

# *Becoming a Capable and Accountable System*

A Review of Professional Development and Curriculum  
in the Baltimore City Public School System



Prepared by  
Education Resource Strategies  
Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University  
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Over the past two years, the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) has – by most indicators of organizational health – struggled to overcome the habits of a system that has been in deep crisis for as many as three decades. A long history of poor fiscal and organizational management resulted in a debt of nearly \$60 million and a widely acknowledged need to reorganize central office, the system of academic “Areas,” and related support services throughout the system.

At the same time, the district has experienced heightened requirements of accountability for increased student performance at both the state and federal levels. The federal No Child Left Behind Act, enacted in 2002, requires every state to develop a methodology by which schools make “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) toward all students’ demonstrating proficiency in reading and mathematics, with annual increments in consequences for schools that do not show AYP. In response, the Maryland State Department of Education developed a new Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC) to align teaching and learning across the state with federal accountability goals. Beginning in 2003, new state assessments were administered annually to gauge whether schools and districts make AYP. Until 2004, BCPSS has shown critically low levels of student achievement as measured by these tests.

It was in this context that the Maryland State Board of Education rejected the district’s master plan – the key to accessing major federal and state resources for public education – as failing to put forth a coherent and efficient plan for using these resources. In addition, the state required the district to implement a set of “corrective actions.” The new chief executive officer of BCPSS, Bonnie Copeland, together with Nancy Grasmick, state superintendent of schools, ordered two external audits – one focused on the district’s use of its professional development resources and one focused on the alignment between the VSC, the district curriculum, and classroom practice. Finally, the district continued to carry the weight of a long-running court case about the inadequacy of funding and services, which was likely to create major state-district tensions over resources.

### The Fragile Potential for Continued Improvement

Given the severity of this situation, the district has demonstrated considerable will in addressing the most pressing crises: the negotiation of a loan from the city,

an aggressive repayment schedule, and the elimination of nearly a thousand positions without making deep cuts in school programs. In addition, Copeland has begun to address the next, and most pressing, set of issues: building the capacity of her central office and Area Academic Offices to lead instructional improvement. In fact, the district posted initial, but significant, gains in student achievement on the 2004 state accountability measures in reading and mathematics at the elementary school level.

However, this potential is fragile. There are deep-rooted systemic problems in teaching and learning: expectations are low and students are engaged in routine tasks. Many teachers work hard and create safe and stable classroom environments for even the poorest children in the city, but they do not have the knowledge or skills to hold these same children to the high standards they must meet to qualify for college or the workplace. Few principals are prepared to be instructional leaders in schools in which teachers are responsible for ensuring that all children reach high standards of performance. As a whole, the system lacks accountability – children, not educators, feel the consequences when they do not score well. Families, the press, and the wider public are losing patience; they fear another round of disappointment.

While these problems may well have roots in earlier practices, it is time for the current administration to address them. The new Board of School Commissioners, the CEO, and the district's partners all face a choice – they can continue to react to various crises as they emerge, or they can adopt a systemic and proactive program to hold themselves responsible for improving the quality of public education at BCPSS.

## Blueprints for Improvement: The Professional Development and Curriculum Reviews

In July 2003, Nancy Grasmick, Maryland's chief state school officer, specified the corrective actions that BCPSS must take to improve its operations and performance. Central to these corrective actions were two external audits, one focused on curriculum and the other focused on the district's approach to professional development.

In 2003–2004, the external audits were conducted by two independent organizations:

- Researchers from Educational Resource Strategies (ERS) examined how the district utilizes its professional development resources.
- Researchers from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) examined the alignment of the district and state curriculum and the quality of instruction in literacy and mathematics as delivered in classrooms.

Throughout the investigation, findings and emerging questions were presented to a Steering Committee composed of members of BCPSS central office, the Mary-

land State Department of Education, the Fund for Educational Excellence and major funders. Thus, the findings and recommendations in this report have been developed in close collaboration with the organizations responsible for implementing them.

In the course of their work, both teams determined it was vital to integrate their investigations and findings to form a concise picture of how stated policies are translated at the district, school, and classroom level. In addition, the teams agreed to present findings on the district infrastructure and its capacity to use information and data to make decisions and communicate with its partners and public. While these issues were not included in the specific request for the audits, the teams found that they were integrally related to the principal concerns of the study; the weak structure of the district and the strained communications with its partners and public affect the district's ability to improve professional development and curriculum.

Thus, this report includes three sections: one on the capability, accountability, and communications of the system; one on the use of professional development resources; and one on the alignment of the curriculum. These reviews were designed to produce blueprints for immediate, feasible actions leading to “accountable improvement” in professional training and in teaching and learning.

## Summary of Major Findings

The following are the review teams' findings regarding the BCPSS system, the use of professional development resources, and the curriculum.

### **FINDINGS ON STRUCTURE, USE OF KNOWLEDGE, AND COMMUNICATION**

In interviews with educators at all levels and an examination of key documents and press reports, the review teams developed a picture of the infrastructure of the BCPSS, its use of knowledge and data, and its communications with its stakeholders. All of these issues must be addressed if the specific review recommendations about professional development and curriculum are to take root and yield substantial improvement.

- ◆ BCPSS currently lacks the capacity to make substantial improvement in teaching and learning.
- BCPSS lacks a well-structured central office with the capacity and infrastructure to support high-quality teaching and learning in its elementary, middle, and high schools.
- BCPSS tends to place more emphasis on compliance than on partnership and support.
- Currently, the Academic Areas cannot function as nimble and differentiated units for supporting schools.
- The district allows schools to employ a patchwork of varied curricular programs, diversely implemented, without attempting to achieve coherence.

- BCPSS does not have a coherent approach to developing the skills and knowledge of its school and district leadership. This includes Area Academic Officers (AAOs), principals, lead teachers and coaches.
- Available supports for improving teaching and learning are not used well. This is particularly true for support/content teachers and coaches – both major investments of district resources.
- ◆ BCPSS is not currently an accountable system. It does not use data effectively to inform its decision making, target its resources, evaluate investments, or hold employees responsible for the quality of their work.
- At both the central and Area offices, it is often difficult to obtain data that is vital to effective planning, accountability, or program evaluation.
- At present, the staff at central office, AAOs, and schools rely chiefly on lagging indicators, such as student test scores, that arrive too late for making interventions and provide little information about the causes for performance. An accountable system must utilize diagnostic, formative indicators to drive improvement.

BCPSS has lost the support and belief of the community it serves.

- Press coverage of BCPSS has shifted from initially supportive to increasingly negative.
- Continued public forums to address key issues may prove to be an important communication strategy. These settings have been both effective and informative.
- ◆ BCPSS serves many masters: federal, state, and local governments; funders; taxpayers; students; and families. Without a coordinated and prioritized set of goals and benchmarks, the district is unlikely to improve teaching and learning.

## **FINDINGS ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In addition to the points above, researchers from ERS found that:

- ◆ BCPSS invests significant resources (\$58 million dollars, or approximately 6 percent of its operating budget) on professional development of teachers, a substantial investment relative to other districts. But the investment is not structured for maximum effect.
- Investment varies widely across schools and programs in ways that do not dependably match the varying needs of students, teachers, coaches, principals, schools, AAOs, or other recipients.
- The district spends \$20 million on teacher salaries for contracted workdays designated for professional development. There is little guidance and no accountability for the effective use of this important investment. Meanwhile, the lack of common planning time for teachers limits the impact of the investment in professional development.

◆ BCPSS has made a substantial investment in coaching as a strategy for improving the quality of instruction without making the necessary investments in planning, selection, and training. These resources are not distributed strategically and there is limited accountability.

- Coaching resources vary dramatically across schools and in ways that are not always consistent with the current levels of student performance or teacher preparation.
- The district has invested in several promising models of professional development and school improvement, including the CEO's model, Achievement First, and Direct Instruction.
- However, there has been no consistent effort to identify and spread best practices in the coaching programs based on data on student achievement or the quality of classroom instruction.

◆ BCPSS invests significant resources in new teacher induction, but there is no career development strategy and the induction activities do not link to school-level improvement efforts.

## **FINDINGS ON CURRICULUM**

In addition to the points above, researchers from AISR found that:

◆ The district curriculum is becoming better aligned to state standards, but teachers lack the support they need to provide rigorous and appropriate learning opportunities for their students.

- The district does not have a central office staff structured to support improvement. Nor is there the depth of knowledge to support principals, teachers, and coaches in making substantive change in major subject areas such as literacy and mathematics.
- Across the district, teachers and coaches have no coherent approach to literacy or mathematics. Thus, students moving around within the district encounter very different messages about what constitutes high performance.

◆ Many BCPSS students encounter a steady diet of routinized, basic skills instruction that is rarely challenging or motivating. Observations of BCPSS classrooms and assignments reveal that:

- Students are accustomed to “being told what to do” rather than generating new understandings, questions, or points of view. “Routine work” of low cognitive demand occurs frequently across grades and subject areas.
- Students practice the same skills across as many as four grades; there is uncertain articulation across grades or levels of schooling;
- Students struggle to read the materials intended to form the backbone of classroom instruction; as a result, many teachers often invent their instructional materials. These vary from thoughtful adaptations of texts and hands-on demonstrations to serial photocopying out of “activity books” that bear no relation to the standards-based curriculum. The latter is most prevalent in the poorest schools.

- ◆ BCPSS teachers work in heterogeneous classrooms without the training to differentiate instruction to meet students' needs.

BCPSS has a long history of failing to address the needs of special populations (e.g., students with disabilities, gifted and talented, children who have experienced sustained poverty, etc.). Despite major court cases, general education teachers still have little experience in (or, in some cases, commitment to) differentiated instruction, nor do they have a commonly held understanding of what is meant by “differentiated instruction” or how it relates to improving student performance. Despite increased accountability for the performance of student subgroups, there is little understanding of how to address the learning needs of special populations.

- ◆ Few students in BCPSS currently have access to additional learning opportunities that extend beyond what occurs within the school day.

Through the spring of 2004, the central office did not have a system for coordinating or distributing extended learning partnerships that support student academic learning. The net result is that school principals and AAOs report scrounging for programs on their own, piecing together services and supports “under the radar.” Furthermore, students who require additional learning opportunities beyond the regular school year can rarely access the level of opportunities that would make a substantial difference.

## Major Recommendations

The three reviews, combined with ongoing discussions with CEO Copeland and her emerging staff, as well as the Fund for Educational Excellence, point to several sets of recommendations.

- ◆ Create an effective system.

### *1. Develop more efficient and capable structures at central office.*

The district needs a new set of central office structures and strategies to facilitate informed and accountable planning. It is critical to:

- Establish a CEOs implementation team, composed of core central office staff and AAOs, charged with building the district's and schools' capacity to improve instruction and to coordinate the delivery of services from external partners.
- Hire a K–12 director of literacy and a K–12 director of mathematics to help the district and schools define the important learning outcomes for students and the professional development priorities for the 2004–2005 academic year (and each year thereafter).
- Redefine the roles and responsibilities of the offices of Curriculum and Instruction and Professional Development.
- Reorganize AAOs so that each Area has a coherent curriculum focus (especially in literacy and mathematics), clear performance targets tied to specific school data, and equitable resources to achieve those outcomes.

## *2. Become accountable.*

- Collaborate with the Maryland State Department of Education to develop a clear and detailed portrait of student performance in Baltimore, with particular attention to the needs of currently low-performing students.
- Create clear performance targets for each school (using the terms of the VSC, samples of student work, etc.) and the means to collect, analyze, and report data related to these targets. Formative and diagnostic assessments must also be an integral part of the support for reaching performance targets.
- Develop effective strategies for generating and sharing performance data with Academic Areas and individual schools in ways that are useful to classroom teachers and that support continuous improvement.
- Establish clear job descriptions and performance criteria for all instructional employees, including central office staff, principals, teachers, and coaches.

## *3. Rebuild commitment.*

- Convene a diverse group of leaders, family members, and students to discuss what the community seeks from the schools.
- Create a calendar of public meetings to inform the public about the progress towards realizing the terms of the strategic plan and the community goals.
- Actively engage the city's press in understanding the issues and in reporting success as well as difficulty.

## *4. Create a coordinated improvement effort.*

At the moment, BCPSS serves many masters, including the state, the mayor's office, local funders, and teacher unions. It is important to coordinate the many visions about what the district should be doing. One approach is to create a unified partners' advisory, including public officials, major funders, and community leaders, that meets regularly to create a shared and prioritized list of goals for the district. The purpose of this advisory is to meet regularly to ensure that the district is answering to a coordinated set of expectations and benchmarks for performance.

### ◆ **Redesign professional development.**

- Outline a yearlong plan for the available professional development days.
- Develop strategies for making equitable and strategic use of school-level resources to support the improvement of teaching.
- Conduct an inventory of school-level resources to determine the highest priority opportunities for freeing up resources, including common planning time, for school instructional improvement.
- Support the professional development of AAOs.
- Redesign the new teacher induction program to provide more on-the-job support linked to specific school needs.
- Pilot a coherent approach to training coaches and principals as instructional leaders.

◆ Strengthen teaching and learning

- Reduce the number of different curricula in use.
- Organize professional development around clear and explicit K–12 frameworks with explicit grade-level expectations.
- Develop common “anchor” units of instruction focused on valued performances and key concepts in literacy and mathematics to create common and equitable learning opportunities for students and appropriate professional development experiences for teachers throughout the system.
- Develop differentiated instructional strategies that permit students of a wide range of abilities to be taught to high standards in common classrooms. Make the modeling of these strategies a key part of professional development.
- Develop a plan for ensuring that all students gain access to learning opportunities outside of the school day. To benefit students, these opportunities must be aligned with academic outcomes.

Throughout the course of the review process, researchers have regularly shared their major findings and recommendations with Dr. Copeland, her emerging staff, and the district’s partners. As a result, numerous initiatives are under way that address the major recommendations. These initiatives include:

- creating a CEO’s implementation team to steer the course of improvement;
- hiring directors of literacy and mathematics to focus the work on narrowing achievement gaps;
- strengthening the district’s literacy and mathematics curricula during the critical middle and high school years;
- making better and more equitable use of the available resources for professional development;
- continuing the CEO’s public forums with students and families.

These are promising moves. However, plans are not the same as actions and promises are a long way from results. BCPSS must hold its current focus on steady improvement that yields results for students.

Finally, while the district can do much to ensure that the schools improve, it will take more than good decisions and follow-through from the central office to make the necessary difference. All partners – the city, the state, the foundations, community groups, and families – are necessary contributors. The cover on this report is a schoolchild’s drawing entitled “My Baltimore.” It depicts an entire bustling city. This is what it will take for the schools to thrive and serve children well.

## *Baltimore: A City in Need of Strong Schools*

**T**o many visitors, Baltimore looks like a city on the rise. The bustling hotels and shops by the Inner Harbor, the new baseball and football stadiums nearby, and museums and music venues all suggest a vibrant, dynamic city. But there is more to Baltimore's story. It is also a city that lost 90,000 manufacturing jobs in the 1970s and 1980s and that suffers from high unemployment and poverty rates. Nearly a fourth of the city's residents, including a third of its children, live in poverty, and its median family income of \$36,134 is just 70 percent of the national average.

To grow into adults who can lead productive, fulfilling lives, Baltimore's children need strong schools. Unlike more advantaged young people, whose families and communities can supply them with the cultural capital that makes for success in school and life, Baltimore's poor and working-poor families rely heavily on the city's public schools to convey the knowledge and skills their children need to succeed in higher education and the workforce.

When a city's economic and cultural base declines, all of its residents, and most particularly its lower-income residents, are affected. As an older cab driver explained, "In my day, we went to hear the Baltimore symphony play as much as once a month – all of us, rich, poor, every kid. I learned to love classical music. I'm raising my grandchildren, three of them, no jobs here for their parents. When they hear me listening to the symphony on the radio, they call out 'Granddaddy's sweet music.' Not a one of them has ever been [to the symphony]. Same as happened to the city, happened to the schools."

In the last two generations, Baltimore's public schools have faced severe challenges – many of the same challenges faced by urban centers throughout the nation: declining enrollment from middle- and working-class families; a loss of experienced principals and teachers to wealthier suburban districts; a growing population of students with special learning and linguistic needs. Like other cities, Baltimore has also faced the challenge of meeting sharply rising standards. In the 1990s, the state of Maryland set very high expectations for every student and put in place a challenging set of performance assessments to measure school progress. And, beginning in 2002, the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) set the expectation that by 2014 all students will be performing at proficient levels in mathematics and reading.

Some urban districts – Boston, San Diego, New York, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg, among others – have made substantial (if not yet sufficient) headway in meeting these steeply higher standards amid the challenges urban centers face. They have done so by developing highly skilled central offices, attracting and retaining a well-trained teacher corps, and establishing cultures that feature both external and internal accountability. There is keen attention in these districts to meeting the expectations of NCLB and state accountability systems. But beyond that, these systems have set for themselves high expectations for the performance of adults: central office staff, principals, coaches, and classroom teachers. Furthermore, these districts have established a coherent program of continuous improvement in which they ask local partners, as well as local and national foundations, to contribute to the success of students and schools. Other cities, like Chicago, Chattanooga, and Birmingham, meanwhile, are looking outside the traditional boundaries of the school system to find learning resources for young people. These cities are attempting to support the growth of mixed-income, mixed-race communities in place of the rampant “lofting” of historic downtown neighborhoods. In these cities, the rejuvenation of public schools is a major strategy, with quality education and the extended learning opportunities of downtown drawing a wide range of urban families together.

With its stores and cultural attractions, Baltimore can become a tourist destination; with its condominiums, it can become a bedroom community for middle-class property owners priced out of Washington. But it cannot become a thriving city without strong schools.

To improve the schools, the district – and those who want to see it improve – must begin by taking stock of the realities of the current situation, chiefly the sobering facts about student achievement.

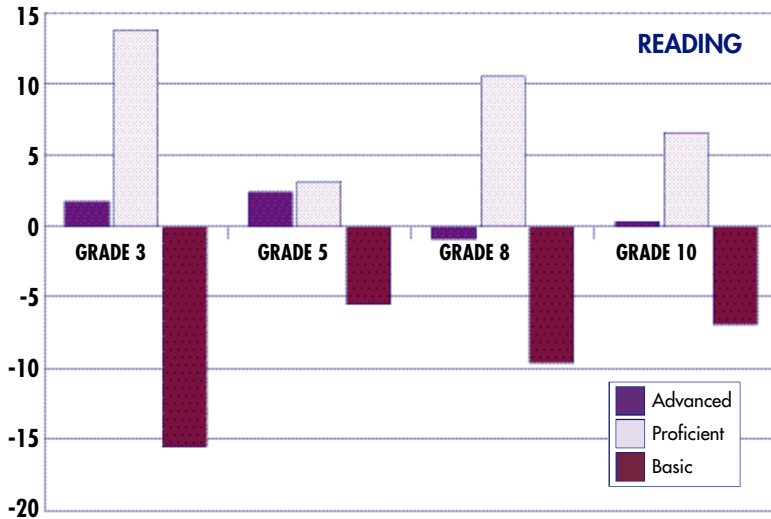
## The Current State of Student Achievement in Baltimore

In some respects, the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) is similar to the city school systems mentioned above that have made strides in improving teaching and learning. BCPSS has benefited from a strong state framework, support from the state department of education, and investment from local foundations and universities. Significantly, the state of Maryland intervened in the late 1990s, creating a joint state-city governance arrangement for the schools and substantially increasing funding for the district.

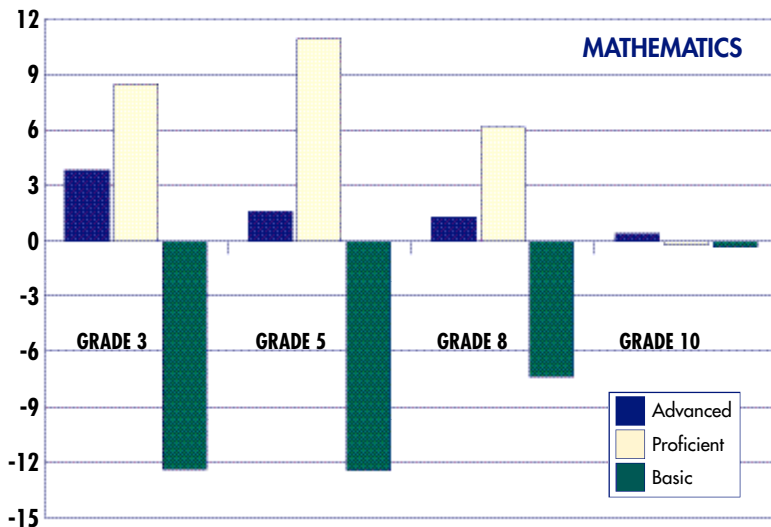
These efforts have demonstrated some payoff: there was some improvement in student achievement in the early 2000s and significant growth in both mathematics and literacy in 2004. About half of the city’s third-graders performed at the proficient level in reading and mathematics in 2004 on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) tests, up from less than 40 percent the year before (Figure B1). And 55 of the 586 schools acknowledged by the Maryland State Department of

Education (MSDE) as making substantial improvement are located in Baltimore City. But there is still much to be done, particularly with regard to the number of students achieving at the proficient and advanced levels.

**Figure B1: Comparison of Performance by Baltimore Students in 2003 and 2004**



| GRADE | YEAR          | READING     |             |              |
|-------|---------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
|       |               | ADVANCED    | PROFICIENT  | BASIC        |
| 3     | 2004          | 3.2         | 51.4        | 45.4         |
|       | 2003          | 1.5         | 37.6        | 60.9         |
|       | <b>change</b> | <b>1.7</b>  | <b>13.8</b> | <b>-15.5</b> |
| 5     | 2004          | 9.7         | 40.2        | 50.1         |
|       | 2003          | 7.3         | 37.1        | 55.6         |
|       | <b>change</b> | <b>2.4</b>  | <b>3.1</b>  | <b>-5.5</b>  |
| 8     | 2004          | 5.6         | 36.8        | 57.6         |
|       | 2003          | 6.5         | 26.3        | 67.2         |
|       | <b>change</b> | <b>-0.9</b> | <b>10.5</b> | <b>-9.6</b>  |
| 10    | 2004          | 8.6         | 26.9        | 64.6         |
|       | 2003          | 8.3         | 20.3        | 71.5         |
|       | <b>change</b> | <b>0.3</b>  | <b>6.6</b>  | <b>-6.9</b>  |



| GRADE | YEAR          | MATHEMATICS |             |              |
|-------|---------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
|       |               | ADVANCED    | PROFICIENT  | BASIC        |
| 3     | 2004          | 6.3         | 47.9        | 45.7         |
|       | 2003          | 2.5         | 39.4        | 58.1         |
|       | <b>change</b> | <b>3.8</b>  | <b>8.5</b>  | <b>-12.4</b> |
| 5     | 2004          | 2.6         | 41.2        | 56.3         |
|       | 2003          | 1.0         | 30.3        | 68.8         |
|       | <b>change</b> | <b>1.6</b>  | <b>10.9</b> | <b>-12.5</b> |
| 8     | 2004          | 3.0         | 16.0        | 81.1         |
|       | 2003          | 1.7         | 9.8         | 88.5         |
|       | <b>change</b> | <b>1.3</b>  | <b>6.2</b>  | <b>-7.4</b>  |
| GEOM. | 2004          | 1.7         | 12.3        | 85.9         |
|       | 2003          | 1.3         | 12.5        | 86.2         |
|       | <b>change</b> | <b>0.4</b>  | <b>-0.2</b> | <b>-0.3</b>  |

NOTE: The graphs represent the figures for percentage change from the tables at the right.

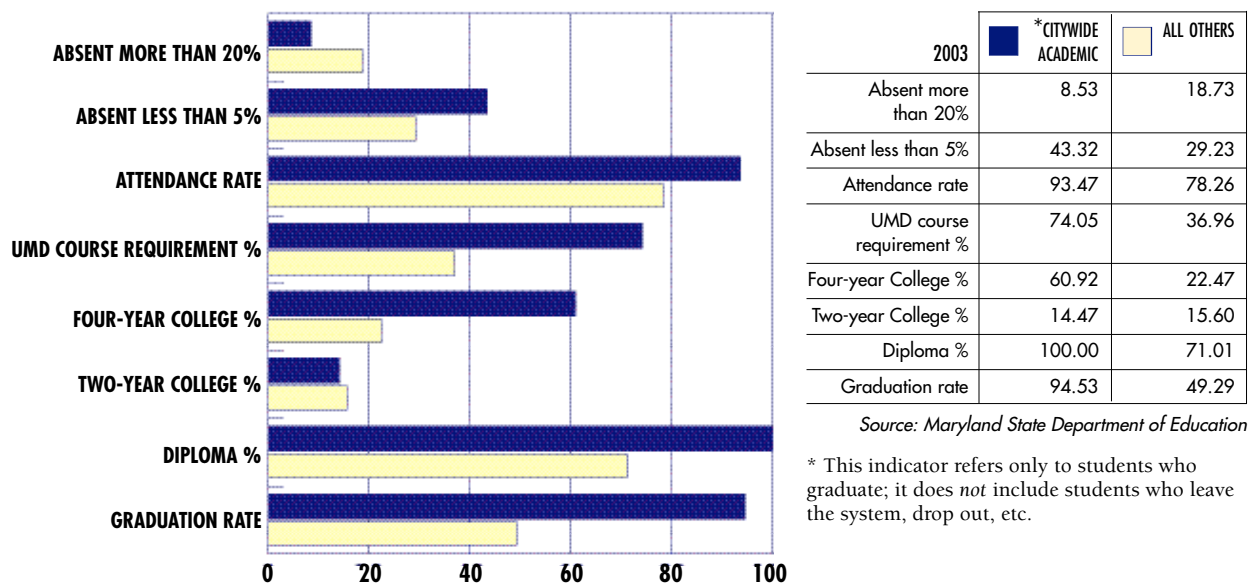
NOTE: Yellow shading indicates where student scores have improved by ten or more points; red shading indicates where scores declined.

While the city results on the 2004 administration of the MSA are impressive, they are uneven. Although some schools are doing well, many others languish, and fifty schools remain on the state “watch list.” Moreover, the results are not as strong in the upper grades, and the district is far from where it needs to be to meet the challenge of ensuring proficiency for all students in a decade.

<sup>1</sup> In the course of this work, the researchers had the occasion to work with Baltimore’s student data and to talk with individuals who use or need to use that data. Appendix 3 contains a set of recommendations for using data as an ongoing planning tool in the district.

Figure B2 illustrates some of the patterns of achievement and their effects on high school students. The chart compares indicators of “high school persistence” – that is, factors that are associated with student engagement and educational attainment – for citywide academic high schools and all other Baltimore high schools. The data show vividly that the school system is unable to adequately prepare a new generation of parents, citizens, and employees.<sup>1</sup> It also exemplifies the two Baltimores. The system is doing well for some, but it is far from doing well for all. Urban high schools typically graduate approximately 60 percent of their students – Baltimore’s comprehensive schools fall beneath even that sobering rate.

**Figure B2: High School Persistence Indicators**



Source: Maryland State Department of Education

\* This indicator refers only to students who graduate; it does not include students who leave the system, drop out, etc.

## The Current State of the School System: A Climate of Crisis

Unlike cities that have begun to make significant headway in their improvement efforts, BCPSS is not currently structured to lead and support all schools to reach high levels of performance. The district has a long history of crises in management and performance. While there has been some recent progress, the extraordinary budget shortfall, the need to restructure the central office, and the ongoing tensions surrounding the oversight of a struggling system have preoccupied the district and the public. However, as the data reported above make clear, the quality of teaching and learning has to become the central focus of BCPSS and its partners.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, signs of progress began to show in BCPSS’s history – some would even say habit – of fiscal, management, and achievement struggles. There was evidence of some improvement in student achievement,

along with the will to organize the district's human and fiscal resources to support that achievement (e.g., rising student scores on the Maryland assessments, the creation of the CEO's District to concentrate on improving the lowest-achieving schools). In 2002–2003, the Baltimore Board of School Commissioners appointed a new chief executive officer, Bonnie Copeland, the former executive director of the Fund for Educational Excellence, Baltimore's local education fund, first as interim and, later, as a fully appointed CEO.

In her first year, Copeland and her team had to deal with the consequences of prior mismanagement, including:

- a new (or at least newly acknowledged) fiscal crisis that resulted in a nearly \$60-million budget shortfall;
- growing evidence of poor staffing and mismanagement, which contributed to the fiscal problems;
- the negotiation of a loan from the city to stem the shortfall and the attendant scrutiny and oversight such financial dependence brings;
- implementation of further payroll reductions to curb the urgent fiscal crisis;
- an ongoing court case about adequate funding of the city's schools;
- tensions among the district, the city, and the state surrounding the oversight of the system; and
- the need to respond to an angry community that had felt ignored for years under past administrations.

These challenges occurred amid stronger calls for accountability from the federal and state levels. Enacted in 2002, NCLB requires schools to demonstrate “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) toward proficiency in reading and mathematics and establishes consequences for failing to show AYP. MSDE, meanwhile, developed a new Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC) in an effort to align teaching and learning across the state with federal accountability goals. Beginning in 2003, the state administered new assessments annually to gauge whether schools and districts make AYP.

In a further sign of discontent with the management of the BCPSS, the Maryland State Board of Education rejected the district's “master plan,” which the district is required to develop under the city-state partnership governing BCPSS in order to access major federal and state resources for public education. The district was required to implement a set of “corrective actions,” a series of mandated strategies for improvement, and to undergo two external audits – one focused on the district's use of its professional development resources, and one focused on the alignment between the VSC and the district curriculum.

As a result of all of these factors, the district in late 2003 and early 2004 was coping with a range of substantial financial, organizational, and academic crises that threatened to undermine the system. These included:

- the rumored loss of qualified teachers, principals, support staff, and other skilled educators to surrounding communities or early retirement;

- the loss of large numbers of novice teachers hesitant to stake their careers on a faltering system;
- federal allegations of ongoing irregularities in Title I spending;
- the state's rejection of the district's master plans for spending federal and state dollars;
- testimony in court hearings over funding adequacy that fed tensions with the city and the state;
- poor oversight of graduation requirements at one of the city's high schools;
- increasingly hostile press coverage; and
- a growing loss of confidence by funders, families, and community members.

## The Potential for Improvement

Despite the severity of the situation, the district possesses some important internal and external strengths that can help BCPSS weather the crises and begin to move forward. These include:

- a CEO – Bonnie Copeland – with a long history in the district and the ability make difficult decisions, such as major cuts in the district payroll;
- an experienced and knowledgeable board of education with four new members, bringing wider community participation;
- high levels of expenditures available for staff professional development compared to other urban districts;
- a state department of education with the capacity to assist the district, coupled with the political will to reverse the effects of prior mismanagement;
- a state-level fiscal commitment to adequate funding for public education (the Thornton Amendment); and
- a respected and well-established public education fund<sup>2</sup> with a history of working collaboratively with the district on matters of instructional improvement.

Evidence from the 2004 school year suggests that, in some important respects, BCPSS has in fact begun to show progress:

- BCPSS secured a loan from the city and has developed an aggressive plan for repayment.
- The CEO has made important reductions in spending – including the reduction of an outsized central office staff – while ensuring that the district has an operating budget for at least half of fiscal year 2005.
- Student and school performance has improved, according to spring 2004 test results.
- The loss of teachers and principals was not as severe as some critics had predicted.

These positive signs point to the *potential* for steady improvement in the quality of public education offered by BCPSS; however, this potential is a fragile one. Sus-

<sup>2</sup> The Fund for Educational Excellence, the public education fund for the district, provides a number of coordinating and school-reform supports.

tained and continuous improvement demands that very bold and specific actions begin immediately to correct systemic problems that still exist. These problems may well have roots in earlier appointments and practices, but they require immediate action nonetheless. The board of education and CEO, therefore, have a choice – they can continue to react to various crises as they emerge, risking further sanctions and loss of confidence, or they can adopt proactive strategies for holding themselves accountable for improving the quality of public education at BCPSS.

## Blueprints for Accountable Improvement: The Professional Development and Curriculum Reviews

In July 2003, Nancy Grasmick, Maryland’s state superintendent of schools, laid out the corrective actions that BCPSS must take to improve its operations and performance, and the state board approved her plan. Central to the recommendations were two external audits: one focused on curriculum and the second focused on the district’s approach to professional development.

In 2003–2004, external reviews were conducted by two independent organizations:

- Researchers from Educational Resource Strategies (ERS) examined how the district utilizes its professional development resources.
- Researchers from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) examined the alignment of the district’s curriculum to the VSC and the quality of the district’s curricula in literacy and mathematics *as delivered* in classrooms.

The reviews were made possible with generous financial support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to the Fund for Educational Excellence. The support allowed collaboration between the outside organizations, the Fund, and the district leadership in conducting these reviews. To ensure that such collaboration took place, a Steering Committee, composed of central office leaders, selected Area Academic Officers, state department of education officials, funders, and the two review teams, met regularly to review data and discuss emerging findings. The effort aimed to keep a group of education leaders talking about improving instruction and to build an objective baseline of information about current practice that leaders could use to prioritize its redesign and improvement.

## Introduction to the Three-Part Study

**A**s part of the corrective action for the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS), two audits were conducted: an examination of the funding and use of BCPSS's professional development resources and an examination of the alignment between the Voluntary State Curriculum and the BCPSS curricula. With funding from the MacArthur Foundation, the Fund for Excellence in Education commissioned Education Resource Strategies to conduct the audit of professional development spending. The Fund commissioned the Annenberg Institute for School Reform to conduct the curriculum audit.

The researchers in each of these organizations recognized that what was required went beyond an audit, in the sense of a strict accounting for the responsible use of public resources. Thus, each team:

- collected data from multiple sources to analyze the consequences of current policies;
- formulated detailed recommendations based on successful practices in improving urban districts; and
- worked closely with a Baltimore-based Steering Committee to ensure that the recommendations could be translated into action by the district and its partners.

To reflect this expanded concept, the broader term *review* is used throughout this report to refer to the audits.

Given the scope of the work, both review teams determined it was vital to integrate their investigations and findings to form a concise picture of how stated policies are translated at the district, school, and classroom level. Thus, both reviews were designed to produce blueprints for immediate, feasible actions leading to “accountable improvement” in professional development, and well as in teaching and learning.

The integrated report contains three major sections. The first section addresses the district infrastructure and its capacity to use information and data to make decisions and communicate effectively with its partners and public. These issues were not included in the specific request for the audits, but the teams found that they fuel the current difficulties in professional development and curriculum. The second section, the professional development strategy and spending review, is based on an analysis of budgets and on interviews with individuals who both

design and participate in the district's programs for teachers and administrators. The final section, the curriculum review, describes a side-by-side examination of the emerging district curriculum and the state's new voluntary curriculum documents. In addition, to determine whether that intended curriculum was actually reaching students, a team of four researchers spent nearly fifty days observing classes, interviewing staff and students, and examining assignments drawn from schools across the district.

Each of these sections presents a primary finding, the framework that led to that finding, a set of major findings, and recommendations for immediate and longer-term improvement.

## *A Review of the Underlying Issues in the Baltimore City Public School System*

**T**he Baltimore City Public School System review begins by discussing a set of underlying conditions – the district’s infrastructure and its communication, both internal and external – that affect the district’s ability to improve its professional development, curriculum, and, ultimately, student outcomes. The recommendations in this section represent the foundation necessary for implementing the recommendations of the professional development and curriculum reviews that follow.

The reviewers interviewed key personnel at all levels, examined a wide range of state and district documents and data, and monitored press reports to explore how the district could best:

- build its capacity to effectively support schools;
- use data to improve accountability and make better decisions; and
- communicate more effectively to build public commitment to Baltimore’s public schools.

The section concludes with a recommendation to all partners at all levels to develop a common set of goals to focus the work.

### **Primary Finding**

*The system struggles with a weak infrastructure, little use of knowledge and data, and poor communication.*

In order to improve results for its students, BCPSS needs to become a capable and accountable system with the ability to build commitment from the public it serves. In the last year, the CEO, Bonnie Copeland, has taken steps toward creating a leaner, more skilled, and more accountable central office. However, the current infrastructure continues to impede the district’s capability: it is still characterized by variable expertise, work that occurs in uncoordinated silos, and a lack of clear lines of accountability and benchmarks for steady improvement in the performance of educators.

In addition, despite the considerable data resources and expertise of the Maryland State Department of Education, as well as the increased federal demand for rigorous evidence of progress, BCPSS is not currently an accountable system. There is little effective use of data for planning, for using resources in effective and effi-

cient ways, or for supervision and performance reviews. Furthermore, at present BCPSS is not a system that communicates effectively with its public. In the firestorm of fiscal crisis, court cases, and restructuring, the district has not had (or taken) the time to use data to engage the public, acknowledge successes, develop shared goals, or forge coalitions around supporting schools and students.

Finally, the district now serves many masters: the federal government, via the requirements of No Child Left Behind; the state department of education, through corrective action; the city, through loan agreements; foundations that lend much-needed support; taxpayers concerned about “the black hole” of funding for failing schools; and the children and families the district serves. Currently, district leadership is darting between demands rather than participating in a coordinated and prioritized discussion with its constituents and those who provide funding and support. The commitment is not there.

All of these issues – the infrastructure, the use of data, the communication with stakeholders – must be addressed if the specific review recommendations regarding professional development and curriculum are to take root and yield substantial improvement.

## A Capable System: Structure and Support for Schools

In the course of interviewing educators at the school, Area, district, and state levels, the review teams probed whether BCPSS was organized to support schools effectively and provide needed guidance and assistance to teachers and school leaders. Major findings include:

- ◆ BCPSS tends to place more emphasis on compliance than on partnership and support.

## The Framework for the Review of Underlying Issues

In the process of conducting their work, the two review teams:

- interviewed key personnel at the school, district, and state levels about their current work and the challenges they faced;
- conducted an extensive review of available documentation, including curriculum materials, personnel documents, guidelines, assessments, and academic standards;
- examined state and district data sources (e.g., budgets, reports on

human resources, student achievement data) to develop a picture of the district’s current performance (performance indicators were chosen to measure both the effectiveness of the district’s processes and the quality of a wide variety of student outcomes, including, but going beyond, standardized-test scores);

- discussed emerging findings with the Steering Committee, which was convened for the review process;
- monitored local and national press reports about the district, which pro-

vide one indicator of the character of civic discussion regarding public education (journalistic accounts can be biased or incomplete, but the content and tenor of the daily press is what the city’s families and taxpayers read);

- tracked other key forms of communications from the district offices – field notes, transcripts, and other documents – for major themes that emerged across interviewees and sources.

According to principals and Area Academic Officers (AAOs), the district central office is mainly concerned with compliance with district rules, rather than improvement in teaching and learning. Area staff felt that the central office's potential effects on instructional practice were rendered ineffective by poor communication, a lack of alignment between central office goals and the organizational realities of schools, the unmet professional development needs of teachers, and a lack of data for instructional improvement.

The interviews revealed a widespread perception that, historically, tools developed by the central office for use in the schools – particularly curriculum guides – have been “disconnected,” “lacking in alignment” with state and national standards, and unrealistic in their pacing for content coverage. Some interviewees noted that the curriculum materials developed by the office of curriculum and instruction differed “philosophically” from the curriculum-in-use in the schools, therefore sending mixed messages to teachers.

Principals and Area officers also cited a lack of coordination within the central office that impedes effective support. AAOs provided the example of the frequent disconnect between the special education office and the curriculum and instruction office; they believe that shared responsibility for IEP development and revision would be more effective. They made similar points with regard to management of resources, timelines, and the use of data to drive instruction.

Several AAOs complained of a lack of a systemic approach and/or theory governing professional development, indicating that the central office could benefit from greater communication with Areas and schools to align central office goals with the professional development needs of the schools.

The sense among many individuals working in schools is that the central office would be more effective if it took on a “partnership” or “supporting” role, rather than a hierarchical one, with respect to the schools. In the view of several interviewees, the central office traditionally has simply mandated improvement, without providing schools with the support they need to improve. Many AAOs suggested that the district office ought to establish a structure of support to schools, using the AAOs as resources for instructional improvement.

◆ Currently, the Academic Areas cannot function as nimble and differentiated units for supporting schools.

The Academic Areas were, at one time, a way of grouping schools by level (high, middle, and elementary schools) and, further, grouping elementary schools by a combination of achievement levels and similar curricula. They were to be smaller, nimbler, and more differentiated in their support of schools than a single, “down-town” central office could be. Thus, the CEO's District was created to provide concentrated support for the lowest-performing elementary schools.

However, as currently configured, the Areas do not function as envisioned. AAOs vary widely in their degrees of managerial skill and instructional knowledge.

Partly because of this variation, the Areas have developed dramatically different profiles of resources, with the CEO's District far outdistancing any other Area (see data presented in the professional development review). Yet there is no evidence that these profiles of resources match the diverse needs of the particular children, communities and teachers they serve.

◆ The district allows schools to employ a patchwork of varied curricular programs, diversely implemented, without attempting to achieve coherence.

Schools employ a wide range of curricular programs, depending on the training and beliefs of their leadership and staff. Areas, in turn, possess a wide range of curriculum materials intended to be aligned to the instructional “philosophies” inherent in the different programs. Some of the highly structured curriculum materials showed some indications of effectiveness in developing basic skills, but offered many fewer opportunities for teachers to develop their own content knowledge and expertise with students.

In many cases, the materials developed by the Curriculum and Instruction office are not aligned with the outcome goals inherent in the schools' curricular programs used in the Areas. This produces confusion among teachers, who are unsure how to balance their instruction among competing demands from the state, the district, their textbooks, and their own training. Schools have responded to gaps in their materials with a range of supplemental programs. While there is evidence that some skilled and energetic teachers have developed curriculum materials on their own, many use commercially published teacher activity books that are not aligned with district standards.

Many AAOs suggested that teachers “teach the curriculum” rather than teaching students, and have little to fall back on when that curriculum does not produce the intended improvements in student learning. AAOs indicated a strong desire for teachers to understand that curriculum materials, textbooks, and the like are merely resources or tools to guide instruction. AAOs were concerned that many teachers lacked the ability to articulate a theory or understanding of “good instruction.” In particular, AAOs and others rated the quality of mathematics instruction as “very poor.” At the higher grades, a wide range of variability was present in the design, intellectual rigor, and delivery of subject-specific courses of instruction. Several AAOs indicated a desire to foster greater collegiality and cooperation among veteran teachers and novices, and most seemed frustrated with the veterans' general resistance to observation or to having their practice critiqued by peers. AAOs also indicated a desire for a specific framework for defining instruction, observing and monitoring classroom practice, and using student work as a critical piece of data for measuring instructional quality.

◆ The development of school-level leaders is weak throughout BCPSS.

The AAOs subscribe to the view that school culture is related to leadership and that both are linked to student achievement. Yet they describe the majority of Baltimore principals, even the most well-intentioned ones, as products of a compli-

ance-based model of leadership that focuses more on operational tasks than on instructional leadership. In the words of one AAO, principals are “trained as managers, not instructional leaders.” The presence of district-selected instructional support/content teachers has had the unintentional effect of removing principals even further from instructional responsibilities. The consequence is that while AAOs can rely on most of their principals to maintain safe, orderly environments, principals are less effective as levers for instructional change. And AAOs suggested that they have little ability to remedy the situation; they report that they lack the time to monitor, problem-solve, or engage with principals effectively. AAOs emphasized the need for professional development for principals, with a focus on how leadership can build the capacity of individual teachers through collaboration rather than oversight.

During site visits to schools, principals themselves spoke repeatedly of wanting additional support in becoming instructional leaders. But unfortunately, as of August 2004, the district has now cut its major program for principal training.

◆ Available supports for improving teaching and learning are not used well. This is particularly true for support/content teachers and coaches – both major investments of district resources.

AAOs and others interviewed expressed appreciation for instructional support/content teachers that the district appointed to lead efforts to improve teaching and learning in their schools. They identified instances in which these teachers shared practices and involved other teachers with instructional improvement. In these cases, the instructional support teachers serve to bridge the communication gaps between central office, the Areas, and teachers in their daily instructional practice. They are effective in fostering alignment among the state standards and the Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC), the textbooks, and the inherited practices of many Baltimore teachers.

But two intervening factors limit the effectiveness of these teachers. First, there is no clear job description or specific professional development, so the effectiveness of teachers in this role appears to depend largely on individual effort, skills, and knowledge. Second, as AAOs and other interviewees pointed out, these teachers are used differently across schools. Some principals differentiate the role by student population – “general education coaches” or “special education coaches”. In some elementary schools, instructional support/content teachers assess students’ reading levels, while in some high schools, these teachers double as department heads. Unfortunately, in many instances the role appears to be that of an “extra body” in the mold of a middle manager.

AAOs and others identified similar issues with the district’s substantial investment in academic coaching. Many acknowledged that they have observed instances of skilled intervention and support by individual coaches. Repeatedly, however, interviewees pointed out that there is no system for skilled coaching. There is no clear job description or hiring process. Thus, individuals tend to be hired chiefly

on their own teaching records and reputations. Interviewees report that the current coaching staff does not reflect the racial, cultural, or economic diversity of the teaching corps or the students, a fact that stresses the already sensitive issues surrounding entry, observation, and intervention. There is also little professional development, supervision, or accountability for individual coaches. Coaches are charged with improving instruction – but are not trained in the process, content, or evidence gathering that should be a part of that practice. Thus, coaching, as it actually plays out in schools, is a matter of highly individualized practice between willing partners – not an evidence-based or accountable system of supports for improvement. (Appendix 12 contains a number of documents that address the issue of how the district might better use support teachers and coaches.)

◆ **The Curriculum and Instruction division of the state department of education is a knowledgeable and willing partner for the district.**

The state department of education is lean and, thus, cannot offer extended, on-site support, given its many other demands. However, the staff is highly skilled and willing to provide targeted assistance. For instance, staff members regularly attended the Steering Committee meetings and supported the researchers' access to state-level data. The current court case regarding resources is generating unfortunate tensions, which could damage a potentially highly productive working relationship between a restructured central office and a skilled state department staff.

◆ **BCPSS appears to approach external support as additions to its program, not an integral part of the program.**

A theme running throughout the reviews of the district master plan was that each individual part (e.g., technology, special education) was designed independently of other portions of the system. As a result, reviewers (other Maryland educators and state department staff) saw silos of effort, a lack of synergy, and a tendency to add, rather than to improve, programs or staff performance.

◆ **BCPSS lacks a well-structured central office and a coordinated team of consultants capable of supporting high-quality teaching and learning.**

As of June 2004, there was not yet a full team of individuals in central office and the Academic Areas who could ensure clear expectations for student achievement, a well-articulated curriculum, a clearly specified model for coaching, or classroom and school-level accountability for the improvement of equity and results. The current structure does not contain positions – or the resulting capacity – to address key curricular areas where major improvement is needed, such as literacy or mathematics.

Nor is there a coordinated plan for the use of external consultants that would ensure both the immediately needed expertise and the will to build local capacity steadily. Building the local infrastructure and necessary external supports must be a priority.

## An Accountable System: Data and Decision Making

Based on the sources outlined above, it is clear that the district faces a second, and equally fundamental, issue – that of becoming an accountable system, in which decision making is rooted in evidence, professional accountability for improvement is built in, and information is used by the district to construct a continuing dialogue with the public it serves. Major findings include:

- ◆ At both the central and Area offices it is often difficult to obtain data that is vital to effective planning, accountability, or program evaluation.

One striking data gap is in special education. Although Areas with a large number of special education students mentioned specific support mechanisms to address the needs of these students, the reviewers were unable to ascertain whether the instructional experiences those students receive are the same as those of their non-disabled peers – and rigorous enough to meet the state’s challenging academic standards. Identification and placement data for special education populations were not easily available. There appears to be no – or only a very rudimentary – system for tracking how many students are successfully mainstreamed back into the regular student population over time, and at what grade levels. The absence or inaccessibility of this data demonstrates the system’s tendency to “go along” without gathering relevant data, reflecting on it, and making deliberate decisions about strategies and the use of resources.

- ◆ At present, the staff at central office, the AAOs, and schools rely chiefly on *lagging* indicators such as student test scores that arrive too late for intervention and provide little information about the causes for performance.

There is little observable evidence of the collaborative use of the excellent resources at the Maryland State Department of Education or of district-level data that could help build predictions about worthwhile investments (e.g., which specific investments in principals or new teachers pay off). Further, there is little time or funding devoted to the analysis of leading indicators such as teacher quality or opportunity to learn. As a result, resources cannot be accurately focused on the interventions that make the most difference.

- ◆ At the Area office and school level, there is little evidence of program evaluation.

The reviewers could not find evidence of program evaluation by school and Area leadership. This is true for in-school instructional programs, such as the Fund for Educational Excellence’s Achievement First; for supplemental programs, such as after-school education; and for summer programs, which one AAO deemed “ineffective.” As a result, school leaders and AAOs report that they have very little to go on in making judgments about program quality, other than the standardized-test scores they receive from the state. Few individuals interviewed were making informed choices.

◆ The district has made an uneven investment in formative assessment at both the student and system level.

Most AAOs and principals indicated a desire for school-based, curriculum-embedded assessment (especially in mathematics) to guide teacher and student learning alike. They pointed to the recent use of quarterly assessments as a promising approach, but differed about the quality and implementation of these assessments. Some AAOs have developed or use monitoring tools to assist them in tracking the pace of instruction against the VSC, but few indicated that they have powerful tools for assessing the rigor of instruction – whether teachers are consistently assigning challenging tasks to their students and to what extent students are having success or require additional supports.

◆ At all levels of the system, Baltimore educators indicated a need for more thorough and timely data collection and analysis, especially diagnostic tools that could help teachers identify the knowledge and skills their students might be lacking, and for their own (teachers’) learning needs.

Educators at all levels report difficulty in obtaining timely and useful information, even of the most basic – and vital – kind. For example, at the high school level, schools do not use data to make decisions about which students should take which courses; one staff member estimates that, as a consequence, as many as 30 percent of high school seniors will not graduate simply because they do not have enough credits. (The recent example of incorrectly awarded diplomas at a city vocational high school is an extreme example of what can occur due to this lack of data and a lack of oversight through data.)

Area officers specifically indicated that the central office does not support them in data use or provide technical assistance; as a consequence, Areas have differing capacities and understanding of how data can be used effectively. Areas that have adopted more structured curriculum programs have a higher capacity for the use of data, because such programs contain embedded diagnostic and placement tools. Because of the variability in curriculum programs, Areas lack the means to “roll up” data at the grade, school, or Area level for the purpose of making regional decisions with regard to instruction, placement of students, and staff professional development.

Given the lack of information and data use, there are no strategies for sharing information with schools and Academic Areas and no clear performance targets for each Area and school.

## Building Public Commitment: Communication

A review of press coverage of the district and key forms of communication looked for ways the district had attempted to build commitment from parents and the public. Major findings include:

◆ Press coverage of BCPSS has shifted from initially supportive to increasingly negative.

At the outset of the Copeland administration, Baltimore journalists registered shock at the rising deficit and clear evidence of mismanagement. However, writers were basically supportive of the difficult decisions mandated by the fiscal crisis. As additional instances of perceived mismanagement have arisen (e.g., the canceling of summer school, the misuse of Title I funds, the problem with diplomas at a vocational high school), news accounts described these incidents – rightly or wrongly – as emanating from the new administration and signaling the “same old story.” In this climate, the evidence of turnaround, such as the very substantial gains in student achievement, or the highly responsible plan to repay the city loan, tend to get lost. The danger is an unbalanced, rancorous account that eats away at the possibility for recovery and rebuilding.

◆ Recent public forums to address key issues have proven to be an effective and informative communication strategy.

In the last year, the CEO and, on occasion, the mayor, have convened small discussions to address critical issues (e.g., meetings with families and students to discuss what they seek from the district, meetings with teachers to discuss job security). These forums are reported to have been effective – for instance, in convincing experienced teachers to stay with the district rather than leaving for Baltimore County schools. They have also provided occasions for public collaboration between the schools and the mayor’s office.

## Recommendations for Improving Capability, Accountability, and Commitment

The findings from the two reviews, combined with ongoing discussions with Superintendent Copeland and her emerging staff, the Fund for Educational Excellence, and the Steering Committee, point to several major recommendations in addition to those specific to professional development and the curriculum.

### CREATING A CAPABLE SYSTEM

The district needs a new set of central office structures and strategies to facilitate informed and accountable planning. Toward those ends, BCPSS should:

◆ Establish a CEO’s implementation team.

The team would be composed of core central office staff and AAOS, charged with building the district’s and schools’ capacity to improve instruction and to coordinate the delivery of service from external partners.

◆ Hire a K–12 director of literacy and a K–12 director of mathematics.

These individuals will supervise and help with the development and ongoing refinement of the district’s instructional model; connect effective, aligned curric-

ula to the model; and support targeted professional development in the content areas.

◆ **Redefine the roles and responsibilities of the offices of Curriculum and Instruction and Professional Development.**

The emphasis here is on reciprocal accountability; these central office structures ought to function as partners with schools in the school-improvement process and be able to respond dynamically to the needs of schools, such as developing new recruitment and induction programs, aligning curriculum materials and related professional development, assisting in the collection and interpretation of data, and monitoring and evaluating programs. The offices themselves should also be monitored annually for effectiveness, with direct links, where possible, between their activities and student outcomes.

◆ **Reorganize Area Academic Offices.**

The Areas should include an Office of High Schools, an Office of Middle Schools, and a reduced number of Elementary School Offices. Each of these units must have a clear instructional focus, an officer capable of and accountable for leading instructional improvement, and staff with the capacity to support principals and teachers. There must be coherence across the Areas in their approaches to literacy and mathematics, and clear targets for improvement should be set. The AAOs have to be able both to expect and to support substantially new practices – accountability for student results, improved instructional practice, and the use of data to inform instructional choices. At the same time, while the proposed type of level-based organization buys coherence, it can hinder the development of a clear K–12 vision, thereby isolating elementary, middle, and high schools from one another. Hence the Areas must also collaborate on a K–12 vision for instruction, articulation, and improvement. (See recommendations in the professional development and curriculum review sections.)

Creating and staffing these new organizational structures may require new job descriptions, open applications for existing positions, and an organized effort to identify new talent among current and retired educators in the city, state, and nation. While the work may initially include external consultants, the emphasis in this process must be on building the internal capacity of BCPSS. Sustained improvement requires on-site investment by individuals who know the community they serve.

## **USING DATA TO BUILD AN ACCOUNTABLE SYSTEM**

The district must build information systems – approaches to using data to inform its decision-making, as well as strategies for using emerging data to inform and dialogue with the public. To achieve this goal, BCPSS should:

◆ **Develop a set of basic information systems for the district. There must be ready access to current data on feeder patterns, student and teacher mobility, the resources flowing to individual schools, etc.**

- ◆ Hire a new director for research and accountability with experience in using data proactively to formulate priorities, make targeted use of resources, and monitor the effectiveness of investments in personnel and programs.
- ◆ Collaborate with the Maryland State Department of Education to develop a clear and detailed portrait of student performance in Baltimore, with particular attention to the needs of currently low-performing students.
- ◆ Create clear performance targets for each school using the terms of the VSC, samples of student work, etc.
- ◆ Develop effective strategies for sharing performance data with Academic Areas and individual schools in ways that support continuous improvement.

Appendix 3 contains a set of recommendations on using data that can inform the work of the district on this theme, some of which specifically include examples from Baltimore of how data could be used to communicate and plan with the Area offices and individual schools.

## **BUILDING COMMITMENT**

The Baltimore Board of School Commissioners and the CEO must reestablish a candid conversation with the public, specifically the students and families whom they serve, as well as with the city's taxpayers and the media that portray the city's schools to the listening and reading public. To do this they must:

- ◆ Convene a diverse group of leaders, family members, and students to discuss what the community seeks from the schools.

The purpose of this process is to refocus public attention on the hopes and needs of students and families (not the fiscal and administrative habits of the district).

The summit process should be an ongoing process, not a one-time event.

- ◆ Create a calendar of public meetings.

The purpose of these meetings would be to inform the public about the progress towards realizing the terms of the strategic plan and the community goals.

- ◆ Actively engage the city's press in understanding the issues and in reporting success as well as difficulty.

## **THE NEED FOR A COMMON SET OF BENCHMARKS:**

### **A RECOMMENDATION TO ALL PARTNERS**

BCPSS currently answers to many masters: the federal government, the courts, the state, and the mayor. The core business of teaching and learning has been at a near standstill while administrative, fiscal and legal questions have consumed the district's attention and resources. In recent months, the district has had to focus chiefly on answering to these other authorities.

There is a substantial danger that sheer crisis management will become the modus operandi. If the district is to focus on instructional improvement, the part-

ners must help the district to establish and meet a commonly defined set of explicit and feasible goals over the next six, twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four months. To accomplish this, BCPSS and its partners should:

- ◆ Convene a blue-ribbon committee to coordinate the work of the district, city, and state on developing transparent, efficient, and accountable systems for public education in Baltimore.

This committee must represent the interests of the state, the city, and the district, but it must also contain – even be chaired by – individuals who can help the parties make informed decisions and negotiate clear benchmarks for progress.

- ◆ Develop an *integrated* review of all outstanding fiscal, management, and legal problems in the district.

- ◆ Develop a three-, six-, and nine-month strategic plan to address those outstanding issues.

# Professional Development Strategy and Spending Review of the Baltimore City Public School System

This review, combined with the curriculum review, aims to jump-start a process of refining the Baltimore City Public School System's (BCPSS) professional development efforts to create a more strategic, comprehensive system that focuses investment where it is most likely to improve instructional practice and so improve student learning. Mapping the current spending and activities aimed at professional development for teachers and school leaders is the first step toward articulating a comprehensive and cohesive strategy. To that end, this review sought to:

- inventory current professional development activities and spending;
- evaluate activities against a set of research-based professional development standards;
- help build a shared understanding of BCPSS professional development priorities and challenges; and
- support the design of a district professional development strategy.

## Primary Finding

*Resources are available, but could be used better.*

While the current financial and performance pressure should cause great concern, the results of this review give reason for optimism regarding BCPSS's prospects for improvement. The Baltimore community has invested significantly in professional development compared with other urban districts studied. *If these resources can be strategically marshaled*, they could enable the district to provide intensive instructional support to struggling teachers and schools. However, currently BCPSS does not allocate these resources strategically or equitably across schools and among teachers, nor does it support a coherent district strategy for instructional improvement.

BCPSS currently has several promising professional development models that improve school performance by focusing efforts around specific content materials. As we will describe more fully, the CEO's District model, combined with Achievement First and the Direct Instruction model, have begun to show some improved student achievement, as reflected in the recent rise in Maryland School Assessment scores. A successful professional development strategy should study and build on the implementation and effectiveness of these models in improving classroom instruction.

In the last year, BCPSS faced significant cuts in personnel and programs as part of a major effort to return to fiscal responsibility. However, both the professional development and curriculum reviews revealed preliminary evidence that many of the schools visited already have significant resources that could be better used to support and provide instruction. Though BCPSS may eventually need to garner more resources to reach high academic standards for all, the first challenge is to focus *existing* resources on improved teaching and learning. In some cases, this will mean changing the roles that people play. In other cases, it will require BCPSS to redirect resources away from some important efforts and toward higher priority endeavors.

## Supporting Findings

Our analysis found that:

- ◆ BCPSS invests significant resources (\$58 million, or approximately 6 percent of its operating budget) on professional development of teachers, a substantial investment relative to other districts. But the investment is not structured for maximum effect.

## The Framework for the Professional Development Review

This analysis examines district spending and activities related to providing the professional development and support necessary to dramatically improve student achievement across the district.

### Criteria

We reviewed spending and activities in light of two critical elements:

- How well does each existing activity match sound principles for a district-level professional development strategy?
- How well do the activities fit into a district school-improvement strategy that offers clear expectations for instruction and provides the support and supervision necessary to meet those expectations?

These criteria are different from many other “evaluations” of professional development. Some evaluations seek to understand whether the professional development offered is “good” professional development; to define *good*, these evaluations might use teacher ratings or schemes that describe characteristics of effective professional develop-

ment. In contrast, in this review, we distinguish between “good” professional development and a “good professional development strategy.” It is quite possible to have high-quality professional development that does not promote a strong districtwide strategy. A district that has a strong professional development strategy allocates scarce resources to its more important professional development priorities in ways most likely to improve instructional practice. Appendix 4, from Miles (2003), describes these characteristics in more detail.

### Process and Definitions

For this analysis, we define professional development as any and all resources aimed at improving the knowledge and skills of staff working in schools. Examples of types of spending include:

- time for planning, sharing, and learning
- staff time for facilitating professional development activities
- external and internal consultants and trainers
- materials, equipment, and travel con-

nected with professional development

- administrative costs
- tuition reimbursement for improving the skills of school-based staff and others

The numbers presented in this report differ from BCPSS-reported total spending on professional development for a number of important reasons:

- Spending, as calculated in this report, reflects the current 2003–2004 school year. Even though this decision meant that some of the dollars would still be unspent, the leadership team felt the analysis would be most useful if it reflected current budgets.
- We used a combination of budget and payroll data to generate the most accurate picture of current spending possible. Because BCPSS was engaged in far-reaching cuts in personnel, we replaced all budget data on salaries with the actual current salaried positions (from payroll data) as of February 2004. By doing this, we reflected the deep cuts in central office made in November of 2003.

- Investment varies widely across schools and programs in ways that do not dependably match the varying needs of students, teachers, coaches, principals, schools, Area Academic Officers, or other recipients.
- The district spends \$20 million on teacher salaries for contracted workdays designated for professional development. There is little guidance and no accountability for the effective use of this important investment. Meanwhile, the lack of common planning time for teachers limits the impact of the investment in professional development.
- ◆ BCPSS made a substantial investment in coaching as a strategy for improving the quality of instruction without making the necessary investments in planning, selection, and training. These resources are not distributed strategically and there is limited accountability.
- Coaching resources vary dramatically across schools and in ways that are not always consistent with the current levels of student performance or teacher preparation.

- District data includes spending from all funds – federal, state, local, and private resources. We supplemented this data with additional data from state and private professional development sources to give as broad a view as possible. This is especially important in Baltimore, because the state of Maryland provides significant technical and financial support for professional development and private donations support much of the reform efforts, especially at the high school level.
- The categories for spending in this report may differ from other reports because we scrutinized each line item and position in the budget to understand the purpose of the spending and determine whether or not it should be included in the analysis. As part of this process, district and state staff helped identify programs and budgets used for professional development activities. Detailed interviews with many unit and department heads clarified specific line items and helped us estimate the percentage of time specific staff spent on professional development.

BCPSS and other districts make significant investments in building professional capacity in two other areas that we do not quantify in this analysis:

- salary increases for teachers who earn advanced degrees or additional college credits; and
- salary expenses that go toward providing teachers with instruction-free time (sometimes called planning time or planning and prep periods) during students' school day.

Calculating these costs requires separate analyses. The size of investments in planning periods and salary increases for taking courses make the more direct spending on professional development we analyze here look small. For example, a recent analysis of Boston Public Schools teacher salaries found that nearly 30 percent of all teacher salary dollars supported increases in salary levels that came from the accumulation of course credit (Miles, Guiney & Winner 2000).

Where appropriate, we compare BCPSS's spending levels with those of five other districts in which we have recently collected these data, using a

similarly intensive process of interviews and analysis. The districts of Boston, Cincinnati, Albuquerque, Providence, and Minneapolis are all engaged in significant efforts to improve instruction through professional development.<sup>1</sup> These districts' engagement in this kind of review shows that each of them was actively rethinking the way it invested available resources to improve instruction. All of the districts provided intensive school-level coaching in at least a portion of schools.

We do not claim that any of these districts offer a model for others – though each district has some effective practices and strategies. Instead, we use the comparisons to get a rough sense of how BCPSS's levels of spending and strategy might be different or similar to others. (For further description of the methods used and the comparison districts, see Miles, Odden, Archibald & Fermanich, forthcoming).

<sup>1</sup> Both Boston and Albuquerque public schools conducted this analysis twice – once, early in their efforts, to rethink their spending and, again, two years later, to reflect on their progress and strategy. These numbers reflect the second analysis. In both cases, the district actively increased investment in professional development organized around their new strategy.

- There has been no consistent effort to develop best practices in the coaching programs based on data on student achievement or the quality of classroom instruction.
- ◆ BCPSS invests significant resources in teacher induction, but there is no career development strategy and induction activities do not link to school-level improvement efforts or priorities.
- ◆ BCPSS has no comprehensive strategy to develop strong school leaders, despite significant state-directed spending to support principals in poorly performing schools. The leadership development strategy should be expanded to include all principals, assistant principals, department chairs, lead teachers, and coaches.

The specific conclusions that yielded these findings are described below.

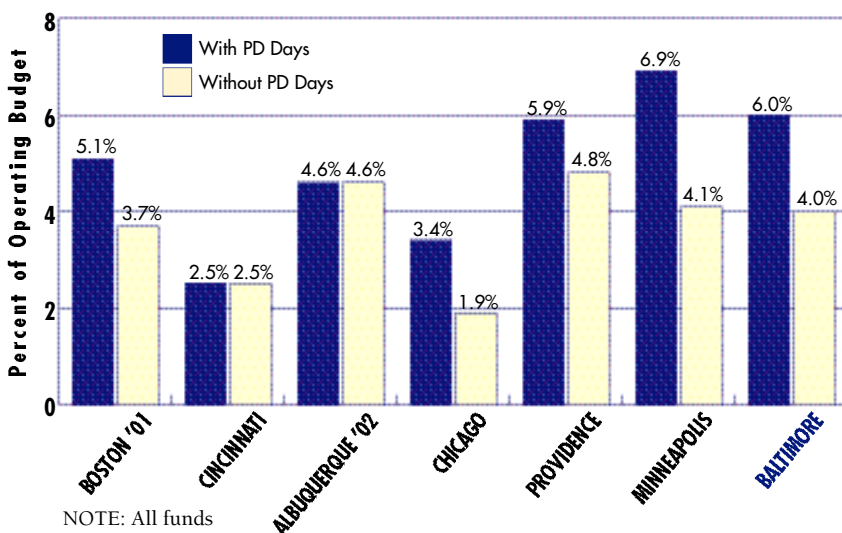
## Major Findings of the Review

### CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

- ◆ BCPSS spent a significant amount – \$58 million, or approximately 6 percent of the annual operating budget – to build the capacity of teachers and school leaders. This total includes all sources of funding: local, state, federal, and private sources. However, there is, as yet, no overarching vision for how the activities supported should result in improved instructional practice.

Including all sources of funds, BCPSS had \$58 million of district- or state-directed professional development in the school year 2003–2004. This represents approximately 6 percent of an approximate \$900-million operating budget for the 2003–2004 school year, or \$9,800 per teacher. This total includes \$20 million to cover teacher salaries for ten working days designated by contract as “professional development” (PD) days. If these dollars for professional development days are not included, BCPSS spent approximately 4 percent of the operating budget, or \$6,500 per teacher, on professional development.

Figure P1: Comparison of Professional Development Allocations



NOTE: All funds included.

As Figure P1 shows, Baltimore invests as much as or more than other districts such as Boston, Minneapolis, and Providence that have organized aggressive reform efforts focused on building teacher capacity. This suggests that there are existing resources to make tremendous and sustainable improvements in teaching quality across BCPSS – were those resources used in a coherent and targeted manner.

## How the money is spent

Teacher salary costs for professional development days, which we will discuss in more detail later, cost the district approximately \$20 million and constitute 33 percent of the district professional development expenditure. We exclude this cost from the remainder of this section to focus on out-of-pocket costs for professional development and to facilitate a more relevant discussion of the size of these investments relative to each other.

As shown in Figure P2 below, the remaining top seventeen initiatives account for 95 percent of the professional development spending exclusive of professional development days, or \$36 million of \$38 million. We will describe these initiatives in greater detail in the section on the relevant findings and in Appendix 5.

**Figure P2: BCPSS Spending on Professional Development by Top Initiatives**

| INITIATIVE NAME                             | AMOUNT SPENT (IN MILLIONS) | % OF PD SPENDING (MINUS THE SALARY FOR 10 CONTRACTUAL PD DAYS) |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| Academic Coaches (Title I)                  | \$ 9.3                     | 25%  |
| *Department Head                            | \$ 5.6                     | 15%  |
| <b>Instructional Support Teachers (CEO)</b> | <b>\$ 3.6</b>              | <b>10%</b>   |
| State Reconstitution Support                | \$ 2.7                     | 7%   |
| New Teacher Blum Mentors                    | \$ 2.4                     | 6%   |
| New Teacher Summer Institute                | \$ 1.9                     | 5%   |
| Achievement First (Direct Model)            | \$ 1.7                     | 4%   |
| MIS training programs                       | \$ 1.5                     | 4%   |
| Tuition reimbursement                       | \$ 1.5                     | 4%   |
| <b>CEO's District Extra Planning Time</b>   | <b>\$ 1.2</b>              | <b>3%</b>  |
| Area Lead Coaches                           | \$ 1.0                     | 3%   |
| Achievement First (Indirect Model)          | \$ 0.8                     | 2%   |
| Teacher Development Program Johns Hopkins   | \$ 0.7                     | 2%   |
| Principal Interns                           | \$ 0.7                     | 2%   |
| Staff Development Director's office         | \$ 0.6                     | 2%   |
| CAO's Office Support                        | \$ 0.5                     | 1%   |
| AAO Office Support                          | \$ 0.4                     | 1%   |

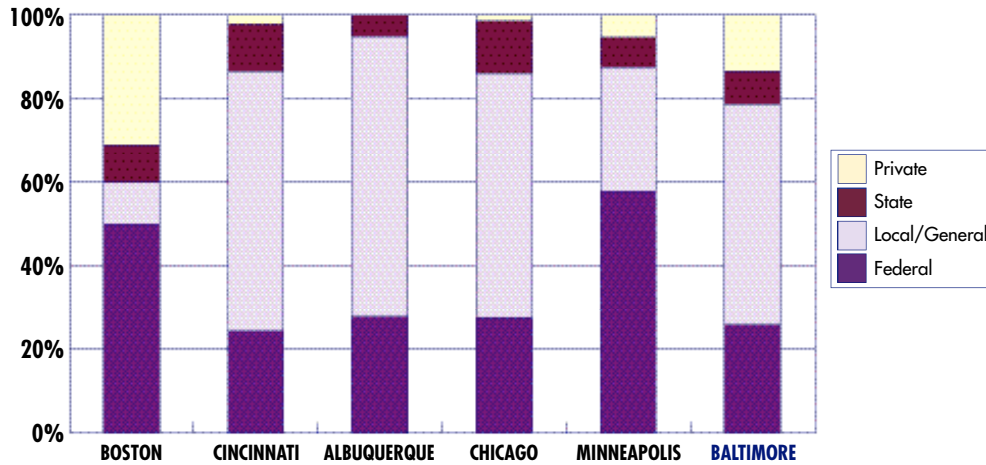
\*Department head numbers are calculated as the contractual "non-instructional" time of department heads. At present, some or all of this time may not be used for PD as practices vary across BCPSS schools.

NOTE: Bolded items are investments explicitly targeted only to the CEO's district, which comprised only 10 elementary schools.

## Source of funds

The total spending of \$58 million (including spending on professional development days) and \$38 million (without professional development days) includes initiatives funded by the Fund for Educational Excellence, private foundations, the state, and the federal government. We have included only those private, state, or federal funds that we could identify specifically as professional development expenses. Federal funds include almost \$10 million worth of Elementary and Secondary Education Act programs, including \$9 million for coaches funded prima-

**Figure P3: Professional Development Spending in BCPSS**



*Comparative PD Spending, Source of Spending, without PD Days per Institutes*

rily through Title I funds. State funds include \$2.4 million toward BCPSS’s share of state reconstitution support, which is spent primarily on “technical assistants” who work with principals in a coaching-type role. The state also provides workshop-type support for new principals and for principals in schools eligible for some type of restructuring. Private funds of \$5 million include the professional development portions of a grant for high school restructuring, Blum mentors (\$2.4 million), and numerous other smaller grants as identified in the BCPSS budget.

Interestingly, as Figure P3 shows, despite spending millions of Title I dollars on academic coaches, BCPSS relied less heavily than most other districts studied on federal funds to support professional development. Federal dollars comprise \$10 million, or 25 percent, of the professional development spending in the district, excluding professional development days. These dollars included \$9 million for academic coaches in high-poverty schools (Title I) with the remaining federal professional development money coming from Title II, IDEA part B, and other programs.

BCPSS receives significant additional federal money that could be dedicated toward professional development as needed. For example, in 2003–2004 BCPSS received almost \$10 million in Title II funds for improving teacher quality. These funds have historically been used exclusively to support professional development in math and science.

But recent changes in the legislation allow districts to use these funds to support class-size reduction. BCPSS did not choose to use these dollars for professional development but, instead, spent most of this money to fund the hiring of approximately one hundred elementary teachers to reduce class size, yielding a net class-size reduction in elementary schools of nearly one student per class. While the trade-off between having more teachers or having more highly qualified teachers

is a difficult one to make, BCPSS, with its significant challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers, may find that investing more in teacher quality will have a greater payoff in terms of improved student performance.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS

◆ Teacher time for professional development in the form of contracted non-student time for teachers designated for professional development represents both a large investment and an opportunity for improved achievement at \$20 million, or over 30 percent of the total spending on professional development.

The difficulty in creating time for teachers to plan and learn together is often cited as the largest barrier to school improvement. The BCPSS contract recognizes this challenge by including ten full days for teacher planning. BCPSS invests \$20 million, or \$2 million per day, in these professional development days, representing 33 percent of the total district professional development spending. This figure includes salary and benefit costs associated with over 6,000 teachers participating in the ten contractual professional development days. It does not include the amount of money spent on planning and executing the training itself.

Compared with other urban districts, this represents a large investment in professional development days. Figure P4 below compares the contractual workdays in a sample of similar reform-focused districts. The table shows that BCPSS has significantly more contractual teacher time devoted to professional development than many other urban districts.

**Figure P4: Teacher Contracted Workdays in Selected District**

|                                   | BALTIMORE | BOSTON | CINCINNATI | PHILADELPHIA | CHICAGO | PROVIDENCE |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|--------|------------|--------------|---------|------------|
| Total Teacher Days                | 190       | 187    | 186        | 190.5        | 191     | 187        |
| Student Days                      | 180       | 180    | 181        | 180          | 181     | 182        |
| Non-student Teacher Days (not PD) | 0         | .5     | 5          | 3.5          | 2       | 1.5        |
| Teacher PD Days                   | 10        | 4.5    | 0          | 5.5          | 8       | 3.5        |
| Estimated No. of Teachers         | 6,100     | 4,600  | 2,600      | 12,000       | 26,530  | 2,300      |

NOTE: that non-student teacher workdays that are not designated as PD are commonly used to set up and break down classrooms at the beginning and end of the school year and/or for teacher-parent conferences.

This unusually high level of investment in teacher time represents a significant opportunity for BCPSS, *if the time can be used effectively to improve instruction*. BCPSS must take care to create a balance between whole-day blocks of time for planning and more frequent, regular time that can provide real-time support to ongoing classroom work. This means emphasizing the scheduling of regular collaborative time for professional development during the regular school day and perhaps rethinking the structure of the ten days of contractual time. Some districts, like the Boston Public Schools, have changed the structure of these days to convert them to “hours” of time that can be scheduled throughout the year.

Research also suggests that teachers and school leaders in poorly performing schools need structured, expert support to change their practices. Professional development time can best be used to support teachers in improving content instruction by examining their own classroom activities and their impact on student work. One of the most important professional development priorities for the upcoming school year and beyond should be investing to ensure that all schools have this support and, in district collaboration with school leaders, designing customized use of this time.

In the 2003–2004 school year, BCPSS professional development days were used for a variety of topics, targeted to many different groups of teachers. Although some of the training was necessary and of high quality, in many cases, teachers were read scripts prepared by the Professional Development Department on specific topics that met district or state compliance needs, such as special education regulations. From interviews, it was clear that most teachers were never given the opportunity to discuss the work of their own students in a supported small-group setting during the professional development days. Accountability and support for the planning and use of these professional development days appeared to vary widely across Area Academic Officers (AAOs) group.

### **TEACHER PLANNING TIME**

◆ Lack of common planning time for teachers during the school day limits the impact of the investment in academic coaches and hinders school improvement.

Research suggests that high-performing schools incorporate common planning time for teachers into the everyday life of the school – at least ninety minutes a week. The studies show that teachers use this time to work together with other teachers to analyze individual student performance, look at student work and classroom assignments, and adjust instructional practice. In addition, an effective coaching strategy requires that all schools have common planning time, thereby providing coaches with consistent and adequate time to work with teachers.

Despite the large number of professional development days described above, BCPSS schools lack common planning time that can be used for professional development to improve teaching and learning. The Baltimore Teachers Union agreement requires all middle and high school teachers to have five preparation periods a week. However, the contract specifies that these preparation periods may not be used for common planning time. With many high schools and middle schools on a 4x4 schedule, preparation periods represent a significant investment for BCPSS – one-fourth of a secondary teacher’s salary. BCPSS should investigate both contract and scheduling changes to promote more accountable use of this time. For example, a seven-period day allows school leaders to schedule double blocks of English and mathematics and provides them with increased flexibility to create common planning time for grade-level or subject-matter teachers.

At the elementary school level, BCPSS teachers’ contract provides for at least three forty-five-minute individual preparation periods a week. In most cases, this is all

the preparation time they receive. Just as in the secondary schools, though, these periods cannot be used for common planning time. In addition, contract provisions only allow teachers to take preparation time when their classes are covered by physical education, art, music, or resource teachers. BCPSS should investigate contract and scheduling changes that allow elementary teachers to use these and other times to meet collaboratively for at least ninety minutes a week.

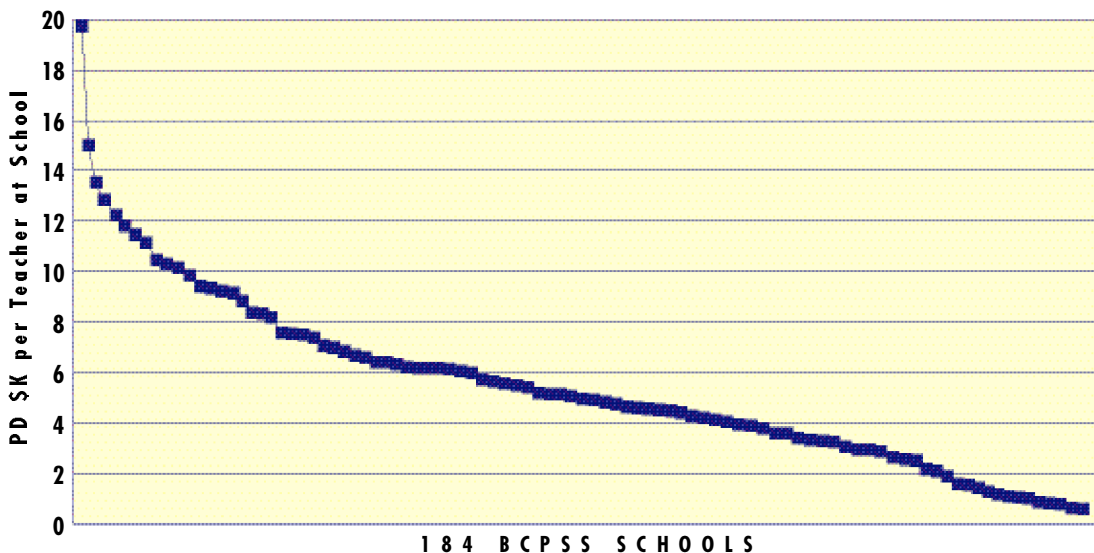
**SCHOOL-LEVEL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES**

◆ School-level professional development resources are not allocated equitably or strategically across schools and teachers. In many cases, significant school-level resources are not integrated into a comprehensive strategy for improving instruction and so contribute to fragmentation and dilution of effort.

Of the \$38 million of professional development spending in BCPSS (excluding professional development days), about \$29 million can be tied to specific school sites. This amounts to over \$4,800 per teacher. In some BCPSS schools, this money seems to be integrated into the school’s instructional vision and curriculum in ways that seem likely to lead systematically to improved instruction, when paired with clear standards of accountability around instructional practices. Specifically, the nine schools in the CEO’s District, most of the Area 3 Direct Instruction schools, several of the New Schools Initiative schools (also in the CEO’s District), and many of the Achievement First Direct Model schools have organized to provide instructional coaching in literacy and in math (as well as some other subjects in some schools) around specific curricula. Thus, BCPSS has existing models of instructionally coherent professional development to build on.

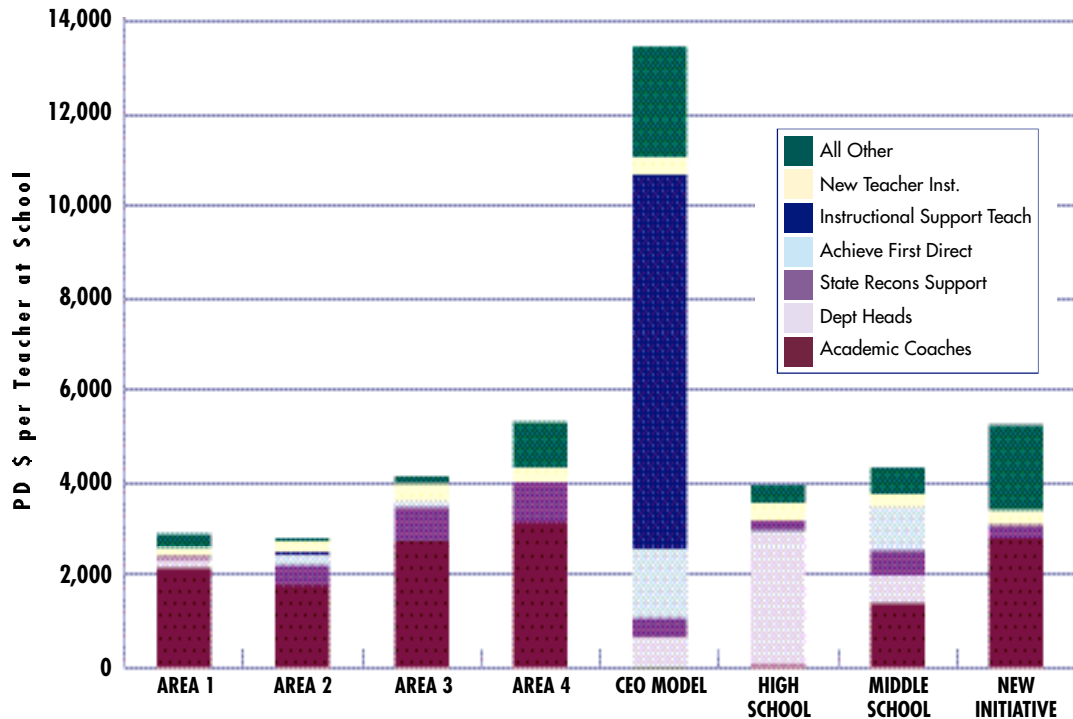
However, school-level professional development support is not distributed equally across all schools, nor is it consistent across schools that appear to have similar needs. Figure P5 illustrates that some schools receive nearly \$20,000 per teacher, while other schools receive as little as \$1,000 per teacher.

**Figure P5: Dollar Allocations per Teacher in BPCSS**



At least since the restructuring of 1992, BCPSS has attempted to group schools into areas based upon need and curriculum and to vary professional development investment across those areas. Three years ago, BCPSS regrouped its schools into seven groups called “Areas”: four elementary areas (numbered 1–4), one middle school area (5), one high school area (6), and one area for the CEO’s model schools and (subsequently) the New Schools Initiative schools (7). Most of the schools that were implementing a curriculum model called “Direct Instruction” were grouped in Elementary Area 3, and schools with the highest need were grouped in Area 4. Nine schools, designated by the state for reconstitution, were grouped together in the CEO’s District (one school was added later). These schools received extra resources according to an intensive model of support and supervision we describe below. Figure P6 below shows the resulting distribution of professional development dollars across areas.

**Figure P6: Dollar Allocations Per Teacher by Area**

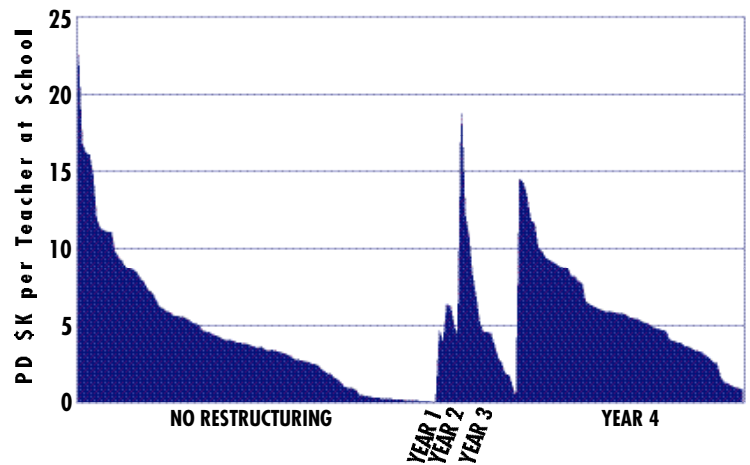


CEO model schools received the most support, followed by Area 4 schools. However, within each area, we again found wide ranges of professional development dollars per teacher; some schools in each area receive practically no support, while other schools receive tremendous levels of support.

Digging deeper, there appears to be no link between the “need” for professional development support and the actual level of resources schools receive. For example, since the state designates schools with the lowest student performance as “restructuring” schools, one might expect significantly more professional devel-

opment dollars to be invested in schools in restructuring status. However, there is no predictable correlation between professional development investment per teacher and the school's improvement status. Within each category of school improvement, there is such a wide variability of professional development investment that significant numbers of non-restructuring schools receive far more professional development support than restructuring schools in any category. Figure P7 shows the professional development investment per teacher across each "restructuring" level and how long they have been in that level.

Figure P7: Investment by School Improvement Category



Instead, how much professional development support a school receives depends upon what "categories" or "labels" it has. Many of these categories describe school need for support at some level. Others, such as Achievement First's direct and indirect models, were awarded for other reasons. Though some of the criteria for determining whether a school gets professional development resources make logical sense, in many cases there is little difference between Title I and non-Title I schools, or between restructuring and non-restructuring schools, in BCPSS. Figure P8 illustrates that some typical schools receive over \$500,000 of professional development resources, while similarly sized schools with almost the same level of need receive less than \$20,000.

Figure P8: Professional Development Support by School Type

| PD RESOURCE                           | CEO'S DISTRICT<br>ELEMENTARY | TITLE I RECONST.<br>ELEMENTARY | NON-TITLE I<br>ACHIEVEMENT FIRST OR<br>DIRECT INSTRUCTION<br>ELEMENTARY | NON-TITLE I<br>NO EXTRA | MIDDLE<br>SCHOOL | HIGH SCHOOL  | NEW INITIATIVE<br>SCHOOLS |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Academic Coach (Title I)              |                              | \$84                           | \$84  |                         | \$84             |              | \$84                      |
| Instructional Support Teachers        | \$400                        |                                |   |                         |                  |              |                           |
| Department Heads                      |                              |                                |   |                         | \$140            | \$280        |                           |
| Achievement First<br>(Direct Model)   | \$70                         | \$70                           |   |                         |                  |              |                           |
| Achievement First<br>(Indirect Model) |                              |                                |   |                         | \$40             |              |                           |
| State Reconstitution Support          | \$29                         | \$29                           |   |                         | \$29             | \$29         |                           |
| New Teacher Institute                 | \$11                         | \$11                           | \$11  | \$11                    | \$11             | \$11         |                           |
| Blum Mentor                           | \$13                         | \$13                           | \$13  | \$13                    | \$13             | \$13         |                           |
| Extra Planning Time                   | \$60                         |                                |   |                         |                  |              |                           |
| School PD Budget                      | \$5                          | \$5                            | \$5   | \$5                     | \$5              | \$5          | \$5                       |
| Model Specific Coach                  |                              |                                |   |                         |                  |              | \$40                      |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                          | <b>\$588</b>                 | <b>\$212</b>                   | <b>\$113</b>  | <b>\$29</b>             | <b>\$322</b>     | <b>\$338</b> | <b>\$129</b>              |

Typical Dollar Amount per School (in thousands of dollars)

NOTE: These figures illustrate what a school would receive if it participated in certain programs we found typical for the groups of schools indicated. By design, this chart does not show averages, which can be found elsewhere.

Figure P9 also shows the typical amount a school might receive for professional development from select professional development initiatives. It then explains why the school would (or would not) receive money from that particular program. This helps explain the wide variation in professional development dollars per teacher across schools within each category of student need, however measured.

**Figure P9: Professional Development Support by PD**

| PD RESOURCE                                  | TYPICAL VALUE (IN THOUSANDS) | TYPE OF SUPPORT | SCHOOL DISCRETION OVER USE | WHY A SCHOOL GETS IT          |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Academic Coach (Title I)                     | \$84                         | Coaching        | Some                       | High Poverty Level            |
| Instructional Support Teacher (2-4 teachers) | \$160-\$320                  | Coaching        | No                         | CEO's Model School            |
| Department Head                              | \$60                         | Teacher Time    | Yes                        | Size of Secondary School Dept |
| Achievement First (Direct Model)             | \$30                         | Coaching        | No                         | AAO Decision                  |
| Achievement First (Indirect Model)           | TBD                          | Coaching        | No                         | AAO Decision                  |
| State reconstitution support                 | \$29                         | Coaching        | No                         | Restructuring Status          |
| Blum Mentors                                 | \$16                         | Coaching        | No                         | District PD Office Decision   |
| District-Funded Extra Planning Time          | \$60                         | Teacher Time    | Some                       | CEO's Model School            |
| Extra Coach                                  | \$80                         | Coaching        | Yes                        | School Decision               |
| Additional AAO Support for CEO District      | \$16                         | Flexible        | No                         | CEO's Model School            |

### *The Example of the CEO's District*

The CEO's District contains nine (now ten) schools that follow the "CEO model" and eleven schools that are part of the New Schools Initiative.

Each of the eleven New Schools Initiative schools is operated with the support of an external operator to help them achieve a specific instructional vision, approach, or focus. To give them the flexibility to create such a program, they are able to claim exemption from various district programs. A list of these schools, their operators, and their unique missions appears in Appendix 6.

CEO model schools receive on average approximately \$13,000 per teacher for professional development, while other school models average \$3,000 to \$5,000 per teacher. Each CEO model school receives three to seven instructional support teachers, depending mostly on size. This support accounts for 60 percent of the overall professional development investment in CEO schools. These Instructional Support Teachers (ISTs) are trained by Achievement First professional developers who have provided demonstration lessons (usually in literacy).<sup>3</sup> Also, ISTs work with principals in regular training sessions to help them work with teachers around student-specific assessment data. ISTs, in turn, work with small teams of teachers in each school during professional development and early release time.

<sup>3</sup> These IST positions may not exist next year due to budget constraints.

The ISTs are thus the vehicle by which professional development is provided to classroom teachers and the keystone of the CEO model.

Other major categories of professional development support in the CEO's District include extra planning time (fifty minutes per week plus seven additional professional development days), Achievement First support, state-supplied restructuring support for eligible schools, new teacher support through the district-run summer institute, and professional development support provided by AAO-level personnel in the CEO's District office (area lead coaches, etc).

The nine original schools in the CEO's District have improved student performance so much that many now exceed state performance standards and four have moved out of the restructuring category. It is important to build on these examples, but in a systematic and thoughtful way.

### **ACADEMIC LITERACY COACHES**

◆ Investment in academic literacy coaches makes up the bulk of BCPSS spending on school-level professional development. This represents a focused use of resources. However, the models for coaching are not well defined and there is limited accountability for effective use of coaches.

Despite the fact that the district eliminated “academic coaches” at non–Title I schools for 2003–2004, it still provides professional development primarily through coaches. In fact, if we exclude professional development days, \$18 million of the remaining \$38 million of professional development spending supports one or another type of school-level “coach” whose primary assignment is the improvement of teaching quality. The largest category of coaching-type positions is the “academic coach” position, funded primarily through Title I dollars (\$9.3 million). Other “coaches” also exist under many names. For example, department heads are released from 25 percent to 100 percent of their teaching responsibilities based on the size of their department, as stipulated in the union contract.

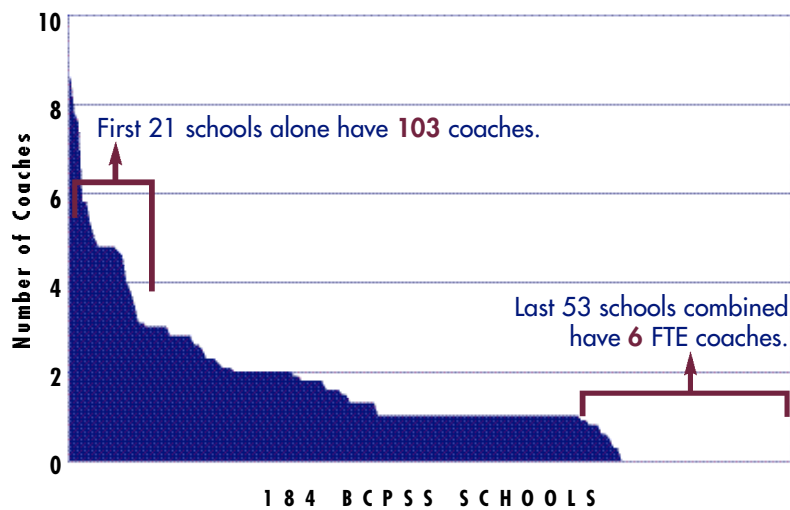
This release time represents an investment of \$5.6 million of possible professional development dollars. Based on interviews, we estimated (perhaps generously) that about half of that time is used for professional development in a coaching-type model, for an investment of \$2.8 million. ISTs in the CEO's District account for another \$3.6 million. Achievement First and Direct Instruction Professional Developers (in both the direct and indirect models) provide another \$3 million worth of instructional coaching for teachers. All told, there are over 230 full-time equivalent coaching personnel in BCPSS. This represents an investment that approaches \$19 million, or almost half of the professional development investment in BCPSS (excluding professional development days).

While many of these coaches are assigned to focus on literacy, the models for coaching are not defined consistently across areas and are not necessarily aligned with the performance challenges of the schools. For instance, some schools have multiple coaches across multiple subjects, while other schools in the same aca-

demographic area have no coaches at all. Or a school might have a literacy coach but no math coach, despite low math scores. Other schools have invested in some form of coaching but do not organize to provide common planning time so that coaches can conduct weekly professional development for teacher teams. Finally, due to the many types of coaching personnel and the programmatic nature of coaching support, many coaches receive little ongoing training and support except in the CEO's District, Achievement First Direct, and some New Schools Initiative schools.

In summary, the coaching function in BCPSS is not integrated into a comprehensive strategy for improving instruction. As discussed above, professional development investment, including coaching services, does not align with student and staff needs. This misalignment results in a situation where some schools have many coaches while other schools have none, and the level of coaching resources does not appear linked to need. As shown below in Figure P10, based on district-provided data, 21 schools have 103 coaches, while 53 schools combined have 6 full-time coaches.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure P10: Number of Instructional Coaches per School**



BCPSS's significant investment in coaching represents an enormous opportunity to focus existing resources sharply on improved teaching and learning.

<sup>4</sup> When district data was supplemented by interviews that identified coaching resources the school has allocated out of its own budget, the number of schools with no coaches drops slightly. According to interview data, it appears that between forty and fifty schools have no district- or school-allocated coaching resources.

As will be discussed in the Curriculum Review, observations of coaching in action revealed that schools' definitions of coaches' professional responsibilities varied widely. While some individuals took an active role in classrooms, co-teaching and assuming equal responsibility for the quality of instruction, the majority of coaches observed "sat back" in the role of an observer. These findings suggest that the current approach to coaching does not appear to support the growth of literacy or critical and creative thinking at a level equal to the investment.

## TEACHER INDUCTION

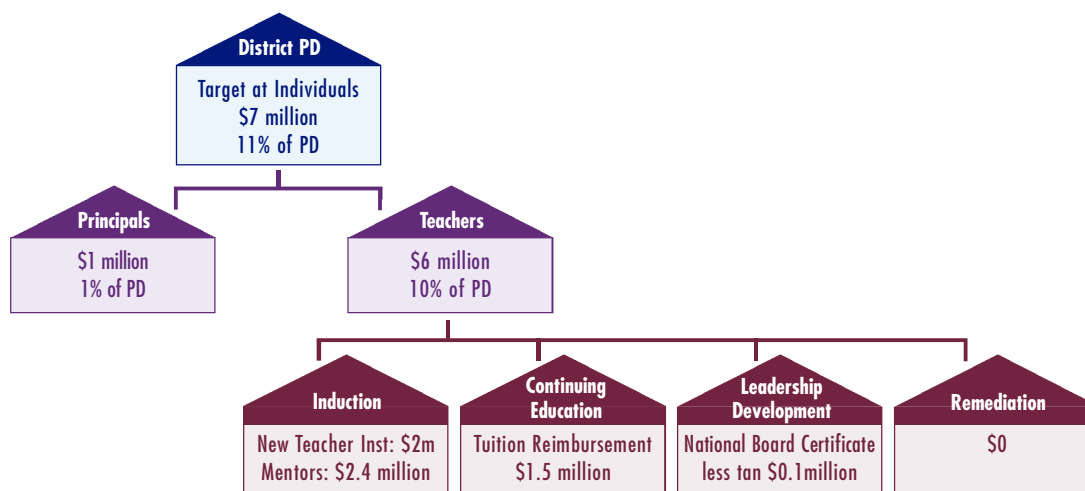
◆ BCPSS invests significant resources in teacher induction, but it is not part of a clear career development strategy and is not linked to an overall school-improvement strategy.

Districts and schools balance professional development between building individual skills and strengthening the instructional capacity of entire faculties or program areas. Individual professional development is often related to the specific career stage of the instructor; for example, it might be targeted to a beginning teacher or a teacher with an unsatisfactory rating. Alternatively, individual professional development might be used to support an educator’s individual need to gain specific skills, such as adding a special education certification.

Professional development targeting an entire school builds individual capacity, but only in the context of a school-level or instructional program effort. These activities engage a school’s teachers in building knowledge about program or subject areas. Two examples of this are comprehensive school-reform models and school-based coaching in content areas.

BCPSS targets \$7 million, or about 11 percent, of professional development at individual teacher and principal professional development (see Figure P11). Of that amount, \$6 million, or 10 percent of all professional development spending, is targeted for teachers, focused mainly on new teachers through the New Teacher Institute and mentoring programs. The remaining \$1 million is targeted to principals.

**Figure P11: Professional Development Allocations**



Professional development for teachers is concentrated on induction and continuing education. Historically, almost no district professional development funds have been spent on leadership development or remediation.

The district spends approximately \$7,000 per teacher to support new teachers as they enter BCPSS. This support comes primarily from two programs. The district spends \$2 million on the New Teacher Institute, which provides three weeks of summer support for new teachers. Although the program is voluntary, most new teachers participate in this program. However, it is not available to teachers who are hired after the summer deadline. The second program is the district's "Blum" mentor program, which provides mentors to schools with high concentrations of new teachers. The district invests \$2.4 million in these mentors. The Blum program provides 29 mentors at 20 schools to provide services to 500 to 600 new teachers.

This is a significant amount of money to spend on new teachers, and principals and teachers interviewed feel positively about the program. However, the Blum mentors and the summer training are not well integrated with the receiving school's needs. Blum coaches often work in several schools and they are not accountable to the school principal in providing support. Teachers in the New Teacher Institute receive a general orientation that may not be linked to the curriculum or approach their assigned school will use. This is generally because some teachers have not been assigned specific schools by the start of the summer program, so it is impossible to provide content instruction specifically for the particular literacy model an elementary teacher might be asked to teach.

In addition to the support for new teachers, BCPSS also invests \$1.5 million to reimburse new and veteran teachers for courses taken. However, there is no deliberate strategy to ensure that the courses teachers take meet district or school needs. Some districts are seeking ways to link coursework to district needs, particularly in light of the fact that teachers also receive salary increases based on additional credits garnered. For example, Albuquerque Public Schools aggressively promotes tuition reimbursement opportunities that lead to certification as a special education or bilingual teacher, since these are shortage areas for the district. Other districts offer tuition reimbursement as a reward and support for teachers who have the potential for and interest in leadership roles in their schools.

BCPSS has recently begun to invest in expanding the number of National Board-certified teachers in the district (the current number is thirteen).

## **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

◆ BCPSS has no comprehensive strategy to develop strong school leaders, despite significant state-directed spending to support principals in poorly performing schools. The leadership development strategy should be expanded to include all principals, assistant principals, department chairs, lead teachers, and coaches.

BCPSS's ability to support improved instruction depends on the quality of its school leaders. In the coming years, BCPSS will have an enormous need to develop new school leaders. As Figure P12 shows, two-thirds of the current

principals have more than twenty-five years of experience and will be soon leaving the district. Nearly half of the remaining third have fewer than two years' experience as a principal. Though it does have some important components in place, BCPSS does not have a coherent strategy to develop strong school leaders. A principal support and accountability strategy should differentiate based on quality of experience of the principal, the need of the school and the curriculum adopted.

**Figure P12: Experience of Principals in BCPSS**

- 67% of principals have 25+ years of experience
- 23 of the remaining principals (42%) have less than 2 years of experience
- 86 Elementary school principals (10%) are new
- 47 Middle school principals (17%) are new
- 36 High school principals (17%) are new

Figure P13 below shows that the district has \$4.8 million in professional development resources targeted at principals, not including its investment in student-free days and principal meetings. School-level support represents 80 percent, or \$3.84 million, of this amount, and individual career-growth support represents 20 percent, or \$970,000. Approximately 58 percent of these resources (\$2.8 million) come from the state for reconstitution support for schools in restructuring (\$2.74 million) or for workshops and seminars aimed at new principals in BCPSS (\$70,000). The specific initiatives are described in more detail below.

**Figure P13: Professional Development Support for Principals**

| INITIATIVE                                   | AMOUNT (MILLIONS) | % OF TOTAL PD FOR PRINCIPALS |
|--|-------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Individual Career Growth</b>              | <b>\$0.97</b>     | <b>20%</b>                   |
| Principal Interns                            | \$0.80            | 17%                          |
| Principal Induction                          | \$0.10            | 2%                           |
| State-Sponsored Workshops for New Principals | \$0.07            | 1%                           |
| <b>School Level Improvement</b>              | <b>\$3.84</b>     | <b>80%</b>                   |
| State Reconstitution Support                 | \$2.74            | 57%                          |
| Achievement First                            | \$0.40            | 8%                           |
| AAO Support                                  | \$0.70            | 15%                          |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>\$4.81</b>     |                              |

*Excludes Monthly Principal Meetings and Contractual Professional Development Days*

As a result of the source of funds and the targeting of these funds to a small class of principals (which itself is not problematic), many BCPSS principals receive virtually no professional development outside of their monthly AAO meetings. While these meetings do provide professional development opportunities for principals, they are large-group meetings by nature. Such meetings rarely provide a ready forum for the differentiated coaching or support, which principals and their leadership teams often require.

### **School-level Improvement**

The state spends \$2.4 million to monitor and provide “technical assistants” (TAs) to the sixty-three BCPSS schools under restructuring (80 percent of all restructuring schools in the state are in the BCPSS system). TAs, who are typically former

principals given additional training by the state, offer leadership development support and coaching to principals and their respective Instructional Leadership teams. They work with principals to plan and sometimes deliver professional development. A full-time TA has responsibility for five schools and visits each at least once per week.

In addition, the state provides one full-time and one part-time statewide monitor, each of whom spends 80 percent of his or her time in BCPSS elementary schools (estimated investment is \$100,000 per individual). Unlike the TAs, who work specifically with leadership teams on a broad set of issues, monitors focus on instruction. Since the monitor resources cannot possibly support all sixty-three schools well, monitors work with TAs, meeting with each of the TAs at least twice a year to plan their work in schools and determine which sites to visit. A TA may call the monitor back to a particular school for more help.

Though the state feels it would be ideal if elementary and middle school monitors worked with the BCPSS AAOs to plan or review their work, the monitors have not done so. Instead, they report their observations to the Maryland State Department of Education. State leaders chose not to monitor Baltimore high schools this year because state leaders felt that the close collaboration between Frank DeStefano, the high school AAO, and the TAs who are assigned to support high schools makes this extra layer unnecessary.

For schools under restructuring, the state also conducted three Principal Institutes this school year (in October, November, and January), using Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) modules. These modules focused on analyzing data and student work, school culture, and instructional leadership. TAs, who attended a summer SREB institute, developed and facilitated the Principal Institutes. In addition to these three statewide sessions, the state held an extra session in March aimed only at BCPSS middle schools in corrective action or restructuring. We estimated the total BCPSS portion of these costs at \$50,000.

While the district desperately needs support in developing principal leadership, these large group sessions are not necessarily linked to district priorities or to individual principal or school-specific needs. District and state leaders have an immediate opportunity to work together to rethink this program and to provide support to principals that will more effectively integrate with school and district strategy.

### ***Individual Career Growth***

Individual support for principals includes \$1 million, with 80 percent of this money coming from the BCPSS principal intern program (\$800,000). This program serves seven to nine new principal interns, targeting those without education backgrounds, giving them a year of on-the-job training and attendance at several training seminars, at an approximate cost of \$100,000 per intern, with most of that going toward the salary and benefits of the intern and with a small

stipend for the receiving principal. According to interviews, this program is quite popular among those who participate. It is a significant district investment in professional development. We recommend the district examine the program's effectiveness on various measures (retention rates and future performance of participants versus non-participants), with the possibility of offering a similar level of support for assistant principals and educators wishing to become principals.

Other principal-targeted initiatives include state-run workshops for new principals (\$70,000 districtwide). Also, the district offers a principal induction program (\$100,000) that pairs new principals with mentors and provides workshops for new principals on high-priority topics, as determined by program and district leaders. This program explicitly aims to establish peer networks among cohorts of new principals that can be maintained throughout their careers.

BCPSS has the potential to integrate the various principal-targeted initiatives into customized support networks based not only on the curricular and performance needs of the school, but also on the specific needs of the principal. This type of support network (as embraced in Boston and elsewhere) can already be found in BCPSS in some of the New Schools Initiative schools. The Curriculum Project, for example, provides support (coaching) for principals that integrates the school's instructional method and curriculum (Direct Instruction). The support varies according to the experience of the principal, with new principals receiving more days of coaching each week (on average). In interviews, Curriculum Project principals expressed tremendous satisfaction with the professional development support they received, as opposed to other BCPSS principals, who sometimes felt that the support they received was fragmented and/or irrelevant to their school's unique situation.

### ***Support for Leaders Other than Principals***

We found scattered professional development support for other district leaders. Each AAO has two "lead coaches." But the use of these coaches varied considerably and there appeared to be no clear model for how they should work with other coaches or with principals. Assistant principals also appear to have very limited professional development opportunities outside of monthly administrative meetings, and we found no discernible support for AAOs or other central office leaders.

Academic coaches appeared to receive less professional development than they receive in other districts with coaching models. This support came in the form of twelve training days held throughout the year, during which the coaches received presentations from experts. It was not clear that Area lead coaches played a consistent or effective role in providing instruction or other professional development to academic coaches, although this, too, varied from case to case.

In general, AAOs had varying approaches to the way they worked with the academic coaches; most did not view them as part of their leadership and support

teams. By contract, the support and professional development of coaches has been a centerpiece of more successful district reform efforts. In Boston Public Schools and San Diego, for example, coaches spend one day per week with their supervisors engaged in problem solving together, with expert support.

## LINE ACCOUNTABILITY

◆ BCPSS functions without strong line accountability for implementing coherent school-improvement programs and improving the quality of instruction.

With the exception of the CEO’s District, BCPSS has not organized its human resources to supervise and support schools in improving performance. As described above, BCPSS has organized its 182 schools into seven “Areas,” each under the supervision of an Area Academic Officer (AAO). Four Areas contain the elementary schools. As Figure P14 below shows, the AAOs have responsibility for evaluating between twenty-two and thirty-three principals and for reviewing and supporting the improvement activities in as many schools. In Area 4, twenty out of the twenty-seven schools are being restructured due to persistently poor performance. Yet this Area receives no extra resources.

Each AAO has two lead coaches and two director-level staff members who spend varying amounts of time supporting professional development. Each AAO has a different way of reviewing school plans and creating accountability for school improvement, and there is no monitoring of improvement of instruction. The roles that these professionals play vary across the Areas, as do their qualifications and expertise in supporting school improvement. Furthermore, within each Area, numerous individuals not within the chain of command (state-provided technical assistants or externally provided coaches) are also delivering messages to teachers, coaches, and principals. In the absence of clearly defined standards of instructional practice, this multiplicity of voices, coupled with a weak accountability structure, often leads to a chaotic or ineffectual implementation of district messages and a failure to meet the state’s high standards for student performance.

**Figure P14: AAO Responsibilities**

| AREA                   | NUMBER OF SCHOOLS | SCHOOLS IN RESTRUCTURING | ACHIEVEMENT FIRST SCHOOLS | CORE KNOWLEDGE AND DIRECT INSTRUCTION | DIRECT INSTRUCTION ONLY OR CORE KNOWLEDGE ONLY | NO OUTSIDE MODEL | SPECIAL EDUCATION ONLY |
|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Elementary           | 33                | 2                        | 7                         | 1                                     | 1  | 25               | 0                      |
| 2 Elementary           | 32                | 11                       | 3                         | 0                                     | 0  | 14               | 1                      |
| 3 Elementary           | 24                | 16                       | 1                         | 11                                    | 4  | 5                | 2                      |
| 4 Elementary           | 27                | 20                       | 25                        | 0                                     | 0  | *1               | 1                      |
| Middle School          | 22                | 16                       | 22                        | 0                                     | 0  | 0                | 1                      |
| High School            | 33                | 6                        | 0                         | 0                                     | 0  | 0                | 4                      |
| CEO District           | 10                | 6                        | 9                         | 1                                     | 0  | 0                | 0                      |
| New Schools Initiative | 13                | 4                        |                           |                                       | 3  |                  |                        |

\* This is an “alternative” school

We believe that for BCPSS to achieve sustainable improvement in student performance, especially in a context where schools and areas are accustomed to the autonomy and variability afforded by multiple curricular models, the district needs to make a significant additional investment in performance management and leadership support that includes a significantly smaller span of controls for area officers, more clearly defined authority and responsibilities, and clearly defined expectations for excellent teachers, coaches, principals, principal supervisors, and area officers.

An effective performance management system in BCPSS would have three component steps (see Figure P15):

- Communicate clear standards for instruction.
- Empower instructional leadership.
- Evaluate performance and progress and provide feedback.

Each of these steps will require the district to take clear action as follows:

◆ **Step 1 - Communicate clear standards.**

- Define performance standards that meet the district's strategy and goals.
- Define observable (measurable) indicators of performance.
- Define and adopt a rubric for evaluation.
- Define positive and negative consequences.
- Communicate the observable indicators, the evaluative rubric, and the consequences in ways that ensure buy-in by key personnel and stakeholders.

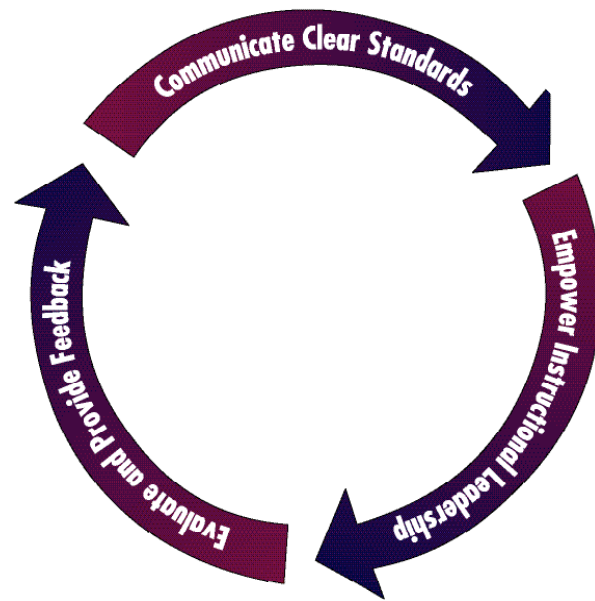
◆ **Step 2 – Empower instructional leadership.**

- Provide authority by eliminating barriers and inflexibilities.
- Provide support and capacity through training, tools and recruiting, and staffing.
- Build consensus and ownership by refining standards and integrating strategic planning with budgeting processes.

◆ **Step 3 – Evaluate performance and progress and provide feedback.**

- Invest in systems and processes for measuring performance.
- Report performance in a timely way.
- Review performance reports regularly.
- Assign consequences for performance (most employees should meet or exceed standards).

**Figure P15: Steps to Effective Performance Management**



## Recommendations

Every year, BCPSS invests significant resources on professional development activities, even more than other comparable urban districts. Professional development funds include a considerable amount from federal, state, and local sources. However, the fragmented sources of funds, the lack of strategic planning, the lack of an instructional context, and the lack of appropriate accountability structures all combine to render much of this investment ineffective.

To create an effective professional development strategy, the district must create a coherent plan that focuses its professional development activities on the most important subjects, schools, and students, in ways that research suggests seem most likely to result in student performance improvement. This suggests the need for a multiyear professional development plan that is:

- focused on highest-priority district goals;
- coherent – not having duplicative efforts in some needed areas and gaps in others (such as leadership development);
- research-based – relying on job-embedded strategies that combine regular common planning time in the school day with frequent school-based instruction around a rigorous curriculum and specific student work;
- equitable and strategic – giving professional development resources based on need, while recognizing that the current unequal allocation of professional development resources is neither equitable nor strategic;
- accountable for the use of professional development time and money, clearly specifying how the activity will meet the goal of systematically improving the quality of instruction in BCPSS and help teachers meet clear standards for good instruction that are even now being laid out in the K–12 instructional framework.

These strategies will take many years to fully adopt, but a clear multiyear professional development strategy needs to be adopted and implemented immediately for the 2004–2005 school year. Neither teachers nor students can wait.

## References

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Miles, K., E. Guiney, and K. Winner. 2000. *Professional Development Spending in the Boston Public Schools*. Boston: Boston Plan for Excellence. Available on the Web at <[www.bpe.org](http://www.bpe.org)>.

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Members of the BCPSS Review Team

**Professional Development:      Education Resource Strategies**

Karen Hawley Miles  
*Executive Director*

Stephen Frank  
*Director of Organizational Strategy*

**Curriculum:                              Annenberg Institute for School Reform  
at Brown University**

Literacy and Systems:              Dennie Palmer Wolf  
*Director, Opportunity and Accountability*

Deanna Burney  
*Senior Consultant*

Mathematics:                              Judith Pelchat  
*Principal Associate*

Margaret Votta  
*Senior Research Associate*

Stephanie Fisher  
*Consultant*

## Schools Sites, Assignment Reviews, and Interviews

### School Visits

The curriculum review team members visited the following schools:

#### Math Team Site Visits:

School #426 (2 classrooms)  
Chinquapin Middle School (3 classrooms)  
Dickey Hill Elementary/Middle School (2 classrooms)  
Harlem Park Elementary School (2 classrooms)  
Harford Park Intermediate School (2 classrooms)  
Johnstown Square Elementary School (2 classrooms)  
Midtown Academy (2 classrooms)  
Morrell Park Elementary/Middle School (2 classrooms)  
Nicholas Elementary School (2 classrooms)  
Patterson High School (4 classrooms)  
Roland Park Elementary School (2 classrooms)  
Violetville Elementary/Middle School (2 classrooms)  
Winston Middle School (2 classrooms)

#### Literacy Team Site Visits:

Chinquapin Middle School (3 classrooms)  
Fallstaff Middle School (1 classroom)  
Johnstown Square Elementary School (3 classrooms)  
Langston Hughes Elementary School (2 classrooms)  
Patterson High School (3 classrooms)  
Reginald Lewis High School (2 classrooms)  
Western High School (3 classrooms)

### Assignment Reviews

Assignments submitted by the following schools were selected for close examination:

Alexander Hamilton Elementary School – *Principal*: Patricia Burrell  
Benjamin Franklin Jr. High School – *Principal*: Paul Llufrio  
Canton Middle School – *Principal*: Anthony Harold  
Collington Square Elementary School – *Principal*: Harold Eason  
Dunbar Senior High School – *Principal*: Roger Shaw  
Dr. Bernard Harris Sr. Elementary School – *Principal*: Lucretia Coates  
Dr. Rayner Browne Elementary School – *Principal*: Charlotte Williams  
Forest Park High School – *Principal*: Loretta Breese

George Washington Elementary School – *Principal*: Ruby Coleman  
Hampstead Elementary School – *Principal*: Jonathan Hornbeck  
Harriet Tubman Elementary School – *Principal*: Angelette Bazemore  
Lockerman-Bundy Elementary School – *Principal*: Linwood Roberts  
Margaret Brent Elementary School – *Principal*: Brenda Abrams  
Morrell Park Elementary/Middle School – *Principal*: Leslie Davis  
Mt. Washington Elementary School – *Principal*: Steve Buettner  
Samuel F.B. Morse Elementary School – *Principal*: Claudia Drumheller  
Southeast Middle School – *Principal*: Almenta Bell  
Waverly Elementary School – *Principal*: Will McKenna

## **Interviews**

Members of the curriculum review team conducted in-depth interviews with the following BCPSS and MSDE staff and members of the Steering Committee:

### **BCPSS School Principals**

Anna Bailey, Harlem Park Elementary School  
Barry Chlebnikow, School #426  
Laura D’Anna, Patterson High School  
Marvin Darden, Harford Heights Intermediate School  
Leslie Davis, Morrell Park Elementary/Middle School  
Doris Graham, Langston Hughes Elementary School  
Mariale Hardiman, Roland Park Elementary School  
Joyce Hughes, Dickey Hill Elementary/Middle School  
Diane Issel, Midtown Academy  
Irma Johnson, Nicholas Elementary School  
Landa McClurin, Western High School  
Pamela Moore, Fallstaff Middle School  
Esther Oliver, Chinquapin Middle School  
Cathy Reinholdt, Violetville Elementary/Middle School  
Catherine Thomas, Johnstown Square Elementary School  
Eldon Thomas, Winston Middle School  
Sandra Turpin, Reginald Lewis High School

Many principals and assistant principals participated in roundtables or phone interviews with members of the professional development review team.

### **BCPSS Staff**

Bonnie Copeland, Chief Executive Officer  
Linda Chinnia, Acting Chief Academic Officer (and staff)  
Rose Piedmont, Chief Financial Officer (and staff)  
Jeffrey Grotsky, Chief of Staff  
Deborah Wortham, Director, Department of Professional Development

Gwen Cleage, Director, Department of Curriculum and Instruction (and staff)  
Tom Bowman, Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
Frank DeStefano, Area Academic Officer (and staff)  
Cynthia Janssen, Area Academic Officer  
Sue Cutter, Area Academic Officer  
James Smith, Area Academic Officer  
Gary Thrift, Area Academic Officer  
Brenda Campbell Jones, Area Academic Officer  
Malcolm Dates, Area Academic Officer  
Gayle Amos, Special Education and Student Support Services Officer (and staff)  
William Boden, Human Resource Officer (and Department staff)  
Tina Knight, CEO's Office  
Mark Moon, Finance Project  
Kate Neville, Finance Project

#### **MSDE Staff**

Colleen Seremet, Assistant Superintendent  
Karen Ganjon, Administration and Instructional Programs  
Dixie Stack, Curriculum

#### **Steering Committee Members**

Gayle Amos, Baltimore City Public School System  
Linda Chinnia, Baltimore City Public School System  
Gwen Cleage, Baltimore City Public School System  
Bonnie S. Copeland, Baltimore City Public School System  
Frank DeStefano, Baltimore City Public School System  
Marietta English, Baltimore Teachers Union  
Jimmy Gittings, PSASA  
Jennifer Green, Fund for Educational Excellence  
Jeff Grotzky, Baltimore City Public School System  
Bonnie Legro, Abell Foundation  
Karen Hawley Miles, Education Resource Strategies  
Rose Piedmont, Baltimore City Public School System  
Milli Pierce, Fund for Educational Excellence  
Colleen Seremet, Maryland State Department of Education  
Kevin Slayton, Parent and Community Advisory Group  
Kim Stephanic, Baltimore City Public School System  
Jane Sundius, Open Society Institute  
Patricia Welch, New Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners  
Deborah Wortham, Baltimore City Public School System

## Using Data to Improve Baltimore Schools

In a small group of Baltimore schools that that decided to make data important, the presence and use of information to inform decisions was evident in principals' talk as well as teachers' actions. In these schools, charts and scores were posted in offices and classrooms. Performance was tracked monthly and quarterly, with goals stated clearly for all to see. Principal interviews and discussions with staff the audit researchers revealed educators who viewed data not as an accessory to, but as a necessary component of, sound school management and instruction.

There are, however, far too few such schools. The emphasis on the importance of data-informed decision making must be heard from central office if use of data to improve student learning is to become the rule rather than the exception.

The Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) has at its disposal a wealth of demographic and results data via the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Web site. These data (including state test scores, attendance, dropout, graduation rates, mobility rates (elementary only), teacher certification status, Title I, free/reduced lunch, special education, English-language-learner status, enrollment) are available online to the public in a format that schools and district districts can manipulate. MSDE data is an entry point into the active use of data, but it is not an end in itself. Schools also need data from the district.

The BCPSS Web site contains many reports on the status of its schools, teachers, and students. These reports include on data truancy, retention, climate, advanced placement, enrollment, SAT scores, participation in enrichment opportunities, parent attitudes, and teacher satisfaction.. However, all of this data is in PDF format. Therefore, a school has two choices:

- 1) attempt to make decisions based on research that the district deems important; or
- 2) manually input numbers available in PDF into a format that can be manipulated.

To be useful to schools and to foster a healthy culture of informed decision-makers, Baltimore must make these data accessible and transparent to principals, teachers, parents, and the greater community.

By convening education stakeholders to discuss how data can best be collected, stored, analyzed, and presented in a user-friendly and transparent manner, Baltimore can ensure that schools and the school community at large enter the school-improvement dialogue in a focused and intelligible way.

Presentation of data can take many forms. One such form is a tool known as MAP, which uses percentiles to compare systems in a school against one another and in doing so allows systems to identify best-practice and peer schools. MAP was developed by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform; for more information, contact Peg Votta at (401-863-7523).

### Research-Based Design Principles for District Professional Development Strategy

The professional development design principles below are taken from Karen Hawley Miles, “The Big Picture: District Strategy Primes the Canvas for School Improvement,” *Journal of Staff Development* 24:3 (Summer 2003).

- Invest primarily in multiyear school-based coaching aimed at building schoolwide instructional capacity around instructional content.
- Encourage individual professional development through career structure and incentive compensation and focus district investment on career entry, leadership, and remediation.
- Vary professional development and level of intervention by performance.
- Invest only where conditions for success exist, but intervene to change them in “high needs” schools.
- Actively extend “Best Practices.”
- Design to embody a research-based vision of how schools and teachers improve.
- Ensure sufficient time for meaningful, collaborative learning and planning.
- Develop partnerships with local universities, set hiring standards, and adjust compensation levels to ensure the highest capacity professionals at entry level.

## BCPSS Spending on Professional Development by Initiatives

### Top Professional Development Initiatives in BCPSS

**Professional Development Days.** BCPSS has ten student-free days per year built into the teachers' contract. This year, three of those days occur just before school starts; the others are distributed roughly once per month. The district professional development office, working jointly with the AAOs, determines the content of these days. However, sometimes there are state or departmental mandates, such as using the time for familiarizing teachers with special education procedures. This investment is the equivalent of \$19.8 million.

**Academic Coaches.** About \$9.32 million is being spent to support 115 academic coaches in BCPSS this year. Most, but not all, of these coaches are funded through Title I funds, so most non-Title I schools do not have a position called "academic coach."

**Department Heads.** There are four levels of department heads in secondary schools in BCPSS. Each department head receives non-instructional time to equal 25%, 50%, 75%, or 100% of the teacher workweek, depending upon the size of the department. This time can be used for professional development activities, but it is not mandated. Department heads are not mandated by the union contract. However, if they exist, the release time is mandated by contract. This works out to an investment of \$5.6 million.

**Instructional Support Teachers.** CEO's District schools have two ISTs in the elementary schools (one for LA/SS; one for math/science) and up to four ISTs in the middle schools (one IST for each core content area). The ISTs demonstrate classroom lessons, provide peer coaching, co-teach with teachers, and help teachers design and plan lessons. They also hold weekly grade-level planning meetings (\$3.63 million)

**State Reconstitution Support.** For principals of reconstituted schools, MSDE provides technical assistants, whose actions are similar to those of a principal coach, approximately one day per week. In the first year of reconstitution, the state also provides three hours per week of paid after-school faculty meeting time. There is also an MSDE-sponsored three-day principal's retreat in February, as well as a meeting every third month. The Baltimore share of the reconstitution support personnel comes to \$2.44 million, with an additional \$250,000 of support for planning time for two schools in the first year of restructuring in 2003–2004 and an estimated \$50,000 of support offered through the seminars and workshops aimed at reconstitution support in BCPSS schools. State reconstitution support from all three sources is estimated at \$2.74 million.

**Mentors.** Twenty-nine mentors are housed in twenty schools at a cost of \$2.42 million. These full-time mentors provide support and training for new teachers. This project is funded by a grant from the Blum Foundation.

**New Teacher Summer Institute.** There is a four-week paid summer institute to which all first-time teachers are invited. Additionally, there is a one-week paid orientation for teachers who are new to the district. This program costs \$1.9 million.

**Achievement First Direct Model.** Support varies slightly by AAO-specific contract. Schools receive a professional developer two days per week and a principal coach one day per week. The professional developer works with teachers in their classrooms to support literacy instruction. Other supports received by schools include a three-day summer literacy planning institute, monthly meetings for principals, and classroom libraries. This support costs the district \$1.65 million.

**Tuition Reimbursement.** BCPSS offers 75% tuition reimbursement for courses up to and including the Master's degree, as well as 50% tuition reimbursement for courses beyond the Master's degree. Reimbursement is paid for up to twelve credits per school year "in an educational field or an approved related field" (from BCPSS Web site). To qualify for tuition reimbursement, teachers must: be employed by BCPSS at the time of the reimbursement, must commit to staying in BCPSS for two years beyond the reimbursement (or pay back the reimbursement), and must earn a grade of B or better. (Also note: all Maryland teachers are eligible for an annual \$1,500 tuition tax credit designed to offset graduate tuition expenses necessary to maintain teaching certification. This tax credit was made law with Tax Article §10-717 of the Annotated Code of Maryland). This expense was approximately \$1.5 million.

**CEO's District Extra Planning Time.** The CEO's District was given an extended workweek. One hour (50 minutes) of this time is mandated for collaborative planning time at which professional development is offered. This cost was \$1.16 million.

**Area Lead Coaches.** Each AAO office has two area lead coaches who are responsible for supporting and developing the coaches in their area. The use of these coaches appears to vary from one AAO office to another. Total district cost was about \$1.02 million.

**Achievement First Indirect Model.** The indirect model of Achievement First provides professional development support for principals in schools contracted to receive the indirect model of support. Cost of this program is approximately \$770,000 per year.

**Teacher Development Program – Johns Hopkins.** \$700,000 program – funds go to support teachers seeking certification.

**Principal Internship Program.** Between seven and nine interns are chosen each year to shadow a principal for a year of on-the-job induction training. They also receive ongoing professional development support throughout the year through a variety of seminars and other activities. At the end of the year, most interns are offered a job as principals. This program is designed to help recruit candidates who may not have a background in education. This program costs approximately \$100,000 per intern, most of which is the intern's salary and benefits. Total program cost for 2003–2004 was approximately \$800,000.

**Staff Development Director's Office.** Includes all of the salaries and benefits of all of the Professional Development office personnel (\$640,000).

**CAO Office Professional Development Support.** The CAO’s office has important roles to play in professional development in BCPSS, working with principals, AAOs, coaches, and teachers. Based on interviews, we estimated that most CAO’s office personnel spend 25% of their time on PD-related activities. This time represents a professional development investment of \$480,000.

**AAO Office Professional Development Support.** This represents 25% of the salary of the AAOs and their assistants. Other AAO office personnel with professional development roles (most notably, area lead coaches) were counted elsewhere. Area curriculum specialists were not included as professional development personnel because they work to spread best practices, which we categorized as distinct from professional development. We estimated this cost to the district at \$440,000, or \$70,000 per area. By area, the AAO office professional development support was as follows:

|         |          |
|---------|----------|
| Area 1: | \$80,000 |
| Area 2: | \$60,000 |
| Area 3: | \$70,000 |
| Area 4: | \$50,000 |
| MS:     | \$70,000 |
| HS:     | \$90,000 |

## **Secondary Professional Development Initiatives in BCPSS**

**Idea Part B.** This \$340,000 is used primarily for contracted services (\$300,000) and supplies (\$40,000) for school-based staff development through the SPED department

**School Professional Development Budgets.** This \$270,000 includes the professional development materials and supplies and travel budgets of each school.

**CEO’s District Support.** This \$230,000 includes all or part of salaries for CEO district administrative personnel providing professional development to CEO schools, including the AAO and assistants (25%), the area lead coach (100%), and two curriculum specialists (25% each).

**Project Site Support.** This multi-source-funded program (aimed toward teacher recruiting) has been almost completely phased out and, apparently, will not be continued. The district portion of this budget was \$180,000 for this year.

**HIV Program.** This program goes to support schools in providing specific HIV education programs. \$140,000.

**Title II – Curriculum and Instruction.** These \$110,000 in funds support the travel of curriculum and instruction personnel in their professional development activities.

**CEO’s Office.** This amount is \$70,000, which includes a portion of the salary of the CEO and her administrative team. We estimated that 25% of their time was spent on professional development activities for other executive team members.

**State-provided Workshops (New Principals).** The state provides workshops and seminars for new principals throughout the year. We estimate the cost to the state of providing these seminars to BCPSS new principals to be roughly \$70,000.

**All Other Professional Development Initiatives.** Other identified professional development initiatives add up to \$650,000, including portions of the Comprehensive School Reform Program (\$42,000); Dropout Prevention–related professional development (\$40,000); Compensatory Education Awards (\$40,000); Alternative Programs (\$36,000); and various departmental professional development and training programs, including SPED administration professional development and professional development for SPED IEP associates (\$170,000); grounds upkeep training (\$80,000); personnel services (\$80,000); the Academy (\$70,000); transportation (\$31,000); security training (\$31,000); fiscal management (\$22,000), etc.

The professional development activities of reform initiatives not mentioned here (such as those associated with HS redesign or other privately funded reforms) have, to the extent possible, been incorporated into many of the top professional development initiatives in the district, depending on how funds were used (professional developers, etc).

## APPENDIX 6

### Professional Development Support for New Schools Initiative

|                                       |  | <b>School/Operator</b>   |   |   |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|--|
|                                       |  | <b>Midtown Academy (#321)</b>  | <b>New Song Academy (#322)</b>  | <b>The Crossroads School (#323)</b>   | <b>KIPP Ujima Village Academy (#324)</b>   |
| <b>Support</b>                        |  | Midtown Academy, Inc.  | New Song Community Learning Center, Inc.  | The Living Classroom Foundation   | KIPP Baltimore, Inc.   |
| <b>Academic Coaches</b>               |  | 1 FTE @ 25%  | 2 FTE @ 50% (1 for lower grades, 1 for upper grades)  | 1 FTE @ 25% (math)  | 2 FTE @ 50% each   |
| <b>Common Planning Time</b>           |  | 1 period/day   | 2 hours/day for lunch and planning  | 60 minutes/day  | 90 minutes/week across subjects<br>30 minutes/week across grade level  |
| <b>Professional Development Days*</b> |  | Morning:<br>whole school<br>Afternoon: teacher teams                                   | 4 at beginning and 1 at end of year<br>Topics include math, language, literacy, readers, and writers workshop, Exp. Learning<br>External consultant, private funds  | Time split into thirds:<br>• Schoolwide focus on a relevant educational challenge<br>• Collaborative decision-making<br>• Team planning | Run by coaches or director – activities vary   |
| <b>Extended Day/Year</b>              |  | Extra 10 minutes/day   | Same number of days as BCPSS but year runs in 6-week sessions<br>M–W: 8:45 to 5:00<br>Th–F: 8:45 to 3:00<br>Th: pm. paid teacher time guided by coaches<br>F: pm (Sept.-Jan.) used by MS teams for voluntary PD directed by principal | 7 1/2-hour school day<br>Early dismissal on Wednesdays leaves an extra 5 hours/month for PD   | Day runs 7:30 to 5:00<br>With Saturday sessions, year totals 217 days<br>3-week summer session<br>Once a month, 2 hours for PD through early student dismissal |
| <b>Other</b>                          |  | 2-day retreat funded through New School Initiative, 1 external consultant for workshop | Conferences:<br>2 teachers, ASCD literacy conference; 2 teachers, exp. learning national conference; principal and Asst., exp. leadership conference; 2 teachers, weeklong summer math institute                                      | \$30,000 from Outward Bound, for PD: job-embedded and workshops – teachers can apply individually for workshops                         | KIPP conference, 4 days; during year, KIPP conferences on different subjects, 2 days long<br>Lang Arts teachers attended a couple of 2–3 day conferences       |
| <b>Principal Support</b>              |  | None noted   | 2 conferences: 9th grade transition and exp. Learning.<br>Independent study – prep. for Fri. MS team meetings<br>Starting/continuing master's studies   | None noted  | KIPP school leaders conferences.<br>Support from local college prep school, St. Paul's Girls' School, once a week  |

\* Unless otherwise noted, BCPSS teacher contractual days are the same in number and time but are school-controlled (except for state/district-mandated activities)

**School/Operator**

|                                       | <b>ConneXions Community Leadership Academy (#325)</b>  | <b>Empowerment Academy (#262)</b>   | <b>Rosemont Elementary (#63)</b>  | <b>City Springs School (#8)</b>  |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Support</b>                        | Baltimore Teacher Network, Inc.  | Empowerment Temple  | Uses BCPSS curriculum   | Baltimore Curriculum Project, Inc.   |
| <b>Academic Coaches</b>               | 2 FTE(from Outward Bound)<br>Teacher mentors – Blum  | 1 FTE @ 100%  | 1 FTE @ 60% and another “resource” person with full teaching load.<br>Coppin provides stipend   | 4 FTEs @ 50% each  |
| <b>Common Planning Time</b>           | 1.5 hours/day (will change next year)  | 1 period/week   | 1 team meeting/week   | 45 minutes/week  |
| <b>professional development Days*</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No professional development days. Time allocated into early dismissals and other times</li> <li>Activities designed and led by staff</li> </ul> | Literacy through the Arts, led by coach   | Run by Coppin State   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-house but will group with two other direct instruction schools for some PD activities on PD days. With coaches with small teams of teachers, topics based on school need</li> <li>Support for new teachers during the first week from the 4 academic coaches</li> <li>Occasionally, a consultant from their direct instruction association will come in for PD on the PD days</li> </ul> |
| <b>Extended Day/Year</b>              | Half-day dismissal on Wed. for PD  | None  | None  | None   |
| <b>Other</b>                          |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some Saturday workshops through Goucher College</li> <li>Summer retreat for all staff</li> <li>Late fall and early winter workshops</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3-day retreat to learn about fish and wildlife (grant obtained with Coppin State support)</li> <li>Optional PD every Saturday for teachers for 4 hours. Run by Coppin State</li> <li>Teachers get free tuition at Coppin State to get their masters</li> </ul> | None noted   |
| <b>Principal Support</b>              | Annual Outward Bound retreat.  | New principals: Johns Hopkins mentoring program once/month  | State provides a retired principal mentor who comes about once every 2 weeks for 3 hours  | None noted   |

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**Education Resource Strategies**

8 Bennett Road

Wayland, Massachusetts

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**Annenberg Institute for School Reform**

Brown University, Box 1985

Providence, Rhode Island

*Cover Drawing: "My Baltimore" by Shawntez Foster*

*Grade 5, Age 10, Abbottston Elementary School #50*