *Does Money Matter?* Brookings Institution, 1996; Erik A. Hanushek (Ed.) *Making Schools Work: Improving Performance and Controlling Costs*. Brooks Institution, 1994; U.S. Education Department, National Center for Education Statistics, *Developments in School Finance, 1997–Does Money Matter?* (NCES 98-212).

[114]In rural Kent County, all four elementary schools achieved SPIs above 100 in the year 2000.

community organizations, and this amount can vary across schools.

Generally, the "unsuccessful schools" were found in geographic areas of the school districts with lower levels of the demographic factors highly correlated with student achievement: relatively lower income, lower parental education levels, and so on.[115]

More than one-third of A&M's successful Maryland schools emanate from the wealthiest of Maryland's 24 school districts, almost all of them from Potomac, Bethesda, and Chevy Chase, three of the wealthiest suburbs in Maryland. In addition to its wealth, Montgomery County hosts some of the most highly educated adult residents in the country.[116] This is pertinent because parents' level of education is often the strongest of all predictors of student achievement in research studies.[117]

With this, we arrive at something on the order of a conundrum. Perhaps it is true within in some school districts, a majority of teachers tend to gravitate, over the course of their careers, toward schools in wealthier communities. They do not do so, however, necessarily because they get paid more (their salary is paid by the school districts; other characteristics of schools in wealthier communities must be attracting them. Perhaps it is also true that schools in wealthier communities, on average, have a preference for hiring more experienced teachers. Finally, it is also certainly easy to believe that parents in wealthier communities provide more extra monetary assistance to their schools (e.g., through foundations or the parent-teacher association) than parents in less wealthy communities.

What is far less clear is how the proposed remedies derived from the consultants' studies would address these issues, which are the product of individual preferences.

The proposed *statewide* remedies would provide school districts with more state money. But the aforementioned behaviors are all *within-district* behaviors. Giving a school district more money will do absolutely nothing to affect teachers' preferences of where to work within the district, schools' preferences of whom they wish to hire, or parents' desire to help their children's school. Moreover, even if the remedies could somehow affect teachers' within-district preferences—paying higher salaries to teachers willing to work in less desirable locations, for example—the evidence for higher teacher salaries producing higher student achievement is not very strong.[118]

[115]We looked most closely at the middle schools, comparing the two groups of them by available background factors. We did not find statistically significant differences for the proportions of limited English proficient or special education students between the two types of middle schools. (Using a t-test of comparison of means.) The difference in the proportions of students receiving free or reduced-price meals—a proxy for parents' income level—was statistically different (at $p < .001$), however.

[116]In Montgomery County reside a large proportion of the country's NASA and FDA scientists; World Bank, IMF, and Federal Reserve Bank economists; and USGS and NOAA meteorologists and cartographers. Indeed, the National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Bethesda Naval Hospital, Discovery Channel, and many of the world's foremost biotechnology companies are located Montgomery County.

[117]One need not enter the nature/nurture debate, either, to find reasons why well-educated parents tend to raise high-achieving children. Well-educated parents tend to know firsthand the value of education and stress it with their children; they know how to succeed in school and can instruct their children in those habits; they know what is important to learn and can pressure their schools to that effect; and so on.

[118]See, for example, "NAEP Mathematics—Average Mathematics Scores by Teachers' Reports of Total Years Taught" at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/mathematics/results/experience.asp. Or Abell Foundation, *Teacher Certification Reconsidered: Stumbling for Quality*, 2001; and Linda Darling-Hammond, *The Research and Rhetoric on Teacher Certification: A Response to Teacher Certification Reconsidered*. Or, Dan D. Goldhaber and Dominic J. Brewer, "Does Teacher Certification Matter? High School Teacher Certification Status and Student Achievement," in Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis (EEPA), Summer 2000, Vol.22, No.2, pp. 129-145, and "Evaluating the Evidence on Teacher Certification: A Rejoinder," EEPA, Spring 2001, Vol.23, No.1, pp. 79-86. Or, Eric A. Hanushek, John F. Kain, and Steve G. Rivkin, "Do Higher Salaries Buy Better Teachers?" National Bureau of Economic Research, #7802, March, 1999.

Evaluating the Professional Judgment Approach Assumptions

A&M and MAP also provide us an alternative "adequacy" approach, in their professional judgment studies. This approach is straightforward: gather together a group of professionals familiar with how much it costs a public school district to effect results to a certain threshold level, such as the school performance index level. This group then considers all the cost components required—labor, materials, supplies, services, and so on—and sums them.

As the reader might well surmise, results will in part depend on the professional experts one picks to make the many judgments involved, such as the components required, the nature of the market, and its relative competitiveness.[119] Both the A&M and MAP studies employed Maryland public school professionals as experts. While this makes some sense—Maryland public school officials are most intimately familiar with what it takes to run a public school in Maryland—it also creates three threats to the validity of the studies:

- First, there is a danger of professional myopia —they may assume certain conditions to be the way things are and must be that experts from outside public school systems might question.
- Second, public school educators generally have little training in operations research, logistics, or finance, and little experience operating in a competitive marketplace, where pressures to reduce costs operate pervasively.
- Third, public school educators have a direct incentive to estimate the cost of an adequate education high. Put bluntly, they stand to get more money.[120]

What These Adequacy Studies Left Out

Another possible adequacy study approach, not utilized in the two Maryland consultants' studies, searches for successful schools by finding those that have most improved student achievement. They can be called "high value-added" schools. Some students start their student careers poor and behind in achievement and others, wealthy and advanced in achievement. High value-added schools are measured by the amount in which they improve students' achievement from the base starting point for each student. One can find high value-added schools in wealthy communities and in poor communities alike.

The problem with the Maryland MAP and A&M adequacy studies for school districts like Baltimore's is that a school district cannot *learn* anything from these studies. Benchmarking simply to a result does little, in and of itself, to help achieve the result. To use benchmarking to help achieve a desired result, one must benchmark to a behavior that one believes will *lead to* the result. The MAP and A&M studies, unfortunately, give little guidance on these matters.

[119] Augenblick & Myers concede that there may be some upside bias to the estimates derived from the professional judgment approach: "Certainly there is no reason to believe that the figures associated with two different approaches will produce the same results. As far as we know, the professional judgment approach tends to produce higher base cost figures than the successful school approach, which can be explained, in part, by the different philosophical underpinnings of the two approaches… Our observation is that participants in the professional judgment approach find it very difficult to focus exclusively on those resources, and only those, that are needed so that a school might meet a particular outcome."

[120] The "position" listed for each professional judge in A&M's Appendix A is rather tersely described, but virtually all team members were part of the public school community—"professors" were education school professors, "association" officials worked for education associations, a "financial analyst" and "area executive officer" worked as school district staff, the "Chief Executive Officer" was a superintendent of a public school district, and the "research scientist" and "consultant" were school district board members.

Overall Conclusions: Evaluating the Study Recommendations

Both A&M and MAP assert that any increased state funding should be given to the receiving school districts "with no strings attached." They justify this recommendation by arguing that managers should have the flexibility to manage within the local environment that they know best. "Mission, money, and measurement should come from the top; method should come from the bottom" is one phrase used in the discussion. "Set outcome targets and then hold their feet to the fire to achieve them," was another. Judging from the public comments of many school district officials and school board members, they agree with this sentiment.

It seems somewhat contradictory, then, when A&M and MAP suggest how the money should be spent, advocating, for example, smaller class sizes and higher relative spending in the lower grades (e.g., see A&M, pp. 32-38). Their recommendations would increase costs, with an expectation, based on some research, of at least some improvement in achievement. There are other researchers, however, who would argue that reducing class size is not a very *cost-effective* method for improving student achievement, and that many other strategies hold more promise.[121]

We are left at this point with a bit of a dilemma. Is BCPSS lacking adequate funding? Based on repeated analyses and recent evidence reviewed by recognized experts, the answer appears to be "yes." Could BCPSS use more funding in a productive manner, then? Despite our concerns with the methodologies described previously, the evidence indicates that of course it could. How much money *could* it use in a productive manner? We cannot provide a precise figure, but needs are substantial.

Within the relevant range of possible spending, however, *how* money is spent matters as much or more than *how much* is spent. A funding increase could be used wisely or, just as easily, used for purposes that have no positive effect on productivity. BCPSS appears to have a good understanding of where additional funds can productively be used. That understanding plus the analyses of successful schools provide a strong basis for seeking, and effectively using, additional monies. One other point is worth noting. Enhanced financial support from the state is a critical ingredient to the Partnership because of the message it sends. By providing BCPSS with additional resources, it broadcasts that the state is truly interested in making a difference in BCPSS and is willing to back it up with needed dollars.

[121]While intuitively appealing, this strategy is by no means without its critics. Murnane, "Why Money Matters Sometimes," *Education Week*, Sept. 11, 1996, for example, found that after class-size reductions in some states, many teachers do not change their classroom behavior; they continue to teach to smaller classes in the same manner they taught to larger classes. So, they have less work (e.g., fewer homework assignments to grade) but the students are treated no differently and their achievement does not improve. Hanushek is also extremely critical of class-size reduction as a remedy for poor achievement. See "The Evidence on Class-size," Thomas B. Fordham Foundation (http://www.edexcellence.net/library.size.html). See also Virginia Postrel, "Economic Scene: Smaller Classes Don't Necessarily Equal Better Education," The *New York Times*, Feb. 22, 2001.

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Attachment A

Actual Staffing Numbers in Sample of Baltimore City Public Elementary Schools

(EXCLUDES SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS; INCLUDES PRE-K TEACHERS)

Level	Elementary							
School	#145	#164	#11	#206	#47	#89	#73	#236
Enrollment	357	386	516	606	497	626	394	766
Grade Span	PK-5	PK-6	PK-5	K-5	K-5	PK-8	PK-5	PK-8
Teaching Staff								
Classroom teachers	17	18	29	24.5	21	29	15	31
Other teachers	3	3	0	2	1.4		1.8	3
Read/TA teacher/IST	1	1	0	2	0.5		1	
ESL teacher	0	0	0					
Subs	0	0	0					
Instructional Aides	2	1	0		2	4	4	
Other Instruc	2	0	1	2.5	5.5		1	1
Pupil Support								
Guidance	0	0	0	1				1
Nurse	0	0	0	1		1	1	1
Other health	0	0	0	1		1	1	1
Psychologist	0.5	0.5	0.5	1	0.4	1	1	1
Social Worker	0.4	0.4	0.4	1	0.6	1	1	1
Parent Liaison	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	
Other support	0	0	0					2
Other Staff								
Library/Media	1	0	0	1			1	
Media/Tech Aide	0	0	0					
Technology Aide	1	0	0		1		1	1
Administration								
Principal	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Assistant Principal	1	1		1		1	0.5	1
Curriculum Specialists	0	2		2				
Business Manager	0	0						
Clerical/Data	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	
Non-instructional aides	0	0					1	
Security	0	0						
Total without special education	30.9	30.9	33.9	43	35.4	42	33.3	45
Certificated staff (without special education)	27.9	27.9	31.9	41	32.4	35	26.3	44
Student/Certificated Teacher ratio	12.80	13.84	16.18	14.78	15.34	17.89	14.98	17.41

9. Implications and Recommendations

Implications

This evaluation of the City-State Partnership was designed to answer four broad questions:

- Whether or not BCPSS has improved student achievement during the four years since SB 795 was enacted.
- Whether or not BCPSS has improved system management since SB 795 was enacted, as evidenced by performance in previously identified areas of deficiency. And, whether or not BCPSS' current management tools are being used effectively as evidenced by the implementation of key Master Plan initiatives.
- Whether and the extent to which any such improvement or lack thereof is the result of the new governance structures established by SB 795.
- Whether the levels and use of funds for the Baltimore City Public Schools are sufficient.

In this section, we return to these questions and, drawing on the information in the preceding sections, provide our answers. In doing so, we are basing our judgments in a large part on the contrasts between then and now, that is, the progress that has been made from the situation that existed prior to the enactment of SB 795 to the summer of 2001. Compared to the situation that existed in the mid-1990s, BCPSS is tremendously improved.

Before addressing these questions, it is important to make note of one general issue in evaluating the success of the City-State Partnership. This relates to staff and their participation in the reform process. We found the depth of staff disenfranchisement to be very disturbing. As was discussed in some detail in the section on communication in the Human Resources chapter of this report, staff do not feel that they are being consulted on issues near and dear to them, nor do they feel that some of their urgent needs for support are being met. We are not in a position to assess whether these feelings are based on fact or on some misperception. We do know, however, that the feelings of alienation are profound and cannot help but interfere with the reform process. In an early conversation, one of those persons most involved in the partnership since its initiation said that an important question for him was how deeply the reform had saturated. He said he feels changes have occurred for the positive at the central office level, but was unsure of how deeply attitudes had changed at the school level. There are a number of findings from this study that taken together suggest a problem exists at the school level, and that true buy-in must require both listening more to teachers' concerns and showing that their needs and recommendations are being appreciated, considered, and respected.

Student Achievement

Our evaluation shows that there has been improvement in student achievement in the 4 years since SB 795 was enacted. While a substantial gap exists between BCPSS and the state overall on both MSPAP and the CTBS/5 and selectively on the MFT, BCPSS has accelerated its rate of progress at the elementary grades where the vast majority of resources have been targeted. In a number of cases, the rate of progress in BCPSS has exceeded that of the state overall on the MSPAP. At the same time, the evaluation shows that there is considerable work left to do, and that the pace of learning must be increased if the system is to reach Maryland state goals and the 2004 targets for student achievement that BCPSS has set for itself.

Major accomplishments of the system include establishing citywide curricula and purchasing

textbooks for K–12 in reading/language arts/ English, mathematics, science, and in grades 6–12 in social studies and history, beginning to put in place a set of assessments for monitoring students' progress, increasing the participation of schools in a number of promising reform initiatives, creating a safer environment for learning, establishing promotion standards, and adding a variety of supports for students in danger of failing. Compliance with special education requirements has also increased. And there is some movement toward improvement in schools that have been named reconstitution eligible.

In addition, there have been some positive steps taken in the area of Human Resources. New recruitment procedures and increased teacher salaries are beginning to draw more qualified teachers. Professional development aligned with the new curricula is being offered; special summer programs and mentoring supports have been provided for new teachers; and classroom teachers are getting increased supports. A clear Performance-Based Evaluation System has been in put in place, with an emphasis on accountability for student achievement.

Our evaluation also revealed mixed results with regard to RE schools. RE schools are showing greater gains in student achievement than non-RE schools, and principals strongly endorse the supports being provided. The extra staffing, mentoring, and technical assistance provided by MSDE and BCPSS clearly deserve some of the credit for the improvements noted. However, frequently used indicators of staff quality (certification, years of experience, and principal's assessments of competence) are lower than in non-RE schools.

Reform efforts have been disproportionately directed at the lower grade levels. While the rationale for this situation is understandable, progress has been more limited at the higher grade levels than at the lower grade levels. A new Blueprint for Baltimore's Neighborhood High Schools has been announced to address this issue.

Even at the lower grade levels where signs of progress are widely seen, we have identified areas needing further attention. As noted in previous chapters of this report, we are recommending further examinations of 1) the new milestone assessments for both regular and special education students, 2) the efficacy of some of the whole-school reform models, 3) the clarity of the promotion retention policy as it stands, and 4) the summer school program.

More needs to be done to hire and retain high-quality staff and provide them with professional development that they feel meets their needs. In addition, although the new Performance-Based Evaluation System has many strengths, the utility of the portfolio assessment as currently implemented is questionable.

Finally, parental involvement should be increased Despite a number of actions taken by the schools to meet parents' needs and to involve them in their children's education, both school staff and some parts of the community feel that parents are not playing the role that they should. This is a difficult problem to solve, as only part of the solution is under the control of the school system.

Management

There have been notable improvements in the management of the system, with an aim toward better supporting the BCPSS instructional mission. Although not complete, improvements have been noted in the financial reporting system, in procurement, in IT services, and in the management of surplus facilities. While staff turnover has been a major problem, and change has been slow and uneven, there are at present a cadre of very capable leaders in key positions. Over the years, increasingly effective use has been made of The Master Plan as a tool for guiding, integrating, and prioritizing efforts within and across the instructional and operational support systems.

A major problem has persisted in the ability of the system to monitor itself and to assess progress against progress standards. By default, much of the monitoring, outside of test scores, has addressed activities completed as opposed to outcomes. The new targets identified in the 2001–2002 Master Plan and evaluation plans being developed by READ provide indications that this problem is beginning to be addressed.

Our evaluation has shown that there have been significant changes in management that manifest themselves both concretely, such as in the organization chart, and philosophically, as in the assumptions made by various institutions regarding their roles in the system. The imperative of supporting instruction has become clearer, and there is more of a culture of accountability in place. Changes have been undertaken in the central and area offices that appear strategic in supporting improved teaching and learning. Significant progress has been made in procurement, in financial management, in the services provided by the IT unit, and in finance and budgeting. Steps taken toward closing schools and reducing surplus facilities have come slowly, but have, at last, been undertaken and done well.

Challenges still abound. Resource allocation and the relative distribution of administrative and support personnel remain major issues. Relative to other jurisdictions in Maryland, BCPSS appears to have too many administrators and too few support personnel. Whether this is a real problem or a problem in staff classification needs to be determined. In addition, inadequacies remain in maintenance, with both deferred maintenance and ineffective use of manpower posing challenges. While there have been improvements in the IT function, technology used both for instruction and support must continue to be improved. Finally, READ needs to provide data for monitoring change and improving schools.

Governance

The establishment of the New Board of School Commissioners and City-State Partnership was a bold and innovative component of SB 795. Judging by what we have seen, it was a well reasoned one, and we find no basis on which to argue that BCPSS should return to its previous status of being controlled by the City of Baltimore. The Board has played a major role in the progress that has been seen to date. Indeed, given the turnover in staff in key leadership positions, the Board has filled a number of roles not typically adopted by a policymaking body. While there have been missteps, the end result is that change has occurred, and it is the kind of change that was sorely needed. It is hard to imagine that without this partnership, BCPSS would have gained the ground that it has.

The Board has played a major role in bringing about change in the system. Its members have shown a passion and devotion to their jobs as system leaders that has forced BCPSS to make progress. In combination with the Maryland State Department of Education, it has exhibited a strength of will and a passion for improvement that deserves considerable credit. Because it is relatively new, it is hard to separate the structure from those who are in it. This caveat aside, it appears that the approach is sound and should be continued. With stabilization of leadership and an increasingly solid management infrastructure, it is hoped that the Board can step back from its intense involvement in day-to-day management and concentrate on its role as a policymaking body.

Adequacy of Funds

The issue of funding adequacy is one that has been in the forefront of discussion about education and educational change in BCPSS. While the City-State Partnership has resulted in additional funds being allocated to BCPSS, the need for continued support remains. Based on analyses of what is needed at the school level for a quality education conducted by two groups of financial experts, it appears that a funding shortfall does exist. If one accepts the conclusions of these groups and examines the current status of staffing in BCPSS, more funding is definitely need to bring school staffing up to quality standards.

The evaluation did not do its own analysis of funding adequacy, but rather was asked to react to work undertaken by two groups of school finance experts. Although we have some reservations about the methodological assumptions used in these analyses, we recognize that they are well respected by many in the field of school finance. Comparisons between the reality of staffing in BCPSS and what is called for by these groups clearly shows that BCPSS needs more support. Examination of BCPSS' use of the additional funds they received in the past shows that these funds have been directed to areas of documented need. Proposals included in the 2003 Remedy Plan for use of additional resources also seem well grounded and would address some of the shortcomings examined by the recent studies.

Major Recommendations

This evaluation of BCPSS has identified many areas of progress and many remaining challenges. Efforts have been made to change both the system and individual schools. Over the years, some strategies have failed and some have succeeded. This should be expected given the extensive nature of the changes that were needed within BCPSS. Perhaps it is more important that the efforts continue, regardless of the outcome of any one strategy.

Our evaluation leads to two overarching recommendations for continued progress:

- Involve stakeholders outside the central office more fully in decisionmaking, and
- Improve and enhance the information available for guiding reform and assessing its results.

Involve Stakeholders

As BCPSS continues its efforts, perhaps our most important suggestion is that the district conduct a comprehensive review of the *processes* undertaken to identify and implement potential remedies. Our evaluation found widespread desire among state, district, and school staff and among family and community members to work side by side in these efforts. Improved coordination, articulation, and communication between these diverse groups about the overall goals of the reforms are needed to ensure that the district benefits from their expertise and to foster commitment to the changes. The arrangement between BCPSS and MSDE is one example of this coordination that we believe has benefited the district's staff and students, and we recommend that this relationship continue.

Enhance Monitoring and Evaluation

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of all the district's efforts at reform are imperative given the limited resources and great need for improvement. In many areas, BCPSS has lacked the information needed to make informed policy decisions and wisely target resources. Managers have been guided by reports of activities carried out rather than results obtained. To provide better information, we suggest that READ implement a rigorous system of program monitoring and evaluation, focused on outcomes and the linkages between interventions and outcomes that will support managers more adequately. Reports on the summer school program, on the MFT scores, and on the SAT test scores produced in summer of 2001 suggest that the timeliness and quality of reports are improving. Initial plans developed by READ for new evaluations are a welcome step in expanding BCPSS' capacity in this area.

We conclude this report with specific recommendations for the continued progress of BCPSS.

1. Continue the City-State Partnership

As stated earlier, the evaluation indicates that the City-State Partnership has been a productive one and that both BCPSS and MSDE have worked hard to combine and synergize their resources to support the reform effort. There are many things about the current partnership that seem valuable: the background and experience requirements for Board membership; the roles of the city, MSDE, and the governor's office in the selection and appointment process; and the collaborative relationship that has characterized the interactions between BCPSS and MSDE.

The extra financial supports provided by Annapolis have also been extremely important and, we believe, have been invested appropriately on areas of identified need. Based on what we found, we strongly recommend that the current partnership and its supports be continued.

- Continue the New Board of School Commissioners with the same basic requirements for composition and length of service.
- Continue the collaborative relationship between BCPSS and MSDE.
- Continue providing additional financial aid to BCPSS to help the system expand and accelerate its improvement in serving the students of Baltimore City.

2. Monitor Impact of Restructuring

BCPSS has undergone much restructuring since first implementing The Master Plan. This has included creation of new area offices, reassignment of schools to these area offices, school closures, and alterations to the services provided by the central office and by the schools. Highly qualified staff have been hired to fill the most senior positions. Yet, the district does not have information on the impact that the restructuring has had on staffing levels, staffing assignments, or costs associated with salaries paid to staff who perform the various functions within the district.

In addition, administrative structures that were established in the wake of SB 795 and the Vaughn G. court case might no longer be appropriate. Duplicate structures may cause unnecessary expenditures and may result in differential quality of services.

- Examine the capabilities of staff in middle management positions. Make sure these individuals have the experience and expertise to provide guidance and leadership in the reform.
- Conduct a review of the staffing configuration throughout the district, including levels of administrative and support staff in both the central office and schools. Seek to identify barriers and incentives to the efficient and cost-effective implementation of the district's primary mission (i.e., education) and identify remedies if the configuration is found to be inappropriate or inefficient.
- As BCPSS moves toward disengagement from the court-ordered Long-Range Compliance Plan over the next few years, examine how services for all students can be integrated more closely at all levels, including the management level. In addition, continue the development of compatibility between SETS and SASI.
- Examine whether BCPSS has sufficient and appropriate staff in place to allow members of the New Board of Commissioners to step back from their current level of direct management. This includes developing a plan for assessing that highly qualified and experienced personnel will continue to fill top management roles.

3. Seek More Creative and Meaningful Ways to Reach Out to Teachers

Analysis of teachers' responses to the survey items, comments written in by teachers, and focus groups with teachers indicate that teachers do not feel they own the reform effort in the same way as staff at the central office and do not feel that their needs are being met. As the City-State Partnership moves forward into its next phase of operation, it is important both to listen to the concerns of teachers and to engage them more fully in the design and implementation of the change process.

- Look more closely at the content and design of professional development activities. Many teachers do not feel that current offerings fully meet their needs. Involve schools in a needs assessment and planning process for school-based professional development.
- As reviews are conducted and refinements are made in the curricula, actively seek input from teachers regarding their perceptions of the textbooks, milestone assessments, and other support materials. Actively solicit their assessment of how they are working and how these tools could work better.
- Continue to involve teachers as teacher mentors. Use teachers to support both new teachers and those who may be having problems.

4. Improve Facilities Management

BCPSS must grapple with several challenges related to facilities management, the solutions to which often appear to conflict with one another. BCPSS operates more facilities than are currently necessary or will be necessary in the foreseeable future. At the same time, many existing facilities are in need of repair and retrofitting if they are expected to meet the changing needs of school staff and students. There also may be a legitimate need for new construction as the student population shifts between different regions of the district. Finally, there are other community and neighborhood concerns that will influence the level of local support for any actions taken in response to these needs. The concerns of the public need to be heard and addressed.

- Continue to undertake activities to improve facilities management, considering fiscal and human needs. Enhance BCPSS' capacity for planning by hiring permanent staff with advanced analytic knowledge and skills in planning, including demography and geographic mobility.
- Consider using public-private partnerships to reduce the future management burden placed on BCPSS and using innovative approaches to reduce the costs associated with existing facilities (e.g., closing selected facilities at a school site or sharing space and responsibilities with community groups). In addition, involve families and local community leaders in the entire planning process—from conception of the plans through implementation.
- Work to improve the quality of repair and maintenance services. Consider the development of a means to track the satisfactory completion of maintenance and repair requests, possibly developing an electronic system that district and school staff can use to request work, monitor progress on the task, and evaluate the outcome (i.e., "customer" satisfaction) of the completed work.

5. Increase Access to High Quality IT

BCPSS has allocated significant resources to upgrade information technology throughout the district. This effort has resulted in improved communication capabilities and potentially enhanced instructional programs. However, BCPSS lacks information on the best ways to target these efforts. Specifically, information is needed on what school staff identify as their most pressing IT needs, such as computer applications, hardware, and training.

- Work in greater partnership with school staff to integrate IT plans districtwide. As part of this effort, consider completing the vision document, initiating user groups and chat rooms, and employing a full-time IT coordinator to assist with writing grants related to school IT.

- Implement current IT plans and discuss with school staff potential enhancements that will aid instructional activities or facilitate school operations. Continue expanding and enhancing:

  a. Access to email for teaching staff, wiring of schools, and provision of adequate computer hardware;

  b. Software such as classroom instruction or management tools; and

  c. Professional development services for teachers at all schools to better prepare them to integrate technology in support of learning.

6. Upgrade Communications Between the Administrative Levels and the Schools

Schools and the central office must rely upon each other for a vast amount of information to effectively and efficiently achieve the mission of BCPSS. The quality and timeliness of this information is critical to the success of their efforts from the administrative offices to the schools themselves. In addition, collaboration and accommodation to each other's needs is necessary to foster a collegial environment and further increase the success of their mission. Anecdotal and survey findings reflect that information is not always shared effectively or efficiently. Unfortunately, BCPSS does not have information on the specific points in the process where problems occur and, therefore, is unlikely to identify solutions to the problems.

- Continue to improve the process by which financial data are provided by BCPSS so that it becomes faster and more convenient for school staff and the general public.

- Investigate ways to improve the timeliness of the data delivery.

7. Continue Emphasis on Building Staff Capacity

Efforts to recruit, support, and evaluate school staff are underway. Yet during this evaluation, many questions were raised about staffing issues: the adequacy of support staff working in the schools; the incentives offered to new staff; the training and credentials of newly hired teachers; the leadership capacity of new principals; and methods used to evaluate staff. No forum exists in which school staff can participate in the development and review of plans to address these issues.

- Increase collaboration between the central office and school-level staff to identify and recruit new staff and to retain all staff. Include discussions about differential teacher compensation, professional development opportunities, and the Performance-Based Evaluation System.

- Continue to provide leadership training for principals, especially those new to BCPSS and the role.

- Examine methods that over time might reduce the number of provisionally certified teachers. Efforts to increase the proportion of certified and tenured teachers serving middle schools and high schools are especially needed.

- Conduct an evaluation of the use of teacher portfolios. Focus the evaluation on the desired results of the teacher's work (e.g., student learning) rather than on a particular method or instrument (e.g., portfolios). Involve teachers in this review process.

8. Determine the Effects of Whole-School Reform Models

Various reform models have been implemented in schools throughout the district. Anecdotal evidence suggests that elements of each of the models can help improve student achievement. Findings from this evaluation indicate that improved achievement in some areas (e.g., language arts) is associated with selected models. However, BCPSS does not have data that could help identify the best model for its students or identify which elements of the various models have the greatest positive effects on students.

- Evaluate the effects of the multiple school reform models currently implemented in the district (e.g., Achievement First, Direct Instruction) and consider whether additional models should be adopted. Include the examination of three core issues.

  a. What effect does each model have on student achievement? This question is especially important in light of high student mobility and high teacher turnover rates.

  b. To what extent is each model aligned with BCPSS and Maryland standards, and with the current research regarding learning and cognition?

  c. To what extent is each model truly a "whole-school" reform rather than a reading program? Does the model address all content areas? Does it address pedagogy, relationships among staff, and integration across content areas?

- Expand reform efforts at middle and high schools. Specifically:

  a. Increase access to instructional materials and offer additional staff development on reform goals and methods.

  b. Create smaller learning environments (e.g., themed schools) at these levels.

  c. Initiate and more fully implement special programs such as intervention and accelerated programs, as well as alternative programs for disruptive students or other students in need.

9. Reassess and, as Necessary, Modify Curricula

BCPSS has reviewed curricula for reading/language arts, science, mathematics, and other content areas. From this process, the district has selected specific curricula for general use throughout BCPSS. Findings from this evaluation indicated widespread acceptance of the curricula and general appreciation of the related staff development that has been provided. However, we also found dissatisfaction with some elements of the curricula and need for additional support if the curricula are to meet all students' need.

- Conduct an audit and comprehensive review of the curricula that have been selected. Address the alignment of the curricula with state outcomes, student assessments, and access to textbooks and other instructional materials.

- Determine ways in which the citywide curricula can be adopted to support full inclusion of special education students, while at the same time providing the differentiation that may be needed to help them achieve their potential. Provide additional training for teachers in using the curricula with special education students.

10. Evaluate the Policies and Programs Designed to Provide Extra Supports for Young Learners and Learners at Risk

The district has implemented several new activities and programs designed to help prepare children to enter school, help prepare them to advance to the next grade level, and assist those students who are at risk of academic failure.

These programs have won widespread approval of families and school staff. However, the programs come at a significant financial cost, and they absorb the attention of many staff. There are no data that provide a comprehensive assessment of the costs and benefits of these programs or services.

- Develop a class-size reduction plan that addresses *all* elementary grade levels, including prekindergarten and kindergarten, and monitor the implementation of the plan.
- Evaluate the specific ready-to-learn initiatives that are in place in the district and provide additional funds to those that are most successful at improving student readiness.
- Expand the efforts to support schools at middle and high schools with a history of low academic performance, and evaluate their effects at the earliest possible time.
- Evaluate the effects of the interventions associated with the new promotion and retention policy on student achievement. Also examine the barriers and incentives to student participation in the interventions, including factors that affect staff, parent, and student involvement.

11. Continue to Use and Develop The Master Plan as a Comprehensive Blueprint for System Functioning

BCPSS struggles to address the challenges it faces given limited financial resources. Our evaluation indicated that district and school staff, family members, and local community members all have ideas about how best to allocate resources—thereby creating competition among various initiatives that might be implemented. Strategic planning and identification of priority initiatives would help guide budget decisions; however, the budgeting process often has been completed *before* the strategic planning process.

- Improve the level of coordination and alignment of the budgeting process and The Master Plan. This includes both continuing to align programs and resources and coordinating their schedules for development and public presentation.

12. Continue Efforts to Involve Parents and Support the Work of the Parent and Community Advisory Committee

It is widely recognized that BCPSS cannot succeed in its primary mission without the support and involvement of parents. However, parental involvement has been a challenge for BCPSS during the past few years. This evaluation identified many challenges faced by families of BCPSS students that discourage the necessary support and involvement. The district has implemented some programs to foster involvement, and schools throughout the district have attempted additional efforts that were tailored to their individual school communities. Given the recognition of the role played by the parents and families, BCPSS needs more information about the barriers and more support to overcome this challenge.

- We recommend that schools improve and increase their outreach activities to intensify parent involvement in the schools. A key strategy is to increase the number and capacity of parent liaisons in the schools. Teachers, parents, and liaison staff should work together to build a parent involvement strategy tailored to each school's needs. Additional attention should also be given to the role and work of the Office of Parental Involvement. In addition, schools need to make parents members of teams working diligently to improve the achievement of students.