House Bill 853
Evaluation of Improvements in the Baltimore City Public School System
School Years 2001-2002 to 2006-2007

Final Report
Volume I

Prepared for the Baltimore City Public School System
Board of School Commissioners
and the Maryland State Board of Education

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Executive Summary

The Baltimore City Public School System Board of School Commissioners and the Maryland State Board of Education are required to conduct a review and evaluation of the improvements in the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) every five years since the 1997 reform initiative. This initiative moved the BCPSS from a department of the City of Baltimore to an independent agency with commissioners jointly appointed by the mayor and governor, established a partnership between Baltimore City and the State of Maryland to improve the system, and provided increased state funding. Westat conducted the first review in 2001. Subsequent federal regulations and guidance under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 had significant effect on educational planning, and Senate Bill 856 Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002 required Maryland local school boards to develop, implement and monitor master plans. The Annotated Code of Maryland Education Article § 5-401 Comprehensive Master Plans further defined the contents of these master plans.

This evaluation is the second review since the 1997 reform initiative, and is required by House Bill 853 of 2002 Baltimore City-State Partnership that reauthorized the original initiative. The evaluation covers school years 2001-2002 through 2006-2007, but is not intended to be a comprehensive history of all the regulatory and responding changes that occurred during the period. Rather it focuses on three areas: student achievement during 2004-2007, key initiatives in the master plan for school year 2006-2007, and improvement in seven areas of system management.

Student Achievement

This report analyzes student achievement between school year 2003-2004 and school year 2006-2007 when the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) began for grades 3-8. Assessments in school year 2001-2002 and school year 2002-2003 are not comparable. Student achievement has improved in the BCPSS since 2004 in both reading and mathematics, although this improvement may not have been enough to make adequate yearly progress toward the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirement of 100% proficiency among all student subgroups by 2014.
Elementary Grades

The reading proficiency of BCPSS students in the elementary grades improved between 2004 and 2007, and could reach the NCLB goal in 2014 for grades three and four if the pace of improvement continues. This began in grades one and two, where students came closer to reaching the national norms for students taking the Stanford Achievement Test during the four years. On the Maryland School Assessment, the percent of students assessed as proficient or advanced increased from 55% to 69% among third graders, from 61% to 73% among fourth graders, and from 50% to 60% among fifth graders. (See Reading Proficiency Chart.) The improvement in grades 3-5 was greater than in Maryland as a whole, and closed one-third of the gap between the 2004 proficiency level and the 2014 NCLB target. Education is cumulative, and analysis suggests that proficiency improvements in these elementary years will lead to improvements in subsequent grades as these students move through the school system.

The mathematics proficiency of BCPSS students in the elementary grades improved between 2004 and 2007, and could reach the NCLB goal in 2014 for grades four and five if this pace of improvement continues. This began in grades one and two, where BCPSS first grade students in 2006 and 2007 scored above the national norms for students taking the Stanford Achievement Test. On the Maryland School Assessment, the greatest improvement came in the fourth grade, from 48% of the students assessed as proficient or advanced in 2004 to 73% proficient or advanced in 2007. The percent increased from 54% to 62% among third graders, and from 44% to 64% among fifth graders. (See Mathematics Proficiency Chart.) Education is cumulative, and analysis suggests that proficiency improvements
in these elementary years will lead to improvements in subsequent grades as these students move through the school system. The mathematics improvement in grades 3-5 was greater than in Maryland as a whole, and closed one-third of the gap between the 2004 proficiency level and the 2014 NCLB target.

**Middle Grades**

Academic achievement in reading changed little between 2004 and 2007 in the middle grades, and the BCPSS is not on track to reach the NCLB goal by 2014 for the middle grades. The percent of sixth grade students assessed as proficient or advanced in reading improved from 44% in 2004 to 54% in 2007, but almost all of that increase came in 2007. Practically no improvement came in the seventh and eighth grade. Improvement in these middle grades fell below the improvement in Maryland as a whole, and closed only 8% of the gap to the NCLB goal. However, education is cumulative, and the proficiency improvements in the elementary grades, together with the 2007 improvement in sixth grade reading proficiency, suggests that more improvement will begin to be seen in the middle school years as students move through their educational process.

Middle grade students improved slightly more in mathematics than in reading between 2004 and 2007. Sixth grade students showed the greatest improvement, increasing from 20% proficient or advanced in mathematics in 2004 to 42% in 2007. Seventh grade students increased from 18% to 26%, and eighth grade students increased from 19% to 24% proficient or advanced in mathematics. This level of improvement only closed 15% of the gap between middle grade achievement in 2004 and the NCLB goal for 2014.

**High School**

Academic achievement improved among Baltimore City high school students, but improved too little to close the difference between them and Maryland high school students as a whole, or to be on pace to achieve the NCLB goal by 2014. Improvement on the English II High School Assessment increased from 35% in 2005 to 48% in 2007, but part of this increase may have come from students taking the assessment in 2007 knowing they must pass it if they are to graduate in 2009. The 13% percentage point increase in English proficiency between 2005 and 2007 among BCPSS high school students was the same as in Maryland as a whole, but 71% of all Maryland high school students taking the English High School Assessment in 2007 achieved proficiency.

The BCPSS graduation rate improved from 54.3% in school year 2003-2004 to 60.1% in school year 2006-2007, the third greatest improvement among the local school systems in the state. However, this still left its graduation rate substantially lower than the 85% graduation rate for Maryland as a whole, and lower than every other local school system in Maryland.
Variation in Improvement

Schools improved throughout the BCPSS, but not necessarily at the same rate. Reading and mathematics proficiency for students in grades 3-5 improved about as much in schools that failed to meet their Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) in school year 2003-2004 as for schools that met their AMOs at the beginning of the period. Proficiency increased enough in some poorer performing elementary schools so that they met their AMOs in school year 2006-2007. Unfortunately, more schools that originally met their AMOs had insufficient improvement in proficiency to continue to meet it. A similar pattern occurred among middle grades in mathematics, although the amount of improvement was less than the earlier grades. In reading, however, improvement among middle grade students occurred in about one-third of the schools that had met their AMOs in school year 2003-2004, and declined in the other two-thirds. No school with middle grades moved from not meeting its AMO in school year 2003-2004 to meeting its AMO in reading during school year 2006-2007.

Student MSA proficiency improved among all student subgroups, but improved most among the small number of Hispanic students and students with limited English proficiency. BCPSS students in special education improved in reading proficiency at a higher rate than did all BCPSS students, but improved less in mathematics. While the BCPSS continues to face challenges in helping many student groups achieve proficiency, particularly in the middle grades, the size of the improvements in other areas shows that the BCPSS is making progress in addressing the needs of its students.

Key Master Plan Initiatives

House Bill 853 set forth 19 focus areas to be addressed in the BCPSS Master Plan that are shown in the Legislative Focus Area table in an abbreviated version. This portion of the evaluation summarizes the extent to which each of these focus areas were addressed in The Baltimore City Public School System Master Plan School Years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 (hereafter referred to as “Master Plan”). The evaluation does not assess how the Master Plan complies with subsequent legislation and regulation. That assessment was conducted by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) prior to its approval of the Master Plan on December 12, 2006.
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<th>Table. Legislative Focus Areas</th>
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This portion of the evaluation was designed to answer three questions:

1. To what extent does the Master Plan include programs, policies, procedures, or initiatives that address each House Bill 853 focus area?
2. To what extent is each focus area fully (comprehensively) addressed in the Master Plan?
3. To what extent have Master Plan strategies for each focus area been implemented during school year 2006-2007?

This analysis first summarized the background, context, and meaning of each of the nineteen focus areas. To accomplish this, the team reviewed Westat (2001), House Bill 853, BCPSS policies, MSDE policies, and other documents to which the focus area referred. Next, key
components of each focus area were identified in order to ensure that the entire focus area would be addressed by the analysis. For example, Focus Area 3 states: Provide a balanced and efficient allocation of qualified educational and managerial staff. Four key components were identified for the analysis of this focus area: (1) provide a balanced allocation of qualified educational staff; (2) provide a balanced allocation of qualified managerial staff; (3) provide an efficient allocation of qualified educational staff; and (4) provide an efficient allocation of qualified managerial staff.

Question 1: To what extent does the Master Plan include programs, policies, procedures, or initiatives that address each focus area?

Using the language of the key components, a list of key words and phrases was developed to help guide the search through the strategies of the Master Plan. This search process was also supported by the use of DTSearch text retrieval software. After linking strategies with key components, we then examined the selected strategies in order to document the specific curriculum, programs, procedures, policies, and initiatives related to each key component within each focus area. Where applicable, we also supplemented the findings about Master Plan strategies with preliminary findings from the evaluation currently being conducted by Bonham and Gorham (2008) of the Master Plan implementation during the current (2007-2008) school year.

It was found that the number of strategies associated with each legislative focus area ranged from zero to 227 strategies, an average of almost 30 strategies per focus area. The two focus areas with the greatest number of strategies were those related to curriculum (227 strategies) and instructional materials and support services (124 strategies).

Question 2: To what extent is each focus area fully (comprehensively) addressed in the Master Plan?

In addition to determining the number of strategies that addressed each key component, the analysis also involved determining how comprehensively each focus area is addressed in the Master Plan as defined by the following criteria:

- **Fully Addressed** – There are Master Plan strategies linked with all key components of the focus area.
- **Partially Addressed** – There are Master Plan strategies linked with some key components of the focus area.
- **Not Addressed** – There are no Master Plan strategies linked with any key components of the focus area.
It was found that the following focus areas (and all of their key components) were fully addressed in the Master Plan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative Focus Areas Fully Addressed in the Master Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase access to high quality information technology (IT)</td>
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<td>Build staff capacity</td>
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<td>Student tracking system</td>
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<td>Financial management system</td>
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<td>Instructional materials and support</td>
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<td>School reform</td>
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<td>Distributing student test data</td>
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<td>Student assessment and remediation</td>
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<td>Student code of discipline</td>
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<td>Implementation and evaluation of reforms</td>
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<td>School restructuring</td>
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The following focus areas were partially addressed in the Master Plan: (Only the key components listed in the table below were addressed in the Master Plan; the remaining key components are discussed later in this executive summary):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative Focus Areas Partially Address in the Master Plan</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Focus Area</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Upgrade communications between administrative levels and the schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra supports for young and at-risk learners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrate special and general education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allocation of staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum and instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher hiring and assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilities Master Plan</td>
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<td>Parental involvement</td>
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</table>

The following focus areas were not addressed in the Master Plan:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Legislative Focus Areas Not Addressed in the Master Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus Area</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Master Plan as a comprehensive blueprint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher input</td>
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A closer look at focus areas that were partially or not addressed in the Master Plan was undertaken in order to determine which key components were not addressed in the Master Plan. These focus areas may be addressed in other ways, or in other documents like those reviewed in the third component of this evaluation. If they are not addressed, they may require more
intensive systemic attention. This analysis resulted in the following list of partially addressed or unaddressed key components:

*Sharing and reporting of data from the central office level to area and school level staff and/or external stakeholders.*

The Westat recommendations that concern reporting financial data to schools and ensuring timely data delivery are both unaddressed in the Master Plan. Similarly, the Master Plan does not provide a detailed process or timeline for distributing student test data to principals or area officers. The legislative reporting requirements that specifically mention the Governor, Mayor, and General Assembly are likewise not specifically addressed in the Master Plan. Finally, the Master Plan does not address the legislative requirement that teacher mentoring programs present reports to the board and senior management.

*Measuring and evaluating the outcomes of reforms.*

The Westat recommendation that the system evaluate interventions related to its new promotion and retention policy is not addressed in the Master Plan. Likewise, the Master Plan does not make provision for capturing program quality information to evaluate the integration of special and general education or for measuring the systemwide impact of this integration on student performance. Another area of measurement and evaluation not addressed in the Master Plan is training school leaders to measure the level of parental involvement in their schools.

*Facilities efficiency and tracking.*

The Facilities component of the Master Plan Status Report does not discuss innovative approaches for reducing costs associated with existing facilities or mechanisms for tracking completion of repair and maintenance services. The BCPSS prepares a separate Comprehensive Educational Facilities Master Plan that was part of the review discussed in the following section.

*Staff assignment and fiscal/qualitative analysis of staffing.*

The legislative mandates that concerned effective assignment of teachers and staff were not addressed in the Master Plan. Likewise, key components that call for a qualitative and fiscal analysis of central and area staffing were not addressed. Other documents discuss allocation of positions, but a separate evaluation shows that not all allocated positions were filled. A more general discussion of the human resources system is found in the following section.

*Training principals and assistant principals in specific parental involvement strategies.*

Two key components related to professional development are not addressed in the Master Plan: there are no strategies to train principals and assistant principals in strategies for connecting parents to the instructional program of the school or to involve teacher organization representatives in the design and implementation of professional development.
Alignment of budget process with Master Plan.

Two budgeting mandates of HB 853 are not met in the Master Plan. There are no specific strategies to coordinate and align the system’s budgeting process with the Master Plan or to coordinate schedules for the development and public presentation of budgets. The time frame for developing the budget and the Master Plan make alignment difficult. The FY2007 budget was based on the 2005 master plan, and the Master Plan for the 2006-2007 school year only showed how increases in that budget over the previous year related to some specific Master Plan strategies. However, a separate investigation found budget support for additional expenditures required by strategies in the Master Plan (Bonham and Gorham, 2008).

Alignment of assessments with standards.

The only instructional mandate not addressed in the Master Plan is the alignment of assessments with state standards.

Teacher input.

The legislative requirement that the BCPSS institute an effective system of teacher input is not addressed in the Master Plan.

Question 3: To what extent have Master Plan strategies for each focus area been implemented as of SCHOOL YEAR 2006-2007?

Finally, to determine the extent to which the strategies associated with each key component were implemented as of July 2007, we reviewed the information provided about each strategy in the “Strategies,” “Evaluation/Monitoring/Evidence,” and “Status Report” columns of the October 2007 Master Plan Implementation Status Report. Using this information, the implementation status of each strategy was categorized in one of the following ways:

- **Fully Implemented** – All of the evidence associated with the implementation of the strategy was documented.
- **Partially Implemented** – Some of the evidence associated with the implementation of the strategy was documented.
- **Not Implemented** – None of the evidence associated with the implementation of the strategy was documented.
- **Unclear** – Strategy implementation documentation was unclear or confusing; therefore, a decision about strategy implementation status was not made.

On average across the focus areas, 36% of strategies linked to focus areas were fully implemented, 34% were partially implemented, 11% were not implemented, and 8% were unclear (i.e., a determination could not be made about the implementation status of the strategy due to problematic, missing, or confusing information provided about the strategy in the Master Plan Status Report).
Focus areas with more than one strategy that had the three highest percentages of “fully implemented” strategies were:

- Evaluate extra supports for young learners and learners at risk (66%);
- Improve the status of schools that are subject to restructuring (64%);
- Provide financial management and budgeting system to maximize resource use (60%).

Focus areas with more than one strategy that had the three highest percentages of “not implemented” strategies were:

- Train principals and assistant principals in increasing parental involvement (50%);
- Incorporate the facilities master plan and update annually (50%);
- Provide effective hiring and assignment of teachers and staff (30%).

The last two of these focus areas with high percentages of “not implemented” in the Master Plan are discussed further in the following review of system management that involved a wider range of documents.

**Improvement of System Management**

The Westat (2001) report included twelve major recommendations. Half of them related to improvement of system management:

- Improve facilities management.
- Increase access to high quality IT.
- Upgrade communications between the administrative levels and the schools;
- Continue emphasis on building staff capacity.
- Continue to use and develop the master plan as a comprehensive blueprint for system functioning.
- Continue efforts to involve parents and support the work of the Parent and Community Advisory Committee.

This evaluation reviewed 112 audits, reports, studies, and other documents relating to the improvement in seven functions of system management over school years 2001-2002 through 2006-2007.

**Financial Management, Including Budgeting, Grant Management and Reporting**

The Westat report recommended improvement in the level of coordination and alignment of the budget process. The BCPSS faced two major challenges to meet the Westat recommendation. The first challenge was in implementing the new Oracle financial application software. General financial and grant management audits, reports, and studies over the years documented the challenge. Some of the weaknesses identified in the various reports, stemmed from the system’s failure to conduct a post-implementation evaluation soon after the installation was complete. The BCPSS
appears to have addressed these challenges and the Oracle financial application seems to be working with adequate controls in place to insure proper budgeting, general financial management, and grant management. The system should continue its monitoring of the financial application and continue the training received from Oracle. This will insure staff will be able to respond quickly to any subsequent financial application challenges, should any arise.

The second major challenge was overcoming a reported $58 M deficit reported at the end of FY 2004, according to the report of the Maryland State Department of Education panel on BCPSS finances. The immediate consequence of the disclosure of the deficit was increased reporting requirements to the local school board, city, and state. This increased level of scrutiny appeared to help focus the system strategically to deal with the problem. The system responded aggressively and eliminated the deficit by the end of FY 2006 according to the June 2006 Biannual Financial Status Report of State Superintendent and subsequent reports. An outcome of the increased number of reporting requirement was that the system improved its financial reporting. In addition, the BCPSS improved its management processes and linked the budget to the Master Plan. As the system continues to monitor and make improvements to the new reporting and management processes, it increases the likelihood that major financial problems will be detected in a timely fashion. The changes put in place have improved the performance and efficiency of the financial management function.

Management Information Systems and Accountability

The Westat report noted that the Information Technology department and IT functions were improving, but recommended that it work in greater partnership with school staff to integrate IT plans district-wide. The IT department and IT functions have made major strides to provide support for software and hardware application throughout the BCPSS. The IT function worked with the finance department to conduct the post-implementation review of the Oracle financial application according to the 2006 Financial Audit Report’s Response to Findings. This function’s leadership seems to be very focused on meeting the system’s technology needs. The IT function’s ability to quickly respond to the system’s needs has aided in improvements in other functions. According to the Office of Legislative Audits - Financial Management Practices Performance Audit Report in January 2006, which included a review of the Information Technology function, the BCPSS IT function provides support for a number of financial and academic applications. In addition, the BCPSS’ IT department was cited for having a number of industry-accepted IT application development best practices in place. Responding to the Master Plan and other reports and studies, this function has made adjustments to meet the needs of the systems for improved technology support. For these reasons and others more fully explained in this review, Management Information and Accountability function has made improvements in performance and efficiency.
Facilities and Maintenance

Westat (2001) identified major needs throughout the BCPSS in the Facilities and Maintenance function. Its major recommendation was to develop a plan that addressed building closures, building construction, and facility maintenance. Since then, major changes have occurred in the leadership of the Facilities and Maintenance functions and the responsiveness of this leadership. This function also had increased oversight at the local and state level that contributed to management and reporting improvements. The leadership over the Facilities and Maintenance function increased the number of capital projects completed and increased school closures as required by the FY 2007 Capital Improvement Program. In addition, improvements in responsiveness to repair and maintenance requests have, at least anecdotally, resulted in improvements in the level of customer satisfaction. This was documented in the correspondence sent to the superintendent on July 26, 2007 from the State of Maryland, Public School Construction Program – Interagency Committee on School Construction. Plans have been put in place and adhered to with goals for facility closures, construction, renovation, and maintenance. However, this function will benefit greatly with stability and leadership to continue to make progress over time. More work needs to be done to insure the improvements are sustainable. While there are still areas for improvements that need to be addressed, such as feedback from customers of progress in this function, there have been significant improvements made in the performance and efficiency in the Facilities and Maintenance function.

Procurement

Westat (2001) noted that procurement for the BCPSS had shifted from the City of Baltimore to the BCPSS, and found widespread appreciation of the new process. Findings and recommendations from the subsequent annual financial audits and other reports and studies indicated that weak procurement internal controls caused items to be expended in excess of the budget and contributed to deficits in school year 2002-2003 and school year 2003-2004. The BCPSS has responded to these findings and recommendations and has strengthened controls over the procurement process. This is documented by review of follow-up to each audit finding in the audit report of the subsequent year. The BCPSS improved the budgeting and encumbrance controls in the Oracle Financial application and moved from a paper process to an electronic process. It piloted a web-based e-commerce procurement application in school year 2006-2007 that integrates with the system’s financial application. In an interview with the Director of Materials, full implementation occurred shortly after the time period covered in this evaluation. Processes have also been put in place to review and establish all contracts in the districts. This has made the contract negotiation process more efficient and has increased the speed of the purchasing process.

Review of the progress made in this function indicates that the district has a strong commitment to improve the controls over the procurement process and a commitment to improve the ease of use of the process for the end user. For these reason, we believe
the BCPSS has made improvements in performance and efficiency in the Procurement function.

*Performance (Human Resource) Management*

The Performance (Human Resources) Management function demonstrated improvement in efficiency and performance as a function of the expanded use of technology, the ability to reorganize its personnel structure to align with the system’s priorities, and the use of innovative recruitment and retention strategies. The 2003 implementation of the Human Resources Management System (HRMS) allowed for enhanced operational efficiency by integrating the major human resource functions such as payroll, position control, and budget into one coordinated system. HRMS facilitated the generation of audits and reports that increased access to data and increased propriety of transactions. Another measure that contributed to greater efficiency was the collaboration with MSDE to pilot a scanning process to manage teacher certification credentials for compliance with the requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Scanning was also used to convert general personnel records from the past ten years from paper to electronic form, eliminating those paper records. The teacher application and selection efforts were made more efficient with the use of *Teacher Track* software, which streamlines the application process. Lastly, the Human Resources Department experienced two major reorganizations to meet the system’s most pressing priorities. The first, which related to teacher certification credentials, consisted of restructuring and expanding the Certification Office. The second involved the Department of Personnel transitioning to a dedicated staffing model to improve relationships between human resource staff and school principals with the goal of enhancing the teacher recruitment process.

In terms of performance in building staffing capacity, the Performance (Human Resources) Management function realized improvement in the areas of organization and staffing, and in teacher recruitment and retention. Collaboration with the Baltimore Model Schools Initiative to train principals in best practices for selecting effective teacher candidates began at the start of the 2005-2006 school year. Every special education teacher position filled at least by the start of the school year 2006-2007. In terms of recruitment, the BCPSS has managed to offer a more competitive package of incentives for new teachers, with benefits ranging from eligibility for an early signing bonus to opportunities for transitional co-teaching. Several initiatives are in place to attract and develop teachers, including international recruitment efforts targeting the Philippines, Alternative Certification Routes, and the Parato-Teacher model. Retention practices improved to assist teachers in attaining highly qualified eligibility. Specifically, the reimbursement policy was revised to lower teachers’ out-of-pocket expenses associated with Praxis fees and coursework needed for certification. Significantly, the expanded recruitment and retention practices contributed to an 18.7 percentage point increase in the number of classes taught by highly qualified teachers between school years 2003-2004 and 2006-2007.
Communication and Engagement

The Communication Management System was designed and strategies implemented that have strong potential to improve communication and public relation functions, and to increase parental and community engagement. Efforts continue to focus on establishing a brand for the BCPSS, telling the story of the district and fostering meaningful involvement and collaboration with families, the community, and business partners. The successful re-launch of Educational Channel 77 allows the system to reach a broad audience via cable television, with a full complement of BCPSS inspired programming that involves students, staff, and administrators. Two new publications, the *Baltimore City Educator* and the *Schools Monthly* e-news letter have been published and disseminated with the goals of sharing information and publicizing the BCPSS’ successes and accolades. The use of the Teacher Support System (TSS), an electronic portal facilitating teacher and student access to instructional resources, increased over the period. For the first time, a course catalog of the system’s classes was published.

The BCPSS developed several initiatives in the area of Family and Community Engagement to help overcome historical barriers to family and community involvement, and assist schools in meeting state and federal parental involvement mandates. The Board approved the Family Community Engagement policy in May 2004 that outlined the requirement to have a family and community engagement team at each school. Workshops and informational sessions were offered to provide parents with the opportunity to learn about ways to get involved in their children’s education and to talk with school and Board administrators. In order to decrease the potential of language serving as a barrier to involvement, translators were provided at all meetings sponsored by the Office of Parent and Community Involvement, and a 12-week Family Literacy class was offered for speakers of other languages. The BCPSS began offering breakfast every school day to students through the *Breakfast Club* in order to assist parents in ensuring that students receive a healthy breakfast. One measure of success in parental and community engagement is the 25 percent increase in school representation at the 2007 Parent and Community Leadership Development Resource session compared with the previous year.

In terms of partnerships, the BCPSS has developed meaningful collaborations with higher education institutions, community groups, businesses, and non-profits. The Human Resources Department, the Teacher/Principal Quality Office, Towson University, and the Cherry Hill community joined together to form the Cherry Hill Learning Zone which serves as a community resource for teachers working toward certification, and as a place where parents and students receive information and services. The partnerships with the Stupski Foundation helped in conducting organizational audits, assisting in developing a communication plan, and enhancing research and evaluation capability. Partnerships allow BCPSS to increase other capacities by leveraging additional resources and opportunities.
**System-wide Organization and Management**

The demand for, and use of, data to make informed decisions regarding system organization and management increased significantly during the period under review. The infrastructure to collect, assess, and disseminate data on key indicators of student performance and system management improved despite the challenges to stability from a high turnover rate in top leadership positions and a series of restructuring events that created, eliminated, and revamped positions. Four changes in the Chief Executive Office (CEO) position occurred between 2002 and 2007, along with key positions reporting directly to the CEO. These changes often resulted in a climate of instability, making it difficult to maintain morale and commitment to initiatives. During the period, the system endured vacillating cycles of centralization and decentralization, which were exemplified by phases of expansion and phases of layoffs at the central office.

The Division of Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Accountability (DREAA) was developed as a result of a mandate of the city-state partnership legislation. It exists to provide accurate, timely, and relevant data to inform decision making and to support evaluation of the master plan Implementation. DREAA contributed to system improvements in several ways: administering benchmarks to monitor student progress and to inform instructional planning, providing internally generated enrollment projections, publishing detailed and aggregated student data, and administering school climate surveys. Additionally, DREAA worked with school staff to produced custom datasets and train them on accessing and using data.

SchoolStat serves as one of the BCPSS data-driven accountability systems. It began in 2001 and expanded each year thereafter. SchoolStat’s central aim is to raise the level of accountability by assessing performance against a standard set of management principles and by providing a structured and collaborative process by which staff work together to assess and address challenges. SchoolStat achieved a number of measurable accomplishments that indicate enhanced management efficiency and performance for the system. For example, in school year 2005-2006, school leadership teams identified and executed best practice strategies that resulted in improved school attendance across grades. Thus, despite changes in the top position, the system achieved improvements in infrastructure to collect, assess, and disseminate data on key indicators of student performance and system management, and increased commitment to use data to inform decision-making.
Public Comments

Public hearings on the draft report generated public comment on the scope of the evaluation, not the findings of the evaluation as presented. The comments included three observations: 1) the evaluation did not collect new information from parents, students, teachers and other stakeholders, 2) the evaluation did not address whether the Master Plan included all the objectives it should and whether it drove the budget or the budget drove it, and 3) and the evaluation did not address whether the improvements were as great as they should have been. The public comments did not view the evaluation as providing guidance for future improvements.

Discussion Summary

This evaluation had a limited scope, both in the questions it was designed to answer and in the information it used to address the questions. It addressed improvements in student achievement primarily through proficiency improvements on the Maryland School Assessments in grades three through eight over four years, not whether students were developing and achieving in other areas. It evaluated how the Master Plan for school year 2006-2007 addressed the areas included in the legislation that re-authorized the City-State Partnership, not whether the Master Plan included what it should nor met current guidelines. It address whether improvements had been made in seven administrative systems, not whether this systems were currently functioning at the level they should be. Within the narrow scope of the evaluation, it found the following:

- **Student achievement** improved greatly in elementary grades, with some grades on track to reach the No Child Left Behind goals if the recent pace of improvements can be maintained for another seven years. Achievement improved a small amount in the middle and high school grades, but not enough to catch up with the rest of Maryland, nor to reach the No Child Left Behind goals without substantially greater amounts of improvement in the future.

- **The 2006-2007 Master Plan** addressed most of the areas included in HB 853, and most of the strategies associated with the legislative focus areas had been fully or partially implemented by the end of the school year. Changes in federal and state legislation and policy since the passage of HB 853 may account for some focus areas not being addressed in the state-approved Master Plan.

- **System Management** has improved since 2001 in efficiency and performance in all seven areas we reviewed. These improvement appear to provide a solid foundation for continuing improvement.
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Evaluation of Improvements in the Baltimore Public School System  
School Years 2001-2002 to 2006-2007  

Background

The Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) is the fourth largest school district in Maryland. Until 1997, the City of Baltimore operated the school system as one of the departments of the city government. In 1997, the city and the state entered into a partnership that created an independent Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners to operate the schools, similar to other counties in Maryland; with commissioners appointed jointly by the mayor of Baltimore and the governor of Maryland. Senate Bill (SB) 795 established The City-State Partnership in 1997, and House Bill (HB) 853 reauthorized it in 2002. These bills mandated an evaluation every five years of 1) student achievement, 2) the effectiveness of governance structures, 3) the efficiency of management functions, and 4) the adequacy of funding. HB 853 also mandated that the BCPSS develop a master plan that addressed nineteen specific focus areas, including the recommendations of the first evaluation by Westat (2001) in December 2001. (See Appendix B for the recommendations.) Subsequent federal regulations and guidance under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 had significant effect on educational planning, and Senate Bill 856 Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002 required Maryland local school boards to develop, implement and monitor master plans. The Annotated Code of Maryland Education Article § 5-401 Comprehensive Master Plans further defined the contents of these master plans.

The BCPSS Board of School Commissioners and the Maryland State Board of Education solicited a second evaluation in 2007 for the school years 2002 through 2007 (RFP-08010). With the effectiveness of governance structures addressed by the Westat (2001) report and the analysis of the adequacy and equity of state funding addressed by the Thorton Commission and the ongoing state-wide master plan evaluation being conducted by MGT of America, Inc. (2006 and 2007), the current evaluation was commissioned to be an update to the 2001 evaluation in the other two areas, and to summarize how the master plan meets the HB 853 legislative requirements.

The Request for Proposal stated that the evaluation should address improvements in three areas:

1. Student achievement: Using the categories of performance data prescribed by the Maryland School Assessment Program under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Contractor shall review the performance of the BCPSS against State standards and according to NCLB desegregation by race/ethnic groups and special student populations, e.g., free and/or reduced meals services (FARMS), special education, and English-language learning. MSA and HAS [sic] data are available through the MSDE website,
www.mdreportcard.org. Stanford data are available from DREAA. To the extent possible discuss the changes in student achievement since 2001.

2. The Key Master Plan initiatives: *House Bill 853 set forth nineteen issues, as listed in Section 4-309 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, to be addressed in the BCPSS Master Plan. Since the issuance of the Westat Report, MSDE has approved two BCPSS Master Plans. The contractor should determine whether, and to what extent, the approved master plans and intervening mandated corrective action identify initiatives to... [the 19 issues].*

3. Improvement of system management. *The Contractor shall assess the improvement in efficiency and performance of the management functions in BCPSS since the last evaluation of the City-State Partnership. In judging improvement, the Contractor shall focus on each management system identified for review, addressing the following:
   a. BCPSS’ performance relevant to each system at the time of the Westat Report.
   b. BCPSS’ current performance relevant to each system.
   c. To the extent practicable, the Contractor should base its evaluation of the performance of each management system by utilizing existing audits, reports and statutory reports.*

The Maryland School Assessment (MSA) and the High School Assessment (HSA) are the primary measures of school achievement in Maryland. They are taken during the spring of the school year. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) began using the MSA in reading and mathematics for grades three through eight in school year 2003-2004. Therefore, so student achievement in these grades can be compared for four years: 2004 to 2007. The MSDE began using the HSA for English II during school year 2004-2005 for high school students. HSA English achievement can be compared for 2005, 2006 and 2007. Only in 2007 did a large proportion of the students have a strong motivation to pass the test as it became a requirement for graduation. The MSDE introduced the HSA in Algebra/Data Analysis during FY2005-2006, but students are not yet required to pass it for graduation and it will not be used in this analysis. The *No Child Left Behind* legislation and the MSDE do not require assessment of students in grades one and two, but the BCPSS assesses students in these grades using the Stanford Achievement Test and these results are available for years 2004-2007.

The MSDE approved the BCPSS five-year Master Plan submitted for school years 2003-2004 through 2007-2008. The MSDE approved the update for school year 2004-2005, but did not approve the update for school year 2005-2006, and instructed the BCPSS to focus its efforts on a new two-year master plan that would complete the original cycle. The BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008 of October 16, 2006 explained in detail the two-year strategic plan to increase student achievement through support of quality instruction. The MSDE approved the Master Plan on December 12, 2006 as meeting state requirements. The Master Plan incorporated the requirements of the federal *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), also known as *No Child Left
Behind (NCLB), the City-State Partnership, the Corrective Action Plans (CAP), the Enhanced Monitoring for Continuous Improvement and Results (EMCIR), and the Maryland Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act (BTE). The Master Plan contained eight goals: the NCLB required the first five goals, the City-State Partnership required the sixth goal and supported the others, and the cross-cutting and special population goals met requirements of BTE. The second section of this report analyzes only how the approved Master Plan for school year 2006-2007 addresses the requirements of HB 853. This section of the evaluation is limited by the Request for Proposal and does not take into account subsequent changes in laws or regulations, or review other documents that may address the requirements of HB 853.

Various evaluations, audits, and reports have looked at different parts of the BCPSS since the Westat report in 2001. The most recent of these is the current MGT (2006 and 2007) evaluation that provides detailed descriptions of how all the local school districts in Maryland are using state education aid, compares districts that show improvement with those that do not, assesses implementation across districts of their master plans, to analyze local funding, and lists programs with positive results. This evaluation reviews and summarizes existing documents to assess improvements in management in seven BCPSS management systems. It collected new information only when these documents did not adequately address the changes recommended by Westat or did not include information on the current status.

Although this report on improvements in the BCPSS addresses improvement over six school years, 2001-2002 to 2006-2007, it places greater emphasis on the most recent years. Data are more consistent for recent years and an evaluation can be more useful when focused on the current system.

The Appendix contains supportive material, including a Glossary of Acronyms and Terms used in this report. (See Appendix A). It is a separate volume due to its size.
Student Achievement

The NCLB requires 100% of all students within a school to reach the same high standards in reading and mathematics by the year 2014. Adequate yearly progress (AYP) is judged against a trajectory that would bring all students to proficiency by 2014. The BCPSS as a whole has not made AYP from school years 2002-2003 to 2006-2007. Meeting or not meeting AYP involves several criteria: student reading proficiency, the percent of students assessed in reading, student mathematics proficiency, the percent of students assessed in mathematics, and student attendance or graduation rate. These are measured for all students in three grade-level groups, and for eight subgroups. Each of these criteria has Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) for schools to meet. In school year 2006-2007, the BCPSS elementary grades (3-5) meet 34 of the 36 assessment indicators, but failed to meet the AMO in reading and the AMO in mathematics for students in special education. The middle grades (6-8) meet 22 of 35 assessment indicators. The high school grades (9-12) met 24 of 35 assessment indicators.

This section documents and analyzes the improvement in student achievement since the assessments were standardized. All assessments are taken in the spring of the school year and reference by the year in which they were taken:

- Data from the Stanford Achievement Tests (Stanford) for grades 1-2 are analyzed for 2004 to 2007.
- Data from the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) for grades 3-8 are analyzed for 2004 to 2007.
- Data from the High School Assessment (HSA) in English II for students generally in grade 10 are analyzed for 2005 to 2007.

Measurement

Stanford Achievement Test

Students in grades one and two take the nationally normed Stanford 10 Achievement Test. The assessment produces a total reading scale score and three reading subscales (word study skills, reading vocabulary, and reading comprehension). It also produces a total mathematics scale score and two mathematics subscale scores (mathematics problem solving and mathematics procedures). The BCPSS records both the national percentile and the closely related normal curve equivalent (NCE) scores for each of the scales and subscales. (See Figure 1 for the relationship.) This evaluation uses the NCE total reading and total mathematics scale scores, as the NCE scores are preferable for mathematical calculations. The Stanford results were provided by the BCPSS (2007m) for the years 2004 to 2007.
Maryland School Assessment

The MSAs in reading/language arts and mathematics are given to students in grades three through eight in the spring of each year. Each student is rated at the basic level, proficient level, or advanced level. Since the NCLB goal is for all students to achieve proficiency, this evaluation combines students at the proficient and advanced levels. The terms “proficient” or “proficiency” are used in this report always mean “proficient or advanced” as the measure of the percent of students achieving at least the proficient level. The evaluation analyzes MSA data only for school year 2003-2004 through school year 2006-2007, when they were administered at every grade level using the same assessment tool (Maryland Report Card, 2008).

High School Assessment

Students take the Maryland HSA at the completion of each of four subject matter classes: Algebra I/Data Analysis, English II, Biology, and Government. Students must eventually pass all four exams prior to graduation. The English II and Algebra/Data Analysis HSAs are the Maryland School Assessment for high schools required by NCLB, but are identified in this report as HSAs and analyzed separately since they are initially taken at the end of a course rather than at a specific grade level, and may be taken more than once until at least proficiency is achieved. This evaluation, however, includes only the English II proficiency rate. The English II HSA is taken primarily in the tenth grade. Tenth grade students in school year 2006-2007 must pass this HSA to graduate in 2009. Students generally take Algebra in the eighth or ninth grade. Since they are not yet required to pass the Algebra/Data Analysis HSA for graduation, it is assumed that the current pass rate does not reflect the true mathematics proficiency of the students. Even use of the English II HSA has limitations, as the MGT (2007, p. 80) report notes:

The English II HSA has been administered annually since 2005, but the 2007 administration marked the key opportunity for first-time test takers in the class of 2009 to pass this exam as one of their graduation requirements. Because Maryland’s centralized database does not yet have a unique identifier for each student and is unable to distinguish first-time test takers from those retaking the HSA, it is not yet possible to compare passing rates from year to year of only
those students who took the test for the first time. Thus, the data used for these HSA comparisons are not ideal, but are the best available at this time.

As with the MSA, students achieving the proficient or advanced level on the HSA will be combined. Student achievement on the English II is available for school year 2004-2005, school year 2005-2006 and school year 2006-2007 (Maryland Report Card, 2008).

**Cumulative Improvement**

Most analysis of change over time compares students in the same grade in different years, which means showing how different students perform on these standardized tests at the same stage of their education. Education, however, takes place over students’ lives, and learning at one grade level is built upon learning at earlier grade levels. Therefore, this evaluation also includes a quasi-cohort analysis. A true cohort analysis would follow the same group of students year by year to determine how they advance through their education. One-fifth (21%) of elementary and middle school students enrolled in the BCPSS during school year 2006-2007 without being enrolled the previous year, and 17%-19% left the BCPSS during the year (Maryland Report Card, 2008). In addition, some students who continue from one year to the next do not advance as expected from one grade to the next, but it is assumed that this percent is smaller than the percent who leave the school system. A quasi-cohort analysis can be instructive if a majority of students assessed in a grade at one year are assessed at the next grade the following year. For this analysis, cohorts are identified by the school year the majority of students would have started first grade if they had started first grade in the BCPSS and assumes they progress through grade levels each year as expected.

Analysis of quasi-cohorts for cumulative improvement also assumes that the measurements from one year to the next are equivalently calibrated. The Stanford assessment for the first and second grade can be considered equivalently calibrated to the national norm. The MSAs at different grade levels are not equivalently calibrated, but they are assumed to measure what students should know at each grade level. Conceptually, proficiency at one grade level should lead to proficiency at the next grade level, and so throughout the educational experience. Therefore, it is assumed for this analysis that the percent proficient/advanced are approximately equivalent measures from one grade to the next.

**Improvement in Grades 1-2**

Students in grades one and two are not included when measuring AYP, and the state has not developed an MSA for this level or established proficiency standards for these grade levels. However, the BCPSS uses the Stanford nationally-normed test at these grades to help teachers identify students’ strengths and weakness. Although the
Stanford assessment is not equivalent to an MSA, it has been used as an indicator of how students might later do on the MSA, and improvements in student achievement on the Stanford could foreshadow improvements in subsequent performance on the MSA.

**System Average**

In 2004, the BCPSS first grade students had a normal curve equivalent of 43.8 on Stanford reading assessment. (See Figure 2.) A normal curve equivalent of 50.0 represents the average for all students taking the assessment, and two-thirds of students nationally score between 40.0 and 60.0 on the normal curve. Thus, first grade students in 2004 had an overall average below the national average, and only about one-fourth rather than the expected half tested above the national average. Scores improved over the next three years to an average of 48.3 on the normal curve equivalent in 2007, much closer to the nationwide average of 50.0. The greatest increase occurred between 2005 and 2006, followed by a very small increase between 2006 and 2007. Reading scores for the BCPSS second grade students increased between 2004 and 2006, but declined slightly in 2007. BCPSS second grade students generally compared less well in reading to their peers nationally than did BCPSS first grade students.

![Figure 2. First and Second Grade Reading Scores by Year](image-url)
The improvement in mathematics scores of BCPSS first and second grade students on the Stanford mathematics assessment resembled their reading scores. (See Figure 3.) However, they started out closer to the national average, and first grade students performed slightly above the national average in both 2006 and 2007. Most of the increases came between 2004 and 2006, with only a small increase between 2006 and 2007 for first-graders, and a small decrease for second grade students.

**School Variation**

The improvement in first and second grade reading occurred throughout the system, in both small and large schools, and in both schools that met their AMOs in 2004 (grades three and above) and schools that did not meet their AMOs in 2004. As a result, 41% of the elementary schools in 2007 had average first grade scores at or above the national average, compared to 25% in 2004. At the second grade level, 26% of the elementary schools in 2007 had average scores at or above the national average, compared to 18% in 2004.

The improvement in mathematics at the first grade level occurred throughout the BCPSS. The improvements in mathematics at the second grade level differed by schools. Small elementary schools (fewer than 100 students) had statistically greater increases between 2004 and 2007 in mathematics proficiency than did large elementary schools. However, increase in mathematics proficiency in the second grade was not related to whether schools had met their AMOs in mathematics in 2004 for grades three and above. In 2004, 41% of the schools had average first grade scores above the national average, and 24% of the schools had average second grade scores above the national average. By 2007, 55% of the schools had first grade mathematics scores above the national average and 38% had second grade mathematics scores above the national average.
Cumulative Improvement

Figures 2 and 3, while generally showing improvement over the years, give the impression that students perform less well in the second grade than they do in the first grade. Analysis of quasi-cohorts of students suggest that there have been cumulative improvements, although not consistently. First grade students in 2003-2004 had an average Stanford reading score of 43.8. In the following year when they were in second grade, they had an average of score of 45.1, showing improvement toward the national norm (See Achievement Table 1.) The first grade students in school year 2004-2005 started at a higher level than the previous year’s first-graders, and also improved relative to the national norm when they were in the second grade. This increase was not observed for students entering first grade in school year 2005-2006. They started at with a higher score than the preceding quasi-cohorts, but they did not build on this first grade improvement during the second grade, and actually did slightly less well in the second grade reading than the previous quasi-cohort. Mathematics did not show the improvement shown in reading. The 2003-2004 first grade quasi-cohort did not improve relative to the national norm when they were in the second grade. The 2004-2005 first grade quasi-cohort improved slightly in the second grade, but the 2005-2006 first grade quasi-cohort that started above the national average in first grade lost that advantage by second grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Entered First Grade</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>Grade 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Improvement in Grades 3-8

Students in grades three through eight take the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) in reading/language arts and mathematics. Student performance is assessed as basic, proficient, or advanced. Proficient and advanced are combined together for purposes of measuring the AMO and are grouped together in this analysis as well.
System Average

Just over half (54.6%) of third grade students achieved proficiency in reading in 2004. (See Figure 4.) Achievement improved steadily until over two-thirds (68.8%) had achieved proficiency in 2007. Achievement also improved each year for students in grades four and five. Little change occurred in grade six until 2007. Seventh and eighth grade students showed no consistent improvement between 2004 and 2007. In each of the four years, fourth graders were the most likely to achieve the expected level of proficiency (73% in 2007), and seventh and eighth graders were the least likely to achieve proficiency in reading (43%-44% in 2007).

Figure 4. Percent Proficient/Advanced on the Reading MSA, by Grade and Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>61.0%</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student achievement in mathematics improved each year at every grade level. (See Figure 5.) The greatest improvement came in grade four, where 48% of the students tested at or above the proficient level in 2004, and 73% tested at or above the proficient level in 2007. The least improvement occurred among eighth grade students, from 19% in 2004 to 24% in 2007. In 2004, the percent of students who tested as proficient declined after grade three. In 2007, the decline did not begin until after grade four.

![Figure 5. Percent Proficient/Advanced on the Math MSA by Grade and Year](chart.png)
School Variation

Reading improved overall for the BCPSS between 2004 and 2007, and improved in all the individual schools. In 2004, 63% of the 113 schools with third grades had half or more of their third grade students reading at a proficient level. In 2007, 88% of the 117 schools had half or more of their third graders reading at a proficient level. (See Figure 6.) Using a different cutoff (not shown), 7% of the schools in 2007 had three-fourths or more of their third grade students reading at the proficient level. By 2007, 36% of the schools had three-fourths or more of their third graders reading at the proficient level. School gains were more modest at the middle school levels, with the percent of schools with half or more of their eighth graders reading at a proficient level only increased from 37% in 2004 to 43% in 2007. Only one (2%) of the 52 schools with eighth grade in 2004 had three-fourths or more of their students reading at a proficient level, and this increased to three (5%) in 2007.

Figure 6. Percent of Schools with Half or More Proficient/Advanced on the Reading MSA, by Grade and Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>(113)</td>
<td>(117)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>(115)</td>
<td>(119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>(115)</td>
<td>(117)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>(61)</td>
<td>(74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>(50)</td>
<td>(58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(59)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(50+% Reading Proficiency)
Schools improved mathematics performance more than reading performance, particularly in grades four and five. In 2004, 43% of the schools had half or more of their fourth grade students achieving mathematics proficiency on the MSA. (See Figure 7.) By 2007, 91% of the schools had achieved this level of mathematics proficiency. The percent of schools in which three-fourths or more of fourth grade students achieved mathematics proficiency increased from 9% to 51% between 2004 and 2007. As with reading, school improvements in seventh and eighth grade mathematics were modest.
Cumulative Improvement

Education from one year to the next builds upon itself, and the pattern of improving proficiency looks slightly different when quasi-cohorts of students are viewed moving through their education. The earlier analysis of proficiency by grade during each year indicated almost a 16 percentage point drop in the percent proficient/advanced on the reading MSA between grade five and grade eight (60.3% to 43.9%). However, the decline is less when looking at quasi-cohorts. The reading proficiency of students who were most likely to have entered first grade during school year 1999-2000 was only 6 percentage points lower in 2007 when they were in the eighth grade than in 2004 when they most of them were in the fifth grade (43.9% and 49.9% respectively). (See Figure 8.) The 2000-2001 first grade quasi-cohort performed better in fifth grade than did the 1999-2000 first grade quasi-cohort, but then there was no difference in the sixth and seventh grades. The 2001-2002 first grade quasi-cohort did not show the large drop between fifth and sixth grade that the earlier cohort did. Likewise, the 2002-2003 first grade quasi-cohort did not show as great a drop in proficiency between fourth and fifth grade as did the previous cohort.

Figure 8. Percent Proficient/Advanced on Reading MSA by Grade Level and Quasi-Cohort

[Graph showing percent proficient/advanced on reading MSA by grade level and quasi-cohort, with data for years 1998-1999 to 2002-2003 and SY2004 shown with different lines and markers.]
Analysis of mathematics proficiency as students progress through shows the general overall pattern observed for reading proficiency, although it is more dramatic. (See Figure 9.) About 20% of the 1998-1999 first grade quasi-cohorts tested proficient or advanced in mathematics, regardless of whether they were in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade. Students who were likely to have started first grade in 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 showed substantial drops in proficiency between fifth and sixth grade, and minor changes thereafter. Those who were likely to have started first grade in 2001-2002 showed no difference in the percent proficient/advanced when most were in third grade in 2004 and when most were in fifth grade in 2006 (54% proficient in both years). They also showed less decline between fifth and sixth grade than the previous two quasi-cohorts had shown. The quasi-cohort who mostly started first grade in 2002-2003 showed an increase in proficiency every year as they moved from third to fifth grade.

![Figure 9. Percent Proficient/Advanced in Mathematics by Grade Level and Quasi-Cohort](image-url)
Improvement in Grades 9-12

System Average

In 2007 48.1% of the students taking the English II HSA achieved the proficient or advanced level. This achievement in the first year the assessment counted toward graduation exceeded the 37.3% who achieved these levels in 2006 and the 34.6% who achieved these levels in 2005. It is still below the 100% of the students who are expected to achieve proficiency in order to graduate from high school. It is not possible with aggregate numbers to distinguish between the achievements of students taking the English II HSA for the first time from those taking it after initially failing to show proficiency. The 2006 HSA pass rates includes both students taking the test for the first time and students repeating the exam due to failing in 2005. One reason that the increase in proficiency between 2005 and 2006 was so small could be due to the addition of students who had at least once before demonstrated a lack of proficiency. Students taking the assessment in 2007 probably included both first time test takers and repeaters, similar to those taking it in 2006. Improvement in the English HSA pass rate by 10.8 percentage points between 2006 and 2007 suggests students are making progress, although this may have been due to the increased motivation of students wanting to graduate in 2009.

School Variation

About one-tenth of the high schools had over 75% of their students pass the English II HSA in each of the three years. (See Figure 10.) The percent of high schools with 50%-74% of their students passing the English MSA changed slightly between 2005 and 2006, but more than doubled in 2007. Likewise, about one-fourth of the schools had 25%-50% of their students achieving proficiency in 2005 and 2006, but this increased to almost half in 2007. As a result, high schools with fewer than 25% of
their students passing the HSA dropped from more than one-half in 2005 and 2006, to less than one-fourth in 2007.

**Cumulative Improvement**

The standardized high school assessments began more recently than the standardized MSA. Cohort analysis is not appropriate for the high school grades, since students take the High School Assessments at the end of specific courses and not in a specific grade, and students must take the assessments until they pass. Thus, assessment takers in a single year can come from different cohorts and data mingle first-time takers with students who have failed to pass the assessment in previous years.

**Improvement in Student Subgroups**

The specific student groups included in this evaluation are those required by the federal NCLB legislation, and include five racial/ethnic groups (American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, African American, White non-Hispanic, and Hispanic), and three service groups (free and reduced price meals students (FARMS), special education students, and students with limited English proficiency.
Schools vary in the number of students they have in the subgroups, and many have too few students in some subgroups to analyze. Therefore, comparisons of specific student groups to all students are made for the system as a whole. Further, analysis of improvement between 2004 and 2007 for specific student groups to all students combines all grade levels and is based upon summations across the schools with sufficient students in the subgroup for separate tabulations (Maryland Report Card, 2007.) These tabulations show an average 8.5 percentage point increase in reading proficiency between 2004 and 2007 for all students. (See Figure 11).

The percent of all students proficient or advanced in mathematics increased by 9.6 percentage points from 37.1% in 2004 to 46.7% in 2007. Students in the various subgroups differed both in the percent proficient in 2004, and in the amount they improved their proficiency by 2007. (See Figure 12.)

**Figure 12. Improvement from 2004 to 2007 in Percent Proficient/Advanced on the Mathematics MSA, by Subgroup**

(number of students in 2004 in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian (143)</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (2,291)</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students (24,389)</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American (21,526)</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian (92)</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (321)</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARMS (18,082)</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited English (307)</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Ed (3.966)</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**American Indian Students**

The BCPSS has few students identified as American Indian. The 221 American Indian students in school year 2006-2007 constituted 0.3% of all students. Only four schools had sufficient numbers taking the reading assessment in 2007 to tabulate their results.
separately. Data available suggests American Indian students improved 6.5 percentage points in their reading proficiencies between 2004 and 2007, although the improvement was not quite as great as for all students. In mathematics, however, data suggest American Indians improved 16.7 percentage points, more than all students did between 2004 and 2007. In fourteen grade-subject assessments (reading and mathematics in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and high school), American-Indian students in 2007 had greater proficiency than average in six, less proficiency in six, and the same (+/- 1%) in two assessments.

Asian and Pacific Islander Students

The BCPSS has relatively few students identified as Asian or Pacific Islanders. The 559 Asian and Pacific Islander students in school year 2006-2007 constituted 0.7% of all students. Only twelve schools had sufficient numbers taking the reading assessment in 2007 to tabulate their results separately. Data suggest that they had higher achievement than all students in 2004 in both reading and mathematics, and their performance increased slightly less rapid than all students between 2004 and 2007 in reading (7.1 percentage points) and mathematics (6.9 percentage points). In 2007, the percent of Asian and Pacific Islander students who achieved proficiency on the MSAs and HSAs was greater than the percent of all students in thirteen of the fourteen grade-subject assessments and smaller in one assessment. Three-fourths or more of the Asian and Pacific Islander students achieved proficiency in nine of the twelve elementary grade assessments. Only in the English II HSA did fewer than half of the Asian and Pacific Islander students test at a proficient or advanced level.

African American Students

Nine-tenths of the BCPSS students in both school years were African American. Therefore, there can be little difference in the improvement in academic achievement of African American compared to all students.

White Students

Students classified as white constituted 7.9% of the students enrolled in the BCPSS in school year 2006-2007. They improved slightly more than all students in reading (9.7 percentage points), but slightly less than all students in mathematics (9.2 percentage points). A greater percent of white students than all students achieved proficiency on all fourteen grade-subject assessments in 2007. Three-fourths or more of the students achieved proficiency in three of the fourteen assessments. Fewer than half achieved proficiency in the mathematics assessments at grades seven, eight, and in high school, even though their proficiency rate was higher than students overall.
Hispanic Students

Hispanic students constituted 2.2% of the BCPSS students in school year 2006-2007. The number of Hispanic students increased between 2004 and 2007. Only 12 schools had sufficient numbers taking the reading assessment in 2004 to tabulate their results separately, while 37 schools had sufficient numbers in 2007 for separate tabulations. The number of these separately tabulated students who took assessments increased from 181 in 2004 to 645 in 2007. Available data suggest that the performance of Hispanic students increased much more than that of all students between 2004 and 2007 in both reading (21.1 percentage points) and mathematics (23.7 percentage points). By 2007, the percentages of Hispanic students who achieved proficiency on the MSAs and HSAs were greater than the percentages of all students in seven of the fourteen grade-subject assessments, smaller in four assessments, and the same (+/- 1%) in three assessments.

Free and Reduced Measl Students (FARMS)

Students in low income families are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Over three-fourths (78%) of the students taking the MSA in 2007 were enrolled in FARMS, up slightly from 73% in 2004. The proficiency of FARMS improved between 2004 and 2007 in both reading (8.1 percentage points) and mathematics (9.4 percentage points), but these improvements were slightly less than for all students. In 2007, students enrolled in the FARMS program were less likely than all students to be proficient in each of the grade-subject assessments, averaging 2.5 percentage points lower than the average. The difference was greatest (-3.3%) in seventh grade reading, where 39.7% of students enrolled in FARMS achieved proficiency compared to 43.0% of all students. The difference was smallest in algebra, where 27.6% of students enrolled in FARMS achieved proficiency compared to 28.6% of all students.

Special Education Students

Students in special education comprised 17% of the students taking the MSA each year between 2004 and 2007. Most schools (176 of 190) had sufficient numbers of students in special education who took the MSA to tabulate separately. Special education students taking the MSA improved more than all students between 2004 and 2007 in reading (11.0 percentage points), but less than all students in mathematics (7.8 percentage points). In 2007, students in special education were an average of 25.8 percentage points less likely than all students to achieve proficiency in the fourteen grade-subject assessments. The difference in reading proficiency increased steadily with grade level, from a 21.1 percentage point difference in reading proficiency in the third grade (47.7% and 68.8%) to a 41.4 percentage point difference in proficiency in English II at the high school level (6.7% and 48.1%). The difference in mathematical proficiency varied less from grade to grade: the greatest difference of 28.7 percentage points occurred in the fourth grade (44.6% and 73.3%) and the smallest difference of
19.2 percentage points in mathematics proficiency occurred in the eighth grade (4.8% and 24.0%).

**Limited English Proficiency Students**

Students with limited English proficiency comprised 1-2% of the students taking the MSA each year between 2004 and 2007. Only 35 of the schools in 2007 had sufficient numbers of students with limited English proficiency to separately tabulate their MSA results. Data suggest, however, a large increase between 2004 and 2007 in both reading proficiency (18.8 percentage points) and mathematics proficiency (21.5 percentage points). By 2007, students with limited English were still an average of 20.2 percentage points less likely than all students to achieve proficiency in reading at each of the assessed grade levels. The difference increased steadily with grade level, from a 5.5 percentage point difference in reading proficiency at the third grade level (63.3% and 68.8%) to a 35.9 percentage point difference in proficiency in English II at the high school level (12.2% and 48.1%). Students with limited English who took the mathematics MSA were an average of 7.5 percentage points less likely than all students to achieve proficiency at each of the assessed grade levels. Like reading, the smallest difference of 1.4 percentage points occurred in the third grade (60.6% and 62.0%), and the greatest difference of 16.7 percentage points occurred on the high school algebra HSA (11.9% and 28.6%).

**Improvement in Schools**

Schools varied in the amount of improvement shown by their students between school year 2003-2004 and school year 2006-2007. The progress they made in the first year of the time period did not necessarily determine the progress they made in the last year of the period, nor the amount of improvement they made during the time period. Because change analysis requires the same measurement for both years for the same school, it is restricted to the 113 schools that existed in both the 2003-2004 school year and the 2006-2007 school year with grades 3-5, and the 56 schools that existed in both years with grades 6-8. Schools are classified into four groups based on meeting or not meeting their Annual Measurable Objective (AMO). The first group did not meet their AMOs in both years, the second group did not meet their AMOs in 2004 but did in 2007, the third group met their AMO in 2004 but not in 2007, and the fourth group met their AMOs in both years. The purpose of the analysis is to determine if the schools’ status in 2004 predicted the amount of increase in proficiency experienced over the period.
Reading

Most of the elementary schools (107 of 113) made their annual measurable objectives in reading in 2004. Three-fourths of these schools (78 of 107) also met their AMOs in 2007, and had an average increase in reading proficiency of 14.8 percentage points. (See Figure 13.) Twenty-nine elementary schools slid from meeting their reading AMOs in 2004 to not meeting it in 2007 because the increases in reading proficiency were small (3.6 percentage points on average). Six schools with elementary grades did not meet their AMOs in reading during 2004, and four of these also did not meet their reading AMOs in 2007. Their failure to meet their AMOs in 2007 was not due to a lack of improvement, for in reading proficiency, they increased an average of 14.2 percentage points, almost as much as in the schools that met their AMOs in both years. Since their students initially scored lower than students at other schools, they had to make even greater improvements for the schools to meet their AMOs. Students at two of the six schools improved by an average of 15.3 percentage points, and this was sufficiently large to move them from not meeting their reading AMOs in 2004 to meeting their reading AMOs in 2007. Most of the schools with middle grades met their AMOs in 2004 (49 of 56). However, only one-third of them (18 of 49) also met

Figure 13. Percentage Point Improvement in Reading Proficiency Between 2004 and 2007, by Meeting AMO in Reading in Both Years
their reading AMOs in 2007. Even among this group, student proficiency improved about half as much as it had improved in the elementary grades for the elementary schools that met their AMOs in both years. The other two-thirds of the middle schools, that had met their AMOs in 2004, experienced on average decline of 2.5 percentage points in reading proficiency that kept them from meeting their AMOs in 2007. The seven schools with middle grades that failed to meet their AMOs in 2004 actually did better, with an average 1.7 percentage point improvement in reading proficiency. However, this was not sufficiently large for any of the seven schools to meet their AMOs in 2007.

**Mathematics**

All AMO categories of schools showed improvement in mathematics proficiency between 2004 and 2007. (See Figure 14.) Thirteen elementary schools did not meet their mathematics AMOs in 2004, but five of these had improved mathematics proficiency by an average of 35.9 percentage points, so that they met their mathematics AMOs in 2007. The eight schools that failed to meet their AMOs in both years had an increase in mathematics proficiency of 21.7 percentage points. Even though this was a greater gain than experienced by the eighty schools that met their mathematics AMOs

![Figure 14. Percentage Point Improvement in Mathematics Proficiency Between 2004 and 2007, by Meeting AMO in Both Years](image-url)
in both years (18.1 percentage points), it was not sufficient to meet their AMOs since they started at a lower point to begin with and did not make up the larger gap. The twenty schools that lost their AMO status between 2004 and 2007 had gains in mathematics proficiency (9.2 percentage points), but this was not enough to continue to meet their AMOs. All four categories of schools with middle grades had gains in mathematical proficiency, with a 14.1 to 14.2 percentage point gain sufficient to retain or move a school into meeting its AMO. The average 9.4 percentage point gain experienced by fifteen schools was insufficient to move them out of failing to meet their AMOs. An average gain of only 5.0 percentage points was enough to drop twenty-four schools from meeting their AMOs in 2004 to not meeting their mathematics AMOs in 2007.

**Improvements Relative to Maryland’s Average Scores**

The *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation requires 100% of students to meet proficiency standards by 2014. This gives ten years from the school year 2003-2004 baseline for the BCPSS to make the 100% proficiency goal of No Child Left Behind. The three years covered by the Maryland School Assessment (MSA, school years 2003-2004 to 2006-2007) represents 30% of the time period, and if progress is assumed to be linear, 30% of the gap between the school year 2003-2004 percentages proficient and 100% proficient should have been made by school year 2006-2007. The MGT (2007) report separated students in grades 3-5 from students in grades 6-8, as these two groups in Maryland showed very different levels of improvement. BCPSS students in grades 3-5 had improved their proficiency by 2007 to close the gap by more than 30% in both reading (34.7%) and mathematics (35.1%). (See Achievement Table 2.) The increase in the percentages of students in grades 3-5 achieving proficient or advanced scores was greater in the BCPSS than in Maryland as a whole in both reading and mathematics. This closed more of the gap in proficiency only in reading, however, as the BCPSS students started further behind students in the rest of Maryland. BCPSS students in grades 3-5 are on track to reach the target of 100% by 2014 if annual progress can be maintained at the same level.

| Achievement Table 2. Percentage Point Improvement and Percent of Gap Closed for Baltimore City and Maryland, by School Level and Subject (MGT, 2007) |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| School Level    | Subject        | Increase % Proficient | % of Gap Closed |
|                 |                | BCPSS | Maryland | BCPSS | Maryland |
| Grades 3-5 (2004-07) | Reading       | 12.7  | 9.9      | 34.7  | 28.2      |
|                  | Mathematics    | 18.1  | 13.2     | 35.1  | 41.5      |
| Grades 6-8 (2004-07) | Reading       | 4.3   | 5.8      | 7.5   | 17.3      |
|                  | Mathematics    | 12.4  | 15.4     | 15.3  | 30.0      |
| High School (2005-07) | English II    | 13.5  | 13.6     | 20.6  | 31.9      |
BCPSS middle grade students showed much less improvement between 2004 and 2007 in both reading and mathematics than did younger BCPSS students. BCPSS middle grade students also showed less improvement than all middle grade students in Maryland. In addition, since BCPSS students had such a long way to go to reach 100% proficient, their improvement during the first three years of the ten-year period was only one-fourth to one-half as much as it should have been. The annual increase in BCPSS student performance in the middle school years needs to substantially increase if the 100% proficient target is to be reached by 2014.

BCPSS high school students increased their proficiency on the English II assessment between 2005 and 2007 by 13.5 percentage points, the same amount as did all high school students in Maryland. However, since Baltimore City students were further behind all Maryland students in 2005 at the first assessment, their improvement did not close as much of the gap to the NCLB goal as did student improvement in the rest of Maryland. Only 48.1% of the BCPSS students tested proficient or advanced in English II compared to 70.9% of all Maryland students taking the assessment in 2007. Further, closing the gap by 20.6% in two years, or an average of 10.3% per year, is not quite sufficient to reach 100% in the nine years between 2005 and 2014. The annual improvement must be slightly higher. In another measure of student achievement in high school, the BCPSS graduation rate improved from 54.3% in school year 2003-2004 to 60.1% in school year 2006-2007. This increase of 5.8 percentage points was much greater than the 0.9 percentage point increase for all of Maryland, and the third greatest increase among the twenty-four local school systems in the state. However, most of the increases came between school year 2003-2004 and school year 2004-2005, and the school year 2006-2007 graduation rate of 60.1% remained well below the 85.2% average graduation rate for Maryland students as a whole. The BCPSS also had a 2.1 percentage point decrease in its dropout rate between school year 2003-2004 and school year 2006-2007, the second greatest decrease among the twenty-four local school systems and substantially greater than the 0.3 decrease for Maryland as a whole. However, the BCPSS dropout rate of 8.6% in school year 2006-2007 still remained higher than the Maryland average of 3.5%.

**Summary and Discussion**

Taken together, analysis of achievement data for BCPSS students reveals steady progress, although students still perform below the state average. This is particularly true in the middle grades and high school. While the BCPSS as a whole did not met NCLB AYP goals for all students during the period 2004-2007, it did meet AMO goals for most categories of elementary school students. Middle and high schools face greater challenges meeting AYP.

The BCPSS has improved in student MSA achievement between school years 2003-2004 and 2006-2007. The improvement in grades 3-5 was about that of Maryland students as a whole, and is large enough to reach the NCLB goal if the annual
improvements can be maintained. Improvement began in first grade or before. By 2007, first-grade students scored almost at the national average in reading on the Stanford Achievement Test, and slightly above the national average in mathematics. Second-grade students made gains between 2004 and 2007, although they did not meet the national average. The leveling off of improvements by first- and second-grade students on the Stanford 10 assessment between 2006 and 2007 might signal difficulty in continuing the same pace of improvement, and the relative drop in achievement of BCPSS students between the first and second grade compared with the national norm suggests room for additional school system improvement. About two-thirds of the students in grades 3-5 in 2007 achieved proficiency on both the reading and mathematics MSAs, compared to about half of the students in equivalent grades in 2004. When viewed from a cohort perspective, some of the improvements look even stronger, as more recent cohorts of students appear to have improved more than did earlier cohorts as they progressed from grade three to grade five.

Student MSA achievement tends to drop between fifth and sixth grades, and the BCPSS experienced little improvement in reading and mathematics proficiency among seventh and eighth grade students between 2004 and 2007. The lower student proficiency in grades 6-8 compared with grades 3-5 occurs in the rest of Maryland also, but BCPSS middle school students started further behind their Maryland peers in 2004 and improved less by 2007. Thus improvements must be much more rapid among BCPSS middle school students in the coming years if the 2014 goal of the NCLB is to be reached. Cohort analysis offers some hope that this can occur. The cohort of students who started first grade in 2001-2002 had a less severe drop in proficiency between fifth and sixth grade than did the two earlier cohorts of students. The following cohort of students achieved about the same level of mathematics proficiency in the third grade, but had a ten percentage point higher mathematics proficiency in the fifth grade. Potentially this group of students could continue their increase in mathematics proficiency into the sixth grade, or at least have a much lower decline as they enter the middle school years. Cohort analysis of reading proficiency does not show the same level of improvement.

At the high school level, BCPSS students showed the same level of reading improvement as their peers in the rest of Maryland between the first and the third administration of the English II HSA. However, since they had lower English proficiency in 2005, they closed less of the gap to 100% proficiency by 2014 than did their Maryland peers. It cannot be determined from data available whether the improvement between 2005 and 2007 was due to improvement in students’ English abilities, or to improvements in their motivation (MGT, 2007). In either case, half of the BCPSS students still did not score at the proficient level in English in 2007. It is too early to measure any improvement in mathematics, as the Algebra/Data Analysis HSA has only been administered twice without any graduation requirement for proficiency. The BCPSS improved in the graduation rates between school year 2003-2004 and school year 2006-2007, but still remains 25 percentage points below the
Maryland average. The high school dropout rate also improved during this time period, but still remains 2-1/2 times the Maryland average.

Student MSA achievement improved throughout the BCPSS, but not necessarily at the same rate. Reading and mathematics proficiency for students in grades 3-5 improved about as much in schools that failed to meet their AMOs in school year 2003-2004 as for schools that meet their AMOs at the beginning of the period. Proficiency increased enough in some poorer performing elementary schools so that they met their AMOs in school year 2006-2007. Unfortunately, many elementary schools who met their AMOs at the beginning did not experience enough increases in proficiency to meet their AMOs in school year 2006-2007. A similar pattern occurred among middle grades in mathematics. In reading, however, improvement among middle grade students only occurred in about one-third of the schools that had met their AMOs in school year 2003-2004. Proficiency levels actually declined in two-thirds of the schools that had initially met their AMOs, so that they did not meet their AMOs in school year 2006-2007. No school with middle grades that had not met its AMO in school year 2003-2004 improved sufficiently to meet its AMO in school year 2006-2007.

The NCLB identifies five racial and ethnic groups whose progress needs to be tracked. They are American Indian, Asian and Pacific Islanders, African American, White non-Hispanic, and Hispanic. All groups showed improvement between 2004 and 2007 in both reading and mathematics proficiency. Hispanic students, while a small group (2%) among BCPSS students, showed greater proficiency gain than any other group. Hispanic students performed the poorest of all the groups in 2004, but their proficiency levels in both reading and mathematics exceeded those of all students in 2007. Hispanic high school students more than doubled their proficiency on the English II HSA, improving from 18% proficient in 2005 to 41% in 2007. Asian and Pacific Islander students are an even smaller group (1%) in the BCPSS, and had the smallest improvement between 2004 and 2007. As in the rest of the state, however, they were the most proficient group in 2004 and remained the most proficient in both reading and mathematics in 2007. White students comprised 8% of the BCPSS students, and their reading and math proficiency improved about the same amount as all students. They had higher than average proficiency in 2004 and maintained higher than average proficiency in 2007. About three-fourths of white students achieved proficiency on the English II HSA in 2007. African American students comprise most of students in the BCPSS, so the overall student scores reflect their scores.

The NCLB identifies three special population groups for achieving 100% proficiency by 2014: students receiving free and reduced meals (FARMS), students with limited English proficiency, and students receiving special education. MSA proficiency improved among all these student subgroups between 2004 and 2007. Over three-fourths of the BCPSS students participate in FARMS, and therefore the proficiency levels and improvements of FARMS students closely reflected those of all students. Special education students improved more than all BCPSS students in reading proficiency between 2004 and 2007, but still lagged substantially behind all students.
and are not on a pace to achieve 100% proficiency by 2014. Special education students in the rest of Maryland also showed greater improvement in reading than in mathematics. Only 7% of special education students passed the HSA English II exam in 2007. The improvement of special education students in mathematics was less than all students, which left them even further behind other students. Students with limited English proficiency performed more poorly on the reading and mathematics MSAs in 2004 than all students, but improved more than all students in both subjects. In grades three through five, the proficiency levels of limited English students about doubled, from one-third to two-thirds in both reading and mathematics. By 2007, elementary students with limited English had narrowed the gap in English proficiency, and had surpassed all students’ mathematics proficiency. At the high school level, however, only one in eight students with limited English achieved proficiency on the English II HSA in 2007.

In order to meet the NCLB goal of all students reaching proficient or advanced levels by 2014, school districts have annual goals for AYP. Individual schools are judged on whether or not they make AYP, based on reaching the AMO goals within student subgroups. While the BCPSS made progress every year, the large gap between student scores at the enactment of NCLB and the 2014 goals mean that each subgroup, as well as the system as a whole, must make significant improvement each year in order to make AYP.

Statewide evaluations find that the BCPSS performs below the state average and many Maryland school districts (MGT 2006, 2007). The BCPSS is making progress even though it has twice the statewide percent of students receiving FARMS, and a substantially higher percent in special education--two student groups that generally have lower scores on standardized tests. In the elementary grades, the percentage point improvement in the BCPSS between 2004 and 2007 exceeded the statewide average, including students with limited English and in special education. In reading, elementary students closed more of the gap to the NCLB goal than did the elementary students in Maryland as a whole, who started at a higher level. The percentage point increase in high school graduation also exceeded the statewide average, and increase in high school English proficiency was at the statewide average. For many student groups, and particularly those in the middle grades, the gap was so big that the improvements were not sufficiently large to keep them on track to reach 100% proficient by 2014. However, while the BCPSS continues to face challenges in helping many student groups achieve proficiency, particularly in the middle grades, the size of the improvements in other areas shows that the BCPSS is making measurable progress in addressing the needs of its students.
Key Master Plan Initiatives

House Bill 853 set forth nineteen focus areas, as listed in Section 4-309 of the Education Article of the annotated Code of Maryland, to be addressed in the BCPSS Master Plan. (See Appendix G.) This section reports the extent to which each of these focus areas were addressed in The Baltimore City Public School System Master Plan School Years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 (BCPSS, 2006i; hereafter referred to as “Master Plan”). The Master Plan explains in detail the two-year strategic plan to increase student achievement through support of quality instruction. This Master Plan was approved by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) on December 12, 2006 as meeting its requirements at that time. Therefore, this analysis does not address whether the Master Plan meets subsequent legislative requirements or the current MSDE guidelines, but only how it compares to the 2002 legislation.

This portion of the evaluation was designed to answer three questions:

1. To what extent does the Master Plan include programs, policies, procedures, or initiatives that address each focus area of HB 853?
2. To what extent is each focus area fully (comprehensively) addressed in the Master Plan?
3. To what extent have Master Plan strategies for each focus area been implemented as of school year 2006-2007?

Methods

This analysis first summarized the background, context, and meaning of each of the nineteen focus areas. To accomplish this, the original documents were reviewed: Westat (2001), House Bill 853, BCPSS policies, MSDE policies, and other documents to which the HB 853 focus area referred.

In consideration of the fact that the Master Plan consists of 1,123 (less for school year 2006-2007) strategies designed to support the achievement of eight overarching goals, the second step of the analysis involved aligning each focus area with one or more of the eight Master Plan goals in order to narrow the scope of the search for corresponding strategies in the Master Plan. Next, key components of each focus area were identified in order to ensure that the entire focus area would be addressed by the analysis. Using the language of the key components, a list of key words and phrases was developed to help guide the search through the strategies of the Master Plan. This search process was also supported by the use of DTSearch text retrieval software.

After linking strategies with key components, we then examined the selected strategies in order to document the specific curriculum, programs, procedures, policies, and initiatives related to each key component within each focus area. Where applicable, we also supplemented the findings about Master Plan strategies with preliminary findings from the evaluation currently being conducted by Bonham and Gorham (2008) of the Master Plan implementation during the current (2007-2008) school year.
It should be noted that (a) some Master Plan strategies were found to address more than one key component/focus area, (b) only the number of “unique” strategies related to each key component/focus area were counted due to the large number of extremely similar strategies in the Master Plan, and (c) the Master Plan includes strategies that address areas not listed among the 19 legislative focus areas.

In addition to determining the number of strategies that addressed each key component, the analysis also involved determining how comprehensively each focus area was addressed in the Master Plan as defined by the following criteria:

- **Fully Addressed** – There are Master Plan strategies linked with all key components of the focus area.
- **Partially Addressed** – There are Master Plan strategies linked with some key components of the focus area.
- **Not Addressed** – There are no Master Plan strategies linked with any key components of the focus area.

Finally, to determine the extent to which the strategies associated with each key component were implemented as of July 2007, we reviewed the information provided about each strategy in the “Strategies,” “Evaluation/Monitoring/Evidence” (hereafter referred to as “evidence”), and “Status Report” columns of the *October 2007 Master Plan Implementation Status Report* (BCPSS, 2007n; hereafter referred to as “Status Report”). The Status Report is a document created by key BCPSS central and area office staff to update its stakeholders about the progress made in implementing the Master Plan during the year. Focusing on the information in three columns, the implementation status of each strategy was categorized in one of the following ways:

- **Fully Implemented** – All of the evidence associated with the implementation of the strategy was documented
- **Partially Implemented** – Some of the evidence associated with the implementation of the strategy was documented
- **Not Implemented** – None of the evidence associated with the implementation of the strategy was documented
- **Unclear** – Strategy implementation documentation was unclear or confusing (therefore, a decision about strategy implementation status was not made)

This section about Key Master Plan initiatives is organized by legislative focus area. Findings for each focus area are presented as follows: focus area context and meaning; summary of key Master Plan strategies and initiatives related to each focus area key component; a statement about whether the focus area is comprehensively addressed in the Master Plan; and a statement about the implementation status of the Master Plan strategies linked to each focus area. Also, for each focus area, a table is provided showing the focus area’s coverage in the Master Plan.
Focus Area 1. Westat Report

The first legislative focus area was that the Master Plan “incorporate the key recommendations of the Westat Report.”

Summary of context and meaning

In January 2001, MSDE and BCPSS contracted with Westat, a survey research organization, to provide an external evaluation of progress at the end of the first four years of the implementation of the City-State Partnership which had been established by the legislature in 1997 as part of an aggressive effort to reform and revitalize Baltimore’s public school system. The evaluation was required by Maryland State Senate Bill (SB) 795, the same legislation that established the City-State Partnership. The Westat (2001) Executive Summary included 12 key recommendations. (See Appendix B.) In 2002, House Bill 853 specified that the recommendations be incorporated in the Master Plan. However, since the publication of the Westat report, MSDE has issued specific guidelines to each of its local school systems about what should be included in each Master Plan document. Accordingly, the current BCPSS Master Plan was developed primarily to meet these requirements that address the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and Maryland’s Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act (BTE). This evolution in the required framework of the Master Plan since the Westat (2001) report is important to consider when one reviews the findings below about the extent to which the 12 Westat (2001) recommendations are reflected in the Master Plan.

In our approach to the analysis of Focus Area 1, we first identified the key components of each Westat recommendation using the details provided in the Westat Executive Summary. Then we mapped the Westat key components onto the other eighteen legislative focus areas. (See Appendix C.) Fourteen Westat key components were found to be nearly identical to key components in other legislative focus areas and, therefore, are not discussed separately but are referenced alongside the related component. Eleven Westat key components were added to existing focus areas because they did not fully overlap with the correlated focus area. Finally, those Westat key components that did not map onto any existing focus area are discussed below. (The number assigned to each key component below corresponds to the assigned numbers and headings in Appendix C.)

1.010 Continue the City-State Partnership

Summary of context and meaning

The City-State Partnership was established in 1997 by Maryland State Senate Bill (SB) 795. The partnership removed the school system from control by the Office of the Mayor and established a new relationship between Baltimore City and the State of Maryland to improve the Baltimore schools. The partnership also resulted in the establishment of a nine-member New Board of School Commissioners jointly appointed by the mayor and the governor. Westat found that this
Board played a major role in the progress of the school system during the evaluation period and, therefore, recommended that the Board be continued. Westat also reported that, based on the analysis of financial experts, a funding shortfall existed for the school system and the need for continued state aid remained. The importance of state aid is highlighted in the recent MGT of America (2007) Interim Report which indicates that the majority of superintendents of local school systems in Maryland view state aid as having the greatest impact on improving student achievement.

1.011 – Continue New Board of School Commissioners

*Summary of strategies and initiatives.* Based on the context of this recommendation (see preceding paragraph) and the fact that the New Board of School Commissioners has indeed continued since its initial establishment in 1997, it was determined that it was not applicable to examine the Master Plan for strategies related to this recommendation. However, it can be noted that in the Executive Summary of the Master Plan, the following information is documented:

*The Board of School Commissioners is committed to supporting fully the following efforts:*

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

1.013 – Continue providing additional financial aid to the BCPSS

*Summary of strategies and initiatives.* The Bridge to Excellence Act, passed in 2002, has provided additional state education funding to BCPSS since the Westat (2001) report was completed. BTE funding has continued through at least FY2008. Nevertheless, this legislation included an inflation factor that would provide for continued state funding over the next two years and BCPSS stakeholders are currently urging the state not to eliminate the inflation funding. This was a recommendation for the Maryland legislature, and therefore not applicable for strategies in the BCPSS Master Plan.

**Comprehensiveness**

For the reasons stated above, this component was not examined with respect to the strategies in the Master Plan.
Implementation Status

For the reasons stated above, this component was not examined with respect to the strategies in the Master Plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master Plan Table 1a. Master Plan Coverage of Westat Recommendation 1.010</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Components</strong></td>
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<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.011 - Continue New Board of School Commissioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.013 - Continue providing additional financial aid to the BCPSS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.050 Increase Access to High Quality IT

Summary of context and meaning

Information technology problems cited in the Westat report included limited access to email for staff other than principals and other administrators, the need for professional development for teachers, particularly with respect to helping them learn how to integrate technology in support of learning, and the lack of formal user groups or chat rooms for either administrative or instructional systems. It was also noted that the BCPSS lacked information on what school staff identified as their most pressing IT needs. Therefore, it was recommended that the BCPSS increase access to high quality IT.

1.051 – Integrate IT plans districtwide

Summary of strategies and initiatives. In the Master Plan, it is stated that the mission of the Information Technology Department is to provide broadband access to all the BCPSS schools and offices and that a comprehensive program of staff development is integral to that mission. The three strategies linked to this key component involve providing full access to computers, connectivity, and technology tools; providing e-Learning opportunities for staff; and supporting classroom and administrative uses of technology.

1.052 – Expand and enhance school IT related to instruction and operations

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The 22 strategies that focus on enhancing and expanding school IT related to instruction and operations include providing on-line courses and courses that utilize IT, as well as updating the technology curriculum; providing professional development in the use of on-line assessments; insuring the functionality of computer and wireless labs and providing laptops for teachers; and using on-line data tools to evaluate staff development. Technology Integration Analysts assigned to each school play a major role in providing professional development to instructional and administrative staff in the effective use
of technology. This support model involves collaboration of the Technology Integration Analyst and the Instructional Support Teacher (IST) in the school.

Comprehensiveness

This recommendation to increase access to high quality IT was fully addressed in the Master Plan although designing formal user groups or chat rooms for administrative or instructional systems is not specifically mentioned among the technology-related strategies in the Master Plan.

Implementation Status

Approximately 40% (10) of the 25 strategies associated with IT were fully implemented and 44% (11) were partially implemented. The Master Plan Status Report indicates that the primary challenges to achieving technology goals were related to staffing and budget issues and that schools had limited opportunities to participate in technology-related staff development; therefore, implementation outcomes did not meet expectations.

| Master Plan Table 1b. Master Plan Coverage of Westat Recommendation 1.050 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Key Components | # of Unique Strategies | Implementation Status | |
| | | Fully | Partially | Not Clear | |
| 1.051 - Integrate IT plans district-wide | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1.052 - Expand and enhance school IT related to instruction and operations | 22 | 10 | 9 | 2 | 1 |

1.060 Upgrade Communications Between Administrative Levels and the Schools

Summary of context and meaning

Achieving the mission of the BCPSS is highly dependent upon the quality and timeliness of the information shared between the central office and the schools and upon fostering a collegial environment. Survey and interview responses from the Westat (2001) study indicated problems in the information sharing process, particularly in the timely provision of budget information to school staff.

1.061 – Improve process of providing financial data to schools and general public

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The Master Plan refers to the reporting of budget information to the public in one strategy that involves public forums sponsored during the year by the Office of Parental, Family, and Community Involvement; the budget was mentioned in the Master Plan Status Report as one of the forum topics. However, there are no Master Plan strategies related to reporting financial data to schools.
1.062 – Improve timeliness of data delivery

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Among the Master Plan strategies, the issue of timely data delivery was not mentioned with respect to financial reporting; however, “timely intelligence shared by all” is one of the four tenets of SchoolStat, an accountability process of the BCPSS.

Comprehensiveness

The Master Plan partially addressed the recommendation to upgrade communications between administrative levels and the schools. The absence of specific strategies related to both the process of sharing of financial (budget) data with schools and the timely delivery of data to schools prevented the recommendation from being fully addressed. Whether this was addressed prior or subsequent to the 2006-2007 Master Plan was not investigated.

Implementation Status

According to the information provided in the Status Report, the one strategy mentioned with respect to reporting budget information at public forums held during the year was implemented.

| Master Plan Table 1c. Master Plan Coverage of Westat Recommendation 1.060 |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Key Components                                  | # of Unique Strategies | Implementation Status |
|                                                |                  | Fully | Partially | Not | Unclear |
| 1.061 - Improve process of providing financial data to schools and general public | 1                | 1    |          |     |        |
| 1.062 - Improve timeliness of data delivery     | 0                |      |          |     |        |

1.070 Building Staff Capacity

Summary of context and meaning

Staffing issues raised in the Westat report included adequacy of support staff in schools; incentives offered to new staff, training and credentials of newly hired teachers, staff evaluation, and leadership capacity of new principals. All of these issues except principal leadership training are addressed in other sections of this report.

1.072 – Provide leadership training for principals

Summary of strategies and initiatives. New Leaders for New Schools (a national principal development program), the Institute for Learning (a professional development for assistant principals), and the Principal Induction Program (support for first and second year
principals) were three initiatives designed to provide leadership training for principals in 2006-2007. These initiatives were related to the goal of High Quality Professional Development. The five additional initiatives included a principal mentoring program, monthly leadership meetings, a two-week summer leadership retreat, and, as a corrective action, a customized leadership program sponsored by the MSDE for principals. The percentage of participants rating these activities as satisfactory ranged from 75% to 100%.

**Comprehensiveness**

The Master Plan contained several strategies related to this single component; therefore, the component is fully addressed by the Master Plan.

**Implementation Status**

Of the eight strategies related to leadership training, four were associated with full and four with partial implementation. Partial implementation was primarily related to not fully achieving attendance goals for all of the training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Components</th>
<th># of Unique Strategies</th>
<th>Implementation Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fully</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.072 - Provide leadership training for principals</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1.100 Extra Supports for Young Learners and Learners At-Risk**

**Summary of context and meaning**

The cost of activities and programs to prepare children to enter school are high. However, because such programs are also regarded as beneficial, Westat (2001) recommended that ready-to-learn initiatives be evaluated to determine which ones were most successful and that the necessary funding be provided for such programs to continue. It was also recommended that prekindergarten and kindergarten programs be expanded.

At the time of the Westat (2001) evaluation, the BCPSS had established a system of interventions (summer school, accelerated programs, extended day programs) and student support services to assist students at risk of retention. However, no comprehensive district-wide plan was found to be in place for determining the influence of interventions on student performance.
1.103 – Provide additional funds to ready-to-learn initiatives that are most successful

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The first priority listed under the Early Learning component of the Master Plan is to expand and improve early childhood experiences to increase the number of students “fully ready” for first grade. The six strategies to support this objective included creating early learning centers, increasing the number of regular and ELL pre-K programs, and providing Summer Early Learning-K programs in all the BCPSS schools. Each of these initiatives was linked to specific Master Plan funding sources (e.g., local, special education, English for Speakers of Other Languages [ESOL] grant).

1.105 – Evaluate effects of the interventions associated with the new promotion and retention policy

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The implementation of two intervention programs, the Alternative Education Program and the Novel On-line Credit Recovery Program, was identified as addressing the promotion and retention rates for students attending these sites. However, a focus on evaluating intervention effects was not included among the information provided about program design and implementation.

Comprehensiveness

This recommendation was categorized as “partially addressed” due to the absence of Master Plan strategies related to evaluating the impact of interventions.

Implementation Status

The four strategies related to maintain full-day kindergarten programs in all BCPSS elementary schools, creating early learning centers, increasing the number of ESOL pre-K programs, and evaluating pre-K and kindergarten teacher’s utilization of the curriculum were all fully implemented. The expansion of pre-K programs was categorized as partially implemented and the provision of Summer Early Learning-K Programs BCPSS schools as not implemented because outcomes for these two strategies were not fully attained or not documented as of June 2007.
1.110 Master Plan as a Comprehensive Blueprint

Summary of context and meaning

The role of the Master Plan in guiding school system functions and activities was acknowledged in the Westat (2001) report. Nevertheless it was also recognized that additional work needed to be done to fully synchronize Master Plan activities with budget development and with the special education reporting process. The need to ensure broad-based awareness of the plan throughout the school community, particularly with teachers and staff other than leadership team members and with parents was also highlighted in the Westat (2001) report.

1.111 – Improve the level of coordination and alignment of the budgeting process with the Master Plan

Summary of strategies and initiatives. This key component is not specifically addressed in the Master Plan. The time frame for developing the budget and the Master Plan make alignment difficult. The FY2007 budget was based on the 2005 master plan, and the Master Plan for the 2006-2007 school year only showed how increases in that budget over the previous year related to some specific Master Plan strategies. However, an interview conducted by Bonham and Gorham (2008) with one central office staff member about the development of the Master Plan provides some evidence of the coordination of the budgeting process with the Master Plan. The staff member indicated that the previously developed department’s plan and budget affected what initially went into the Master Plan, but that the next budget was driven by the Master Plan. Additionally, Bonham and Gorham (2008) found that a sample of additional expenditures required by the Master Plan had support in the budget. However, Bonham and Gorham (2008) also found that not all subsequent changes that occurred in the Master Plan were reflected in changes to the budget.

1.112 – Align programs and resources and coordinate their schedules for development and public presentation

Summary of strategies and initiatives. There are no Master Plan strategies related to this key component. Possibly accounting for the absence of Master Plan strategies for components 1.111 and 1.112 is the fact that the guidelines used to develop the Master Plan did not include the Westat recommendations but primarily focused on federal law and the goal of improving systems management (see Focus Area 1 “Summary of context and meaning”). Therefore, although there is no evidence in the Master Plan that some of the Westat recommendations have been addressed, it may be that BCPSS may have addressed the Westat recommendations in a format other than its primary strategic plan document.

Comprehensiveness

This component (1.110) was not addressed comprehensively because no Master Plan strategies were identified as addressing any of the subcomponents (1.111 and 1.112).
Implementation Status – Not applicable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master Plan Table 1f. Master Plan Coverage of Westat Recommendation 1.110</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Components</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.111 - Improve the level of coordination and alignment of the budgeting process with the Master Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.112 - Align programs and resources and coordinate their schedules for development and public presentation</td>
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Focus Area 2. Integrate Special and General Education

The second legislative focus area was that the Master Plan “address both the compliance efforts as well as the System's efforts to achieve full organizational and instructional integration of special education and general education including the quality indicators that will be used to evaluate the extent of integration, and its impact on student performance.”

Summary of context and meaning

Senate Bill 795 required that the BCPSS identify actions necessary for incorporating the requirements of the court-ordered Long-Range Compliance Plan which focuses on delivery of education services to students with disabilities. However, on May 4, 2000, the Long-Range Compliance Plan was replaced by the disengagement plan which includes 15 outcomes (e.g., reduced suspension rates, students receiving individual education plan (IEP services in regular classrooms, evaluation meetings conducted within required timelines, and IEP team meetings for students who drop out) plus one requirement for reporting student achievement. Along these lines, the Master Plan objectives include that by 2006-2007, students with disabilities receiving least restrictive environment (LRE) special education services in general education (LRE A) or combined settings (LRE B) will increase by a minimum of five percentage points.

In addition to addressing compliance efforts, other factors and strategies which have been cited as successful in closing the gap and improving the performance of special education students include: professional learning communities (PLC), special education co-teaching, inclusion and intervention programs, data utilization in instructional decision making, individualized attention to students’ needs, parental involvement, professional development for teachers (in differentiation and in implementing IEPs), and small class size (MGT, 2007). It is also critical that the focus on integrating special and general education address central office organization and reporting.

The term “quality indicators” refers to contextual factors such as resources, instructional practices, school climate and organization of instructional setting, and parent participation.
These indicators go beyond compliance to address program quality. This is important because compliance with state and federal laws is not enough. The goal of effective educational programs for students with disabilities is the development of successful individuals who can function in society.

To comply with this legislative focus area, the Master Plan should include everything the school system is doing to comply with the disengagement plan’s focus on integration of special and general education and everything being done to meet the objective of inclusion at all levels, including the classroom, school, and management levels.

2.1 – Address both the compliance efforts as well as the System’s efforts to achieve full organizational integration of special education and general education (also see Westat 1.023 - “Integrate services for all students at all levels”).

Summary of strategies and initiatives. In 2001, the BCPSS Inclusion Services, which had been a part of the Office of Special Education and Student Support Services, were moved to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction to provide support to regular teachers requiring more skills to work with students with disabilities (SWDs) in the regular classroom (Westat, 2001).

2.2 – Address both the compliance efforts as well as the System’s efforts to achieve full instructional integration of special education and general education (also see Westat 1.092; Westat 1.093)

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Key Master Plan strategies aligned with this component are to develop and implement systemic LRE/Inclusion Action Plans in focus and restructuring schools and to monitor the success of implementation through Quarterly Review of LRE A and B data, through monthly review of Inclusive Practice Classroom Observation Checklists, and IEP Folder Review Checklists. These strategies are included in all components of the Master Plan for all school levels, subject areas, and for early learning. Another strategy that is embedded in all instructional components of the Master Plan involves conducting professional development to support the implementation of students’ IEPs in general education or combined settings.

2.3 – Address the quality indicators that will be used to evaluate the extent of integration.

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The primary measure selected by the BCPSS to assess the extent of integration is whether the targeted increase in the number of special education students receiving services in general education and combined settings has been achieved. However, this measure does not capture program quality information and there are no Master Plan strategies clearly designed to capture such information.
2.4 – Address the quality indicators that will be used to evaluate the impact of the integration on student performance.

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The Inclusive Practice Classroom Observation Checklists includes an assessment of instructional practices related to differentiation. However, the Master Plan does not specify any indicators that are being developed or measured to evaluate the impact of system-wide integration of general and special education.

Comprehensiveness

There are a total of seven unique Master Plan strategies that address this legislative focus area. The issue of identifying quality indicators to analyze the impact of the integration of general and special education has not been addressed in the Master Plan; therefore, this focus area is not fully addressed by the Master Plan.

Implementation Status

The single strategy related to organizational integration of special and general education has been fully implemented. Of the six strategies related to instructional integration, three have been fully implemented, two have been partially implemented, and the implementation status of one strategy is unclear. The partially implemented strategies have to do with providing teachers with professional development opportunities, assistive technologies, instructional materials, and instructional strategies to support integration. It is unclear from the Status Report whether the system has compared similar and dissimilar students in LRE-A, -B, and -C to support further integration.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Master Plan Table 2. Master Plan Coverage of Focus Area 2</th>
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<td><strong>Key Components</strong></td>
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<td>2.1 - Address both the compliance efforts as well as the</td>
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<td>System efforts to achieve full organizational integration</td>
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<td>of special education and general education</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2 - Address both the compliance efforts as well as the</td>
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<tr>
<td>System’s to achieve full instructional integration of</td>
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<td>special education and general education</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.3 - Address the quality indicators that will be used to</td>
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<td>evaluate the extent of integration</td>
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<td>2.4 - Address the quality indicators that will be used to</td>
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<td>evaluate the impact of the integration on student</td>
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<td>performance</td>
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Focus Area 3. Allocation of Staff

The third legislative focus area was that the Master Plan “provide a balanced and efficient allocation of qualified staff to support the necessary educational and managerial functions of the school system, and include in an annual status report on the implementation of the Master Plan a qualitative and fiscal analysis of the staffing of key central and area office functions.”

Summary of context and meaning

As discussed in the Westat Report, identifying and recruiting qualified staff has been a long-term effort of the BCPSS. This legislative focus area makes reference to two ideal characteristics of staff allocation – efficiency and balance. Efficient allocation of qualified staff creates a sustainable staffing structure that allows for fewer potential vacancies and the best use of funds. A balanced structure enables the system to maintain the integrity of its managerial and educational functions regardless of the area of focus. This focus area also requires that the BCPSS’s updates on the implementation of the master plan include an analysis of central and area office staffing.

According to Westat, increased collaboration between the central and area office levels is essential to recruit new staff, retain all staff, and increase the proportion of highly qualified staff. Other Westat recommendations related to this focus area included: “reviewing the staffing configuration throughout the district, including levels of administrative and support staff in both the central office and schools; seeking to identify barriers and incentives to the efficient and cost-effective implementation of the district’s primary mission (i.e., education), and identifying remedies if the configuration was found to be inappropriate or inefficient.”

Since the time of the Westat (2001) report, there is evidence that the BCPSS has developed strategies to address the issue of staff allocation. For instance, Bonham and Gorham (2008) found that the BCPSS human resources department produces position reports showing which budgeted positions are filled and which are vacant. While these reports show that not all allocated positions were filled during school year 2006-2007, it is not clear whether these reports are then used to determine whether personnel are allocated in a balanced and efficient manner. The components, strategies, and initiatives relevant to this focus area are summarized below.

3.1 – Provide a balanced and efficient allocation of qualified staff to support the necessary educational functions of the school system

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The Master Plan presents numerous strategies to effectively address providing qualified staff for the school system’s educational functions. These strategies include: expanding the recruitment of Highly Qualified Teachers via alternative pathways, using the Baltimore City Teacher Residency and Teach For America programs; enhancing the Teacher Track application process to target critical needs audiences; amending the recruitment schedule based on success ratios from 2005-2006; and using the Teacher Insight screening tool to select the highest quality candidates. Also in support of this component, the
Master Plan cites continuing implementation of HRStat, a “data-driven accountability process to ensure the recruiting and staffing of classes being taught by highly qualified teachers;” and implementing RetentionStat, a “data-driven accountability process to improve systemic teacher retention.” It should be noted, however, during interviews conducted by the evaluator with key central office personnel about their challenges and concerns in implementing the Master Plan (Bonham & Gorham, 2008), several respondents mentioned that they were having difficulties in staffing their departments due to procedural lapses in HR. The BCPSS hired a new HR officer in October 2007, and further discussion of the human resources system is found in the third section of this evaluation.

3.2 - Provide a balanced and efficient allocation of qualified staff to support the necessary managerial functions of the school system

Summary of strategies and initiatives. A review of the Master Plan management-related components of the Master Plan found that several central offices indicate the hiring of FTEs to support strategies such as researching support for all aspects of Title I and projecting enrollment; and the Office of School Improvement included the resources of eight FTEs to implement and monitor the MSDE-approved alternative governance structures for schools in restructuring status.

3.3 – Include in an annual status report on implementation of the Master Plan a qualitative analysis of the staffing of key central and area office functions

Summary of strategies and initiatives. In a review of the BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008 Implementation Status Report (BCPSS, 2007i) and the BCPSS (2007o) Annual Report, there are no references to or documents that contain a qualitative analysis of the staffing of key central and area office functions.

3.4 – Include in an annual status report on implementation of the Master Plan a fiscal analysis of the staffing of key central and area office functions

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The BCPSS (2007o) Annual Report includes independent auditor’s reports for Fiscal Year 2007, with comparative totals for 2006. However, there are no strategies or evidence indicating the preparation or existence of a fiscal analysis of the staffing of key central and area office functions.

3.5 – Develop and monitor class-size reduction plan that addresses all elementary grade levels

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The Master Plan includes a strategy to reduce class sizes in the system’s schools of most need. According to the Master Plan Status Report, “additional staff were allocated to schools in most need, as per staffing plan. Each elementary school or K-8 identified by the state for school improvement that did not meet the AMO target for all students in mathematics was allocated 1.0 FTE mathematics coach plus an additional 1.0 FTE for every 300 students enrolled in K-5 over the initial 300 K-5 students enrolled.”
Comprehensiveness

There are a total of 17 Master Plan strategies that address this legislative focus area. This focus area is partially addressed in the Master Plan. The key components not addressed are the inclusion in the annual implementation status report of both fiscal and qualitative analyses of the staffing of key central and area office functions.

Implementation Status

Of the 13 strategies related to staffing of educational functions, four (31%) have been fully implemented, seven (54%) have been partially implemented, and two (15%) have not been implemented. Partially implemented strategies include establishing a career ladder and Aspiring Leaders Program for teachers, expanding the recruitment of highly qualified and career and technical education (CTE) teachers, and implementing HRStat. Strategies not implemented include a strategic marketing campaign and monetary incentives for paraprofessionals transferring to Title I schools. All of the strategies related to staffing of managerial functions have been fully implemented. The implementation status of the strategy related to class size reduction is unclear, due to the fact that the Status Report does not refer to the evidence listed for the strategy, which is improvement in student achievement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Components</th>
<th># of Unique Strategies</th>
<th>Implementation Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 - Provide a balanced and efficient allocation of qualified staff to support the necessary educational functions of the school system</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Fully 4    Partially 7 Not 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 - Provide a balanced and efficient allocation of qualified staff to support the necessary managerial functions of the school system (also see Westat 1.021; 1.022; 1.025; 1.041)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 - Include in an annual status report on implementation of the master plan a qualitative analysis of the staffing of key central and area office functions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 - Include in an annual status report on implementation of the master plan a fiscal analysis of the staffing of key central and area office functions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 - Develop and monitor class-size reduction plan that addresses all elementary grade levels (Westat 1.101)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focus Area 4. Curriculum and Instruction

This legislative focus area aimed to:

“Provide effective curriculum and instructional programs for the Baltimore City Public School System, including the development and dissemination of:

(i) A citywide curriculum framework reflecting state learning outcomes, including Maryland School Performance Program standards, and an appropriate developmental sequence for students;

(ii) An effective program that involves school-based practitioners including teachers, mentors, master teachers, and instructional support teachers, as well as the exclusive employees’ organization representatives in the design and implementation of high quality, differentiated professional development activities derived from analysis of student performance needs and that complies with the National Staff Development Council Standards for content, context, and process; and

(iii) An effective educational program for meeting the needs of students at risk of educational failure.”

Summary of context and meaning

Research (MGT, 2007) indicates that alignment of the curriculum with standards and assessments is a characteristic of improved districts. The heart of this focus area is the development and distribution of a citywide curriculum based on state-approved standards for students. Whereas HB 853 mentioned the Maryland School Performance and Assessment Program (MSPAP), the MSDE replaced the MSPAP with the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) in 2003 in order to satisfy the requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). In addition to the MSA, state standards are encompassed by the Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC), which contains standards and assessment limits for all grade levels and subject areas, as well as the Core Learning Goals in English, biology, algebra, and government. As part of the corrective actions mandated by the Maryland State Board of Education in 2006, the BCPSS was required to replace its curricula judged as not in alignment with the VSC, replacing them with standards-aligned curricula that had been successful for at least one year in another Maryland district. Levels and subject areas in which the Corrective Action Plan mandated change included: elementary reading, elementary mathematics, middle school mathematics, middle school language arts, high school English, high school biology, high school mathematics, and high school government. The need for review of curricula was also indicated by the Westat (2001) report, which found dissatisfaction among teachers with some characteristics of the curricula. As a result, Westat recommended that the BCPSS conduct an audit and comprehensive review of its curricula, especially attending to the alignment of the curricula with state outcomes.

In addition to developing and/or adopting standards-based curricula, this legislative focus area also highlighted the need to effectively distribute curriculum materials to all schools and to ensure that adopted curricula include a developmental scope and sequence. Westat (2001) found that the system had made strides in adopting curricula aligned with state standards and that,
despite some gaps, advances had also been made in supplying curriculum materials, resources, and supports to all teachers.

Another of Westat’s (2001) findings was that many teachers did not feel that professional development offerings met their needs. Hence, this focus area of HB 853 sought to make professional development more effective by involving area- and school-level practitioners, as well as teacher organization representatives, in the design and implementation of professional development activities. According to the legislation, these activities were to reflect the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) standards for context, process, and content. This was a nod to NCLB, which requires that all teachers of core academic subjects receive high-quality professional development. The NSDC standards meet all but one of the NCLB requirements for high-quality professional development (PD). It should be noted that professional development standards similar to those of NSDC were developed by the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Advisory Council that State Superintendent of Schools Dr. Nancy Grasmick convened in January 2003. The NSDC (2008) standards are outlined in Figure 15 and the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards are in Figure 16, below.

**Figure 15. NSDC’s Standards for Staff Development**

**Context Standards** – Staff development that improves the learning of all students:
- Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district. (Learning Communities)
- Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement. (Leadership)
- Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration. (Resources)

**Process Standards** – Staff development that improves the learning of all students:
- Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement. (Data-Driven)
- Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact. (Evaluation)
- Prepares educators to apply research to decision making. (Research-Based)
- Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal. (Design)
- Applies knowledge about human learning and change. (Learning)
- Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate. (Collaboration)

**Content Standards** – Staff development that improves the learning of all students:
- Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement. (Equity)
- Deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately. (Quality Teaching)
- Provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately. (Family Involvement)
Finally, in this focus area HB 853 required that the BCPSS provide appropriate interventions for students at risk of academic failure. Again, this mandate was reflective of NCLB, which aims to improve outcomes for at-risk student groups as defined by poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency. As a result, the BCPSS Master Plan was expected to make provisions to ensure the academic success of these student groups.

This legislative focus area represents perhaps the most critical component of the functioning of all school systems. According to the MGT (2007) evaluation, all Maryland districts spent the majority of their new resources on the instructional process, including the selection, implementation, and standards alignment of research-based core programs. Districts’ approaches to delivering curriculum and instruction and improving the nature of the instructional content included the following methods: hiring additional teachers, aligning the curriculum with a standard or test, and developing partnerships with external agencies to support a specific goal. In all, districts expended $279.1 million on new or additional personnel and $87 million on strategies that could be categorized as alignment to the VSC or state testing programs.

Figure 16. Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content Knowledge and Quality Teaching</td>
<td>Professional development that deepens a teacher’s content knowledge as well as the skills necessary to learn and use the best instructional strategies and assess student progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research-Based</td>
<td>Professional development that helps teachers apply research to decision-making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Professional development that assists teachers to collaborate to improve instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse Learning Needs</td>
<td>Professional development that ensures teachers have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to meet the variety of learning needs of their students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Learning Environments</td>
<td>Professional development that helps teachers create safe, secure, and supportive learning environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Involvement</td>
<td>Professional development that provides teachers with the skills and knowledge to involve families and other community members as partners in the educational process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data-Driven</td>
<td>Professional development that is based on rigorous analysis of data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Professional development that is evaluated on its effectiveness in improving teaching and student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design and Teacher Learning</td>
<td>Professional development that includes ongoing opportunities for practice, reflection and feedback.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key components and the BCPSS Master Plan initiatives for this legislative focus area are described below.

4.1 – Development and dissemination of a citywide curriculum reflecting MSA and VSC standards

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The BCPSS reviewed existing curricula and adopted new curricula for elementary reading and mathematics, middle school language arts and mathematics, and high school English II, mathematics, biology and government. In all cases, curricula were selected for adoption based on alignment with the MSA and/or the HSA. In addition, the system worked with curriculum providers to develop benchmark assessments aligned with the VSC. Open Court was adopted as the reading curriculum for grades Pre-K, 4, and 5. Scott Foresman was adopted as the mathematics curriculum for grades K-5. At the middle school level, the BCPSS adopted the mathematics curriculum used by Cecil County, MD. In addition, the system implemented an eighth grade algebra/data analysis curriculum aligned to the state’s Core Learning Goals and the HSA. It should be noted that in the Evaluation of Master Plan Implementation (Bonham & Gorham, 2008), several teachers have expressed concerns about the horizontal alignment of the adopted curricula alignment with state standards (VSC) and assessments (benchmarks, HSA).

The Master Plan also mandates the adoption and implementation of standards-based technology and fine arts curricula. With respect to technology, the BCPSS technology curriculum was updated to reflect VSC standards. In addition, the Division of Instruction was granted funding to integrate the state’s technology literacy standards into the BCPSS literacy and mathematics curricula. Similarly, several Master Plan strategies are aimed at meeting the state’s fine arts standards through arts-integrated instruction and/or implementation of a fine arts curriculum.

With regard to distribution of curriculum, several Master Plan strategies state that all teachers are to receive all instructional materials, supplies, and guidance documents (e.g., scope and sequence, pacing guide) for the adopted curricula. Other curriculum components listed for development and distribution include assessments, model lessons, assistive technology, supplemental texts, leveled classroom libraries, and access to online curriculum resources. However, as preliminary evaluation results indicate (Bonham & Gorham, 2008), timely receipt of curriculum materials and supporting resources has been uneven, as reported by teachers participating in the evaluation.

4.2 – Development and dissemination of a citywide curriculum reflecting an appropriate developmental sequence for students

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Mathematics, biology, algebra, and government are the subject areas in which the Master Plan specifically states that curriculum materials should include a scope and/or sequence. In contrast, several teachers participating in the Evaluation of Master Plan Implementation (Bonham & Gorham, 2008) discussed problems with vertical alignment, i.e., the degree to which the curriculum for a given subject area moves from grade
level to grade level in a well-sequenced manner from elementary school through high school. According to these teachers, the lack of alignment compromises the instructional process when students engage topics without first mastering the necessary prerequisites.

4.3 - School-based practitioner involvement in design of high quality PD

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Key Master Plan initiatives related to this component include providing training to subject-area coaches, instructional support teachers (ISTs), ESOL, and general and special education teachers on the skills of coaching and providing professional development to others. Other key initiatives are: 1) soliciting survey input from teachers regarding professional development needs and using this data to plan differentiated professional development and 2) partnering with the MSDE per corrective action to train teachers on how to provide professional development on instructional strategies related to literacy. Preliminary data from the Evaluation of Master Plan Implementation (Bonham & Gorham, 2008) suggests that some teachers and ISTs, especially in Area 9, have been tapped to design professional development. In addition, the MathWorks program is hailed by several elementary and middle school mathematics teachers as a teacher-driven professional development initiative that meets their needs.

4.4 - School-based practitioner involvement in implementation of high quality PD

Summary of strategies and initiatives. With respect to this component, the key approach in the Master Plan is to implement job-embedded professional development, in most cases provided by school-based ISTs, now known as “job-embedded professional developers.” According to the Master Plan, topics for job-embedded professional development should include analysis and use of student test data, implementation of new curricula, and research-based approaches for teaching poor and African American students. Preliminary data from the Evaluation of Master Plan Implementation (Bonham & Gorham, 2008) suggest that some teachers and ISTs have been tapped to implement professional development for their peers. Also, as mentioned above, the MathWorks program, fully implemented by teachers, is referred to in positive terms by elementary and middle school mathematics teachers participating in the evaluation (Bonham & Gorham, 2008).

Preliminary evaluation findings (Bonham & Gorham, 2008) about the helpfulness and competence of ISTs indicate that teachers’ views are not only mixed but, in some instances, seem to represent opposite ends of the spectrum. ISTs were rated as extremely helpful by some and as not at all helpful by others. Key person interviews of central office staff also showed that at least two key central office staff expressed doubts about the skill level and competencies of ISTs. In addition, the fact that many teachers reported that their ISTs are frequently engaged in tasks unrelated to curriculum support provides some evidence that this is a common practice throughout the system.
4.5 – Involvement of employees’ organization representatives in the design and implementation of high quality PD

*Summary of strategies and initiatives.* There are no Master Plan initiatives related to this component.

4.6 - Differentiated PD activities

*Summary of strategies and initiatives.* There are eight unique strategies in the Master Plan that call for professional development to be differentiated based on the needs of different teacher populations. ESOL teachers, Wilson Reading System teachers, teachers teaching students with disabilities, special education teachers, literacy teachers, and mathematics teachers are all identified for distinct professional development offerings. The Master Plan also mandates differentiated PD based on teacher survey data, as well as PD based on teacher-specific disaggregated test data. It should be noted, however, that several teachers participating in the Evaluation of Master Plan Implementation (Bonham & Gorham, 2008) did not believe that PD was differentiated to address their needs as teachers.

4.7 – PD derived from analysis of student performance and needs

*Summary of strategies and initiatives.* The key Master Plan initiative for this component is to provide professional development to ISTs, lead coaches, general and special education teachers on analyzing student test data and providing professional development. Another key initiative is to develop a systematic data collection and analysis process to guide curriculum implementation (and presumably professional development). Finally, the Education That is Multicultural (ETM) section of the Master Plan contains an initiative to train teachers on the instructional needs of African American and poor students.

4.8 - PD meeting NSDC standards

*Summary of strategies and initiatives.* With respect to the NSDC context standard, the Master Plan mandates the creation of school level instructional leadership teams, grade level teams, and school improvement teams, meeting the NSDC standard for learning communities. The strategies that call for intensive professional development “retreats” also meet this NSDC standard.

Many Master Plan strategies also meet the NSDC process standards. In several instances, the Master Plan’s approaches to professional development incorporate best practices for adult learning, such as differentiation, job-embeddedness, and mentoring. As noted above, however, several teachers participating in the Evaluation of Master Plan Implementation (Bonham & Gorham, 2008) did not believe that PD was differentiated to address their adult learning needs.
Key Master Plan strategies that address the NSDC content standards refer to PD that includes: 1) subject-area content; 2) the needs of diverse student groups such as African American students, poor students, ESOL students, and students with disabilities; 3) data-driven instruction; and 4) research-based instructional strategies.

Despite the Master Plan’s extensive coverage of professional development, however, Bonham and Gorham’s (2008) recent evaluation of Master Plan implementation found that teachers’ views on the availability and helpfulness of professional development are mixed. They identify major issues related to facilitator competence and the planning and coordination of professional development. These focus group findings do not appear consistent with the high levels of satisfaction by the majority of PD participants that are cited in the Master Plan status report. Several reasons for the discrepancies may exist. They may be due to the small number of self-selected participants in the focus groups compared to the larger population of participants captured in the routinized PD assessments. They may be due to the longer length of time focus group participants have had to evaluate the value of personal development. The discrepancies may also be due to the different nature of information collected through in-depth and interactive focus groups versus short standardized surveys.

4.9 - Effective educational program for students at risk of educational failure

Summary of strategies and initiatives. There are 53 unique Master Plan strategies related to providing curricular supports, remediation, and other interventions for students at risk of educational failure. These initiatives include providing students with afterschool and supplemental learning opportunities aligned with academic outcomes, providing assistive technology and mentoring to support teachers of students with disabilities, using assessment results to target instructional support, providing full block instruction, reducing class sizes, and providing supplemental and tailored curriculum materials for students performing below grade level. The Master Plan also mentions implementation of several specific remediation programs including the Wilson Reading System, the Intervention component of Open Court Reading, Horizons, Language for Learning, Larson Math, and Corrective Reading. Specific at-risk groups targeted for interventions in the Master Plan include SWD, ELL, students in Title I elementary schools, students in schools in school improvement, students in alternative schools, students reading significantly below grade level, truant students, and those in schools with the lowest attendance rates.

4.10 - Conduct audit of curricula (Westat 1.091)

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The Master Plan calls for reviews of the English II curriculum as well as the system’s Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs.

4.11 - Evaluate ready-to-learn initiatives (Westat 1.102)

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The Master Plan includes three key initiatives related to evaluation of early learning programs. One strategy calls for collection and analysis of data regarding pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers’ utilization of the state-approved
curriculum. Another strategy requires the system to provide data on performance indicators for three-to-five year olds in all demographic groups. Finally, the system is to provide data on performance indicators for three-to-five year olds with IEPs being served in Head Start, the BCPSS, and private settings that use the state’s assessment checklists for young children with disabilities.

**Comprehensiveness**

This focus area is not comprehensively addressed, due to the lack of Master Plan strategies that concern the involvement of employee organization representatives in the design and implementation of high-quality professional development. However, all of the ten other components of this focus area are addressed in the Master Plan. The number of strategies related to this focus area is summarized in Master Plan Table 4, below.

**Implementation Status**

There are 230 Master Plan strategies that address this legislative focus area. Of these, 101 (44%) have been fully implemented, 115 (50%) have been partially implemented, seven (3%) have not been implemented, and the implementation status of seven strategies (3%) is unclear.

Key strategies related to development and dissemination of standards-based curriculum that are partially implemented include developing and piloting quarterly benchmarks, implementing a standards-based fine arts curriculum, and providing model lessons and curriculum materials to ESOL teachers. The strategy not implemented is implementation of an 8th grade algebra/data analysis curriculum. All of the strategies related to development and dissemination of a curriculum with an appropriate developmental sequence have been fully implemented.

Of the nine strategies related to school-based practitioner involvement in PD design, the following have been partially implemented: supporting literacy ISTs, general and special education, and ESOL teachers to provide PD, administering a professional development survey to teachers, and supporting teachers to develop leadership training. Of the six strategies related to school-based practitioner involvement in PD implementation, only one – related to providing professional development to literacy ISTs – has been fully implemented.

Seventy-five percent of the strategies related to differentiated PD have been partially implemented or have an implementation status that is unclear. Of the seven strategies related to PD derived from analysis of student performance and needs, three strategies have been partially implemented, all concerning job-embedded PD or PD for ISTs. Thirty-two percent and 36%, respectively, of the strategies related to PD meeting NSDC standards and effective educational programs for students at risk have been fully implemented. The single strategy that addresses the audit of curricula has been partially implemented.

Of the three strategies that address evaluation of ready-to-learn initiatives, the one that concerns evaluating pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers’ use of the curriculum is fully addressed.
The others – collecting and disseminating assessment information for all three to five-year-olds and for those with IEPs – have been partially implemented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Components</th>
<th># of Unique Strategies</th>
<th>Implementation Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 - Development and dissemination of a citywide curriculum reflecting MSA and VSC standards</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Fully: 47, Partially: 17, Not: 1, Unclear: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 - Development and dissemination of a citywide curriculum reflecting an appropriate developmental sequence for students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 - School-based practitioner involvement in design of high quality PD</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Fully: 1, Partially: 5, Not: 2, Unclear: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 - School-based practitioner involvement in implementation of high quality PD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fully: 1, Partially: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 - Involvement of employees' organization representatives in the design and implementation of high quality PD</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 - Differentiated PD activities</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fully: 2, Partially: 5, Not: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 - PD derived from analysis of student performance and needs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Fully: 4, Partially: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 - PD meeting NSDC standards</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Fully: 23, Partially: 45, Not: 3, Unclear: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9 - Effective educational program for students at risk of educational failure</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Fully: 19, Partially: 32, Not: 1, Unclear: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10 - Conduct audit of curricula (Westat 1.091)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11 – Evaluate ready-to-learn initiatives (Westat 1.102)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fully: 1, Partially: 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Focus Area 5. Performance-Based Evaluation System**

The BCPSS was expected to “review the requirement of a demonstrated student achievement portfolio for the performance-based evaluation system for teachers and principals, and incorporate design modifications that will enhance teacher and principal investment in the evaluation instrument.”

**Summary of context and meaning**

The evaluation of BCPSS teachers included a Demonstrated Student Achievement Portfolio that documents a sample of students’ progress toward identified learning goals. Westat reported that this evaluation measure was regarded by teachers as disconnected from what they really do in the classroom and as one more hurdle to jump over.
The following statement was taken from the performance-based evaluation system (PBES) information available on the BCPSS Blackboard:

As required by Maryland Senate Bill 795, the New Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners adopted the new Performance-Based Evaluation System (PBES) for teachers on December 9, 1997. The PBES was designed to improve the quality of instruction and increase student achievement in the Baltimore City Public School System. Based on the work of Charlotte Danielson, the Performance-Based Evaluation System centers around four domains: Planning and Preparation, The Learning Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. A fifth domain, Demonstrated Student Achievement, and the prescribed Demonstrated Student Achievement Portfolio, were removed in a major revision of PBES in 2003.

The revision of PBES was based on feedback received in focus groups of administrators and teachers, in collaboration with the Public School Administrators and Supervisors Association and the Baltimore Teachers Union, and reviewed by BCPSS cabinet-level staff. The revision was approved by the New Board of School Commissioners on September 23, 2003, and disseminated to administrators in a series of workshops. Because the requirement of a demonstrated student achievement portfolio was removed prior to the development of the Master Plan, this legislative focus area did not need to be included in the strategic plan.

5.1 – Review the requirement of a demonstrated student achievement portfolio for the performance-based evaluation system for teachers and principals (also see Westat 1.074)

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Requirement no longer exists.

5.2 – Incorporate design modifications that will enhance teacher and principal investment in the evaluation instrument

Summary of strategies and initiatives. See the preceding “Summary of context and meaning” section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master Plan Table 5. Master Plan Coverage of Focus Area 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Unique Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 - Review the requirement of a demonstrated student achievement portfolio for the performance-based evaluation system for teachers and principals (also see Westat 1.074)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 - Incorporate design modifications that will enhance teacher and principal investment in the evaluation instrument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comprehensiveness – Not applicable
Implementation Status – Not applicable

Focus Area 6. Student Tracking System

Here, the legislative focus area was to “provide effective management information systems for the Baltimore City Public School System, including the capacity to track student enrollment, attendance, academic records, discipline records, and compliance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).”

Summary of context and meaning

Nearly all districts participating in the MGT (2007) evaluation indicated that data utilization for instructional decision-making had become critically important. However, based on interviews with principals and teachers, many districts still do not have an electronic data warehouse that would allow for student-level data analysis by indicator. Availability of student-level data by indicator would allow quick adjustments to strategic plans at both school and system levels, making it possible to better respond to identified student needs.

With respect to instructional technology, principals participating in the MGT (2007) evaluation maintained that use of technology in instruction increases teaching effectiveness. MGT site visit teams observed technology use in the classrooms, and found that technology increased student motivation and attention and allowed teachers to more effectively transmit complex concepts.

The BCPSS’s increased communication needs and enhanced instructional programs justify increased access to high quality information technology systems. Pressing IT needs as stated in Westat (2001) are: computer software for instruction and management, hardware, district-wide integration of IT plans, and IT staff training.

6.1 – Provide effective management information systems for the BCPSS

Summary of strategies and initiatives. There are 35 Master Plan initiatives that address this focus area. The Master Plan states that the BCPSS will: partner with the Division of Research, Evaluation, and Assessments (DREAA) to ensure timely data analysis; implement a new data-integration and reporting system; and continue routine and ad hoc reportage, moving these to the new data reporting system. Additionally, the system will train central office and field staff in accessing and using the new data management system. The system will continue to implement InterruptionStat, a “data-driven accountability process to minimize interruptions to special education related services and to improve the BCPSS operations supporting students with special needs.” The following initiatives are also cited for development and implementation: a comprehensive Data Management System to integrate accessibility of Enterprise Data Systems, courses that enable teachers and administrators to use instructional technology applications, and strategies to enhance instruction. Finally, staff will provide support for instructional technology activities and professional development.
6.2 – Provide effective management information systems that include the capacity to track student enrollment

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The one Master Plan strategy related to management systems for tracking student enrollment focuses on continued implementation of EnrollmentStat, a “data-driven accountability process to maximize student enrollment and reimbursement for enrollment.”

6.3 – Provide effective management information systems that include the capacity to track student attendance

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Two of the three strategies linked with tracking student attendance involve AttendanceStat, a process used to monitor and analyze student attendance data district wide. The remaining strategy involves digitizing student records.

6.4 – Provide effective management information systems that include the capacity to track student academic records

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The capacity to track student academic records is supported by one strategy involving digitizing student records and another involving tracking the academic data of students enrolled in extended learning programs.

6.5 – Provide effective management information systems that include the capacity to track student discipline records

Summary of strategies and initiatives. One key strategy for this component involves monitoring documentation of parents’, students’, and other family members’ reports of intimidation or harassment, and submitting these reports using a web-based application.

6.6 – Provide effective management information systems that include the capacity to track compliance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Five Master Plan initiatives related to this component are: evaluation and monitoring of Title I schools in restructuring to ensure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations governing Title I schools; continued implementation of InterruptionStat, a “data-driven accountability process to minimize interruptions to special education related services;” improvement of the BCPSS operations supporting students with special needs; and ensured universal 508 compliance for students with special needs.

6.7 – Continue development of compatibility between SETS and SASI

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Upgrade and convergence of the Student and Staff Information System (SASI) and Special Education Tracking System (SETS) is the one Master
Plan initiative that addresses this component. The BCPSS integrates the SASI and SETS systems on a daily basis, and these two systems together provide information to track student enrollment, attendance, academic records, discipline records, and, for special education, IEPs, special services and accommodations. The systems still have limitations: they provide for individual access but not a data warehouse, they do not have checks at data entry, they do not automatically include MSA scores, and they do not link with the Maryland Online IEP. Upgrades were made to the system in school year 2006-2007 in an amount exceeding that included in the Master Plan.

Comprehensiveness

This legislative focus area is fully addressed in the Master Plan.

Implementation Status

Of the 48 strategies related to providing effective management systems, 13 were categorized as “fully implemented,” 23 as “partially implemented,” 8 as “not implemented,” and three as “unclear.” The evidence for strategy implementation was not documented (“not implemented”) for some strategies associated with three of the seven key components: tracking student academic records, tracking compliance with the federal IDEA, and the general strategy which focuses on providing effective management information systems for the BCPSS.

### Master Plan Table 6. Master Plan Coverage of Focus Area 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Components</th>
<th># of Unique Strategies</th>
<th>Fully</th>
<th>Partially</th>
<th>Not Implemented</th>
<th>Unclear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 - Provide effective management information systems for the BCPSS</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 - Provide effective management information systems that include the capacity to track student enrollment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 - Provide effective management information systems that include the capacity to track student attendance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 - Provide effective management information systems that include the capacity to track student academic records</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 - Provide effective management information systems that include the capacity to track student discipline records</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 - Provide effective management information systems that include the capacity to track compliance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7 - Continue development of compatibility between SETS and SASI (Westat 1.024)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Focus Area 7. Financial Management System

The seventh legislative focus area was to “provide an effective financial management and budgeting system for the BCPSS to ensure the maximization and appropriate utilization of all available resources.”

Summary of context and meaning

According to Westat (2001), strategic planning and identification of priority initiatives is essential to guide budgetary decisions. A key need that Westat recommended be addressed was improving the level of coordination and alignment between the budgeting process and the Master Plan. This function necessitated alignment of programs and resources and coordinating schedules for development and public presentation of the budget. At the time of the Westat evaluation, the BCPSS Finance Office was focusing on cleaning up outstanding liabilities, making information more timely, and continuing to upgrade their IT systems (see Focus Area 1 above – 1.050). The primary budget issues for school administrators were related to getting financial information from the central office (see Focus Area 1 above – 1.060).

Key components and Master Plan initiatives for this focus area are summarized below.

7.1 – Provide an effective financial management system for the BCPSS to ensure maximization and appropriate utilization of available resources

Summary of strategies and initiatives. One of the key strategies associated with this component indicates that BCPSS uses the Oracle Financial System which contains several modules including a Fixed Asset Module, used for tracking and depreciation purposes, and the Cash Management Module, which automates the reconciliation of the bank statements to the issued checks from Accounts Payable and Payroll. The remaining three strategies involve establishing an independent fund to accept strategic tax-deductible donations, improving the processing of bank reconciliations, and continuing to maintain fiscal stability through financial control.

7.2 – Provide an effective budgeting system for the BCPSS to ensure maximization and appropriate utilization of available resources

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The strategy to continue to maintain fiscal stability through financial control is relevant to the goal of providing an effective budgeting system. However, there was no evidence of Master Plan strategies that address the specific budget issues raised in the Westat report, such as timeliness of financial information to schools.

Comprehensiveness

This legislative focus area is comprehensively addressed in the Master Plan.
Implementation Status

The evidence documented for the two components indicates that progress is made by BCPSS in providing effective financial and budgeting systems that support achievement. For three of the five strategies, all of the evidence specified for the strategies were documented. However, for the component related to providing an effective financial management system, one strategy was not implemented and the information provided in the Status Report for one strategy was unclear such that a determination could not be made about its implementation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Components</th>
<th># of Unique Strategies</th>
<th>Implementation Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1 - Provide an effective financial management system for the BCPSS to ensure maximization and appropriate utilization of available resources</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fully: 2, Partially: 1, Not Implemented: 1, Unclear: 1</td>
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<td>7.2 - Provide an effective budgeting system for the BCPSS to ensure maximization and appropriate utilization of available resources</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fully: 1, Partially: 1, Not Implemented: 1, Unclear: 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus Area 8. Teacher Hiring and Assignment

The eighth legislative focus area was to “provide effective hiring and assignment of teachers and staff.”

Summary of context and meaning

In Westat (2001), the BCPSS was advised to address: the adequacy of support staff working in the schools; the incentives offered to new staff; the training and credentials of newly hired teachers; the leadership capacity of new principals, and methods to evaluate staff. According to the MGT (2007) evaluation, educational enhancements in this area developed by other districts include the reconfiguration of staff or staffing additions in order to meet identified programmatic needs, professional development for teachers, and class size reduction.

Key components and strategies related to this focus area are summarized below. Note that many of these initiatives were also addressed in Focus Area 3.

8.1 – Provide effective hiring of teachers

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The Master Plan includes 16 strategies related to effective teacher hiring. The BCPSS will continue its strategic marketing campaign and offer new incentives to potential teachers. Additionally, the system will continue new salary scale incentives for teacher interns who commit to the BCPSS. Incentives will include 100% tuition
reimbursement for teachers in critical subject areas and for Title 1 teachers. Two strategies involve training: providing New Teacher Evening Seminars to 1st and 2nd year teachers and expanding the mentoring program from 29 mentors to 41 mentors in schools with 35% or more new teachers and those in school improvement status. Support will be given to the National Board Teacher Certification Program. Adding a mid-year cohort with a special focus on critical subject areas to the Baltimore City Teaching Residency -- to enter the BCPSS in January 2007 -- is another strategy to address this focus area.

8.2 – Provide effective assignment of teachers

Summary of strategies and initiatives. In the Goal 3 narrative that provides information about the priorities and challenges related to highly qualified teachers, BCPSS mentions gains in increasing the percentage of core academic subjects taught by highly qualified teachers in low poverty schools. However, there are no strategies in Goal 3 which specifically refer to actions that the BCPSS will take during the 2006-2007 school year to assign high quality teachers to teach core academic subjects in the schools of greatest need.

8.3 – Provide effective hiring of staff

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The Master Plan provides two strategies for effective hiring of staff. One involves a plan for increasing the staff of the Career and Technology Office by employing an Educational Specialist, Literacy Coach, Data Analyst, Work Based Learning and Tech Prep Coordinators. The other focuses on hiring additional Bilingual assistants to assist with the inclusion of limited English proficient parents. In narrative sections of the Master Plan (reading intervention, transportation), efforts to improve services by hiring additional staff are mentioned but similar to component 8.2, specific strategies were not outlined with respect to hiring competent non-teaching staff.

8.4 – Provide effective assignment of staff

Summary of strategies and initiatives. There are no strategies in the Master Plan that address this component.

8.5 – Increase collaboration between central and school-level staff to recruit and retain staff (Westat 1.071)

Summary of strategies and initiatives. A specific Master Plan initiative pertaining to this component is implementation of the leadership growth plan for Area Academic Officers. Additionally, the system will develop a customized leadership program in collaboration with the MSDE to improve instructional leadership.
8.6 – Increase proportion of certified and tenured teachers serving middle and high schools (Westat 1.073)

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The proportion of certified and tenured teachers serving middle and high schools are potentially impacted by two SchoolStat strategies: one is HRStat, an accountability process to ensure the recruiting and staffing of classes being taught by highly qualified teachers; the other is RetentionStat, an accountability process to improve systemic retention. The goal of the former was to have 60% of the BCPSS classes taught by highly qualified teachers by June 2007; the goal of the latter was to increase retention of teachers with one to three years of service by three percentage points.

Comprehensiveness

This legislative focus area is partially addressed in the Master Plan. Two components – providing effective assignment of teachers and providing effective assignment of staff – are not addressed.

Implementation Status

Eleven of the 16 strategies for effective hiring of teachers were either fully or partially implemented according to the Status Report data and both of the strategies for effective hiring of non-teaching staff were also implemented. However, the effort to increase the proportion of certified and tenured teachers serving middle and high schools had mixed results. According to information provided in the Master Plan Status Report, the RetentionStat goal was not achieved and the HRStat goal was partially achieved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master Plan Table 8. Master Plan Coverage of Focus Area 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Components</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1 - Provide effective hiring of teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 - Provide effective assignment of teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3 - Provide effective hiring of staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4 - Provide effective assignment of staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5 - Increase collaboration between central and school-level staff to recruit and retain staff (Westat 1.071)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6 - Increase proportion of certified and tenured teachers serving middle and high schools (Westat 1.073)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focus Area 9. Instructional Materials and Support

The ninth legislative focus area was to “develop an effective system of providing instructional materials and support services.”

Summary of context and meaning

In the context of the legislation, instructional materials include all curriculum materials such as textbooks, assessments, and other materials and supplies aligned with the curriculum.

As used in Westat (2001), the term “support services” refers to a wide range of instructional supports. In addition to curricular materials, these support services include professional development, supports for student promotion and retention (programs such as summer school to bring students up to grade level and end social promotion), whole-school reform models, supports for schools in school improvement (referred to previously as reconstitution-eligible schools), special education services and supports for inclusion, parental involvement, and initiatives promoting safe and orderly school environments. In addition, support services include interventions such as ready-to-learn (early learning) initiatives, class-size reduction, and middle and high school reform efforts. All districts participating in the MGT (2007) evaluation spent the majority of any new funding on the instructional process, including adding personnel and aligning curricula to the Voluntary State Curriculum and Core Learning Goals.

As indicated in Master Plan Table 9, there are 124 Master Plan strategies related to this focus area. Key components and the 2006-07 Master Plan initiatives that address each are detailed below.

9.1 – Develop an effective system for providing (distributing) instructional materials

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The Master Plan provides strategies that refer to distributing curricular materials and supplies for each subject area and grade level. Specifically, there are Master Plan strategies that mention provision of: curriculum pacing guides, scope and sequence guides, model lessons, assistive technologies, classroom libraries of leveled readers, laptops for access to the BCPSS Blackboard (TSS), Home Language Survey materials, equipment, hardware, and software.

What is missing from these Master Plan strategies is a system for ensuring that all teachers have all necessary materials. Indeed, in interviews with ISTs as part of the Evaluation of Master Plan Implementation (Bonham & Gorham, 2008), it was found that the process for filling teachers’ materials requests varied from school to school and could include such disparate strategies as word of mouth, e-mails, written logs, chalkboard notes, and sign-out sheets. Perhaps as a result of this lack of a consistent systemic approach, many teachers participating in focus groups reported that they had not received all of the necessary materials.
9.2 – Develop an effective system of providing support services

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Because of the broadness of this component, there are a large number of Master Plan initiatives that address it. These 108 initiatives include interventions such as afterschool programs for students not reaching grade level in reading and mathematics, supports for inclusion and SWD, targeted professional development for teachers of SWD and ELL, expansion of standards-based early learning initiatives, class-size reduction in targeted schools, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and other supports aimed at safe and orderly schools, remedial curricula, professional development regarding parental involvement strategies, and technological access and supports.

Comprehensiveness

This legislative focus area is fully addressed in the Master Plan.

Implementation Status

All but one of the strategies concerning distribution of instructional materials have been fully or partially implemented. The strategy for which the implementation status is unclear is upgrading the materials of career and technology education (CTE) programs. All but eight of the 108 strategies concerning support services have been fully or partially implemented. Those that have not been implemented concern supports for students with disabilities, ELL students, and students who have failed the English HSA. Also not implemented are strategies for supporting the technology curriculum and providing training on subjects such as family involvement and culturally responsive learning communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master Plan Table 9. Master Plan Coverage of Focus Area 9</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1 - Develop an effective system for providing (distributing) instructional materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2 - Develop an effective system of providing support services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus Area 10. School Reform

The legislature next required the BCPSS to “develop and evaluate model school reform initiatives.”
Summary of context and meaning

Whole-school reform models discussed by Westat (2001) as in use in the BCPSS at the time of its data collection included Direct Instruction, Achievement First, and the New Schools Initiative. In Westat’s assessment, reviews of these models – mostly implemented at the elementary level – were mixed, prompting its recommendation that the system develop and evaluate reform initiatives, as well as expand reform efforts in middle and high schools.

As Master Plan Table 10 indicates, the Master Plan includes eight strategies related to this focus area. Key components and accompanying initiatives are described below.

10.1 – Develop model school reform initiatives

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Reform initiatives referred to by the Master Plan as currently in use include New Leaders for New Schools, the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, Whole-School Enrichment, and alternative governance structures selected by schools in school improvement. Master Plan strategies call for professional development, planning assistance, and financial support for these initiatives.

10.2 – Evaluate model school reform initiatives (also see Westat 1.081)

Summary of strategies and initiatives. There is only one Master Plan strategy that refers to evaluation in the context of school reform initiatives: it states that teachers in the IB program will assess students’ progress using formal and informal assessments. By extension, it can be inferred that this assessment of student progress may also be used to assess the effectiveness of the IB program for BCPSS students.

10.3 – Expand reform efforts at middle and high schools (also see Westat 1.082)

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Reforms at middle and high schools include all of those mentioned with respect to Key Component 10.1, above. In addition, one strategy specifically mentions that the IB Middle Years Programme is being implemented at one BCPSS middle school.

Comprehensiveness

This legislative focus area is fully addressed in the Master Plan.

Implementation Status

One of the strategies concerning development of model school reform initiatives has been fully implemented. The remainder have been partially implemented. The single strategy related to evaluation of model school initiatives has been fully implemented. The two strategies aligned with expansion of reform efforts at the middle and high school levels have been partially implemented.
### Master Plan Table 10. Master Plan Coverage of Focus Area 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Components</th>
<th># of Unique Strategies</th>
<th>Implementation Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.1 - Develop model school reform initiatives</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10.2 - Evaluate model school reform initiatives (also see Westat 1.081)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3 - Expand reform efforts at middle and high schools (Westat 1.082)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4 - Not Un-clear</td>
<td></td>
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### Focus Area 11. Distributing Student Test Data

The next legislative focus area was to “develop a process with time lines to govern the distribution of student test data to area officers and to principals, as well as the central office resources that will be provided to school level practitioners to validate and analyze the student test data.”

**Summary of context and meaning**

Because many of the sanctions in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) are based on desegregated test data, a premium is placed on the central office 1) distributing test data in a timely manner to area- and school-level staff and 2) building the capacity of area- and school-level staff to analyze the test data for use in instruction. One of the Westat (2001) recommendations was that the system establish a comprehensive system of evaluation and reporting. Timely access to reports on outcomes such as student test data, is a key characteristic of such a system.

#### 11.1 – Process for distributing student test data to area officers

**Summary of strategies and initiatives.** The main Master Plan initiative for this component is for the BCPSS Division of Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Accountability (DREAA) to ensure timely data analysis and return of information to the field. This strategy is mentioned twice in the Master Plan. However, it should be noted that the strategy does not mention the details of the data distribution process nor does it mention a timeline that specifies how quickly data should be distributed to staff at the area and school levels.

Another Master Plan strategy in support of this component appears in the Early Learning section and calls for the system to collect and distribute data regarding the assessment outcomes for three to five-year-olds with IEPs.
11.2 – Process for distributing student test data to principals

*Summary of strategies and initiatives.* Master Plan strategies aligned with this component are the same as those listed above, with the addition of a strategy that specifically calls for partnering with DREAA to ensure timely data analysis and return of data to schools. Again, the details and specific timeline for the data distribution process are not mentioned.

11.3 – A process for distributing central office resources that will be provided to school-level practitioners to validate and analyze student test data

*Summary of strategies and initiatives.* The key Master Plan initiative for this component is provision of professional development on the subject of analyzing and using student assessment data. Variants of this initiative appear for all subjects and grade levels and are indicated for literacy ISTs, Wilson Reading System teachers, school improvement teams, principals, ALT-MSA Test Examiner Teams, literacy lead coaches, social studies departments, and special education and ESOL teachers. Additionally, several strategies call for the central office to support local evaluation of outcomes for students in extended day intervention programs. Though mentioned only once, another important initiative in support of this component is LearningStat, a process by which staff can view and utilize school-level performance data in order to implement differentiated instruction.

11.4 - Timelines for distribution of test data to area officers and principals

*Summary of strategies and initiatives.* Two unique strategies use the word “timely” to describe the intended distribution of student test data to the field. This word implies that there are or will be timelines for distribution. However, the details of these implied timelines – i.e., how quickly data will be returned to areas and schools – are not elaborated in the Master Plan

**Comprehensiveness**

All components of this focus area are addressed in 28 strategies in the Master Plan. However, more detail regarding the process and timelines for data distribution is needed to fulfill the intention of the legislation.

**Implementation Status**

As indicated in *Master Plan Table 11*, most of the strategies for this focus area (79%) have been fully or partially implemented. The two that have not been implemented concern distribution of central office resources to school-level practitioners for the purposes of analyzing and utilizing student test data. The implementation status of several other strategies is unclear.
Master Plan Table 11. Master Plan Coverage of Focus Area 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Components</th>
<th># of Unique Strategies</th>
<th>Implementation Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.1 - Process for distributing student test data to area officers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fully: 1  Partially: 1 Not: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2 - Process for distributing student test data to principals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fully: 1  Partially: 1 Not: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3 - A process for distributing central office resources that will be provided to school-level practitioners to validate and analyze student test data</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Fully: 5  Partially: 13 Not: 2 Unclear: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4 - Timelines for distribution of test data to area officers and principals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fully: 1  Partially: 1 Not: 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus Area 12. Student Assessment and Remediation

The twelfth legislative focus area was to “provide appropriate methods for student assessment and remediation.”

Summary of context and meaning

School-level stakeholders participating in the Westat (2001) evaluation reported frustration with the lack of alignment between milestone, or benchmark, assessments and the state assessments. As a result, Westat (2001) recommended that the BCPSS 1) get teachers’ input into milestone, or benchmark assessments, and 2) ensure that curricula and assessments are aligned with state outcomes.

Addressing remediation, Westat (2001) noted that the district had implemented several interventions targeted at helping at-risk students -- including class-size reduction, supplemental education programs, and ready-to-learn initiatives -- but that there was no data available regarding the relative costs and benefits of these programs. The resulting recommendation was that the district evaluate the outcomes of its remedial and intervention programs, expanding them where indicated.

MGT (2007) noted that the common feature of effective intervention programs is attention to the needs of students who may benefit from additional instruction, be that remediation for lower-performing students or enrichment for higher-performing students. The report also noted that some intervention programs specifically target students at risk for dropping out and thus could also qualify as initiatives to improve graduation rates.
12.1 – Appropriate methods for student assessment

Summary of strategies and initiatives. One of the primary Master Plan initiatives that address this focus area is the development and implementation of new benchmark assessments for every grade level and subject area. Another is the implementation of need-specific existing assessments, including the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills, Open Court Reading Unit Assessments, Gates MacGinitie Reading Test, and Diagnostic LAS links testing, the behavior checklist for assessing giftedness, and the MSDE Maryland Model for School Readiness assessments. In several cases, the Master Plan calls for use of developmental and skills checklists, as well as student work, for assessment, reflecting a developmentally appropriate approach.

Notably missing from these strategies is a process to ensure that all assessments are aligned with both the citywide curricula and the state MSA and/or HSA assessments. Indeed, teachers continue to reflect what they perceive as a lack of alignment between the curriculum pacing guides, the benchmark assessments, and the MSA (Bonham and Gorham, 2008). On the other hand, there are key central office staff who report that assessments are aligned with curricula; however, it is not clear 1) whether the assessments referenced by central office staff are benchmarks or MSAs/HSAs and 2) whether ongoing teacher concerns about alignment have been addressed in teacher professional development settings.

12.2 – Appropriate methods for student remediation

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The Master Plan calls for need-specific remediation targeted to several different student populations. For students with disabilities, remediation strategies include using: supplemental materials such as Horizons, Language for Learning, and Corrective Reading; additional reading supports; and ongoing support. For ELL students, strategies include the supplemental materials mentioned above, as well as ongoing support. For students reading below grade level, strategies include 90-minute block literacy instruction, the Wilson Reading System, and classroom libraries that include leveled readers for those reading below grade level. Several strategies identify Larson Math as a remedial option for students not performing at grade level in mathematics. Early identification and intervention programs are indicated to identify and support students with disabilities in the early years. For all grade levels and subject areas, Master Plan strategies call for systemic support for students at risk of not performing at the proficient level on the MSA. The Alternative Education Program and the Novel On-line Credit Recovery Program have been implemented to address the promotion and retention rates for students attending alternative schools. Students in grades 9 and 10 who fail the HSAs receive individual learning plans. In addition, the system has developed an Algebra/Data Analysis course for students who do not pass that HSA by the end of ninth grade.

Comprehensiveness

This legislative focus area is comprehensively addressed in the Master Plan.
Implementation Status

Of the strategies that address student assessment, 86% have been either fully or partially implemented. Strategies not implemented include piloting a learning styles inventory, analyzing assessment results for gifted students, and administering the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test to 9th and 10th graders.

Ninety-three percent of the strategies that concern student remediation have been fully or partially implemented. Those that have not include 1) identifying reading supports for ELL and SWD and 2) identifying target groups of ELL and SWD to receive additional supports.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Master Plan Table 12. Master Plan Coverage of Focus Area 12</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Components</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.1 - Appropriate methods for student assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2 - Appropriate methods for student remediation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Focus Area 13. Student Code of Discipline

The thirteenth legislative focus area was to “develop and implement a student code of discipline as required in Section 7306 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.”

Summary of context and meaning

Westat (2001) found that the BCPSS had made progress in safety and discipline but that there was a need for more and better alternatives to suspension and more appropriate placements for students of elementary age.

MGT (2007) noted that behavioral issues remain one of the major challenges that schools face. The evaluation found that, by improving overall school climates, reducing teacher time spent on behavioral issues rather than instruction, and increasing overall time students spend in classrooms, behavior modification programs impact student achievement in a significant way. Fourteen principals (9.3%) participating in the evaluation cited a behavior modification program as one of their best practices.

13.1 – Develop and implement a student code of discipline required in Section 7306 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The one Master Plan strategy in support of this component is to “provide a program that emphasizes behavioral expectations and consequences
for inappropriate behaviors to all students.” The BCPSS Student Code of Discipline meets this requirement. (Please see Appendix H for the BCPSS student code of discipline.)

**Comprehensiveness**

This focus area has only one component and is, therefore, comprehensively addressed by the Master Plan.

**Implementation Status**

The implementation of this strategy was measured by the number of schools that submitted the Code of Conduct Monitoring forms verifying use of the Code of Conduct lessons. Based on the documentation that the outcome was achieved, the strategy was categorized as fully implemented. However, Focus Area 13 makes reference to Section 7306 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. The Annotated Code is not referenced in the Master Plan and the Master Plan does not make it clear whether the Code of Conduct lessons used in the schools conform to Section 7306 of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master Plan Table 13. Master Plan Coverage of Focus Area 13</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.1 - Develop and implement a student code of discipline</td>
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<td>required in Section 7306 of the Education Article of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotated Code of Maryland</td>
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<td># of Unique Strategies</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fully</td>
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**Focus Area 14. Facilities Master Plan**

The next focus area was to “incorporate the school system's facilities Master Plan including information about projects currently underway as well as those planned pursuant to the capital improvement program and update this information annually as the Master Plan is updated.”

**Summary of context and meaning**

Improving facilities management offers several challenges. A few of these, mentioned in Westat (2001), are: enhancing the BCPSS capacity for planning by hiring permanent staff with advanced analytic knowledge and planning skills; working to improve the quality of repair and maintenance services; developing a tracking method – possibly electronic – for satisfactory completion of maintenance and repair requests; considering use of public-private partnerships to reduce the future management burden placed on the BCPSS; and considering sharing space and responsibilities with community groups. Key components of this focus area and Master Plan initiatives associated with each are summarized below:
14.1 – Incorporate the school system's facilities master plan into the Master Plan

*Summary of strategies and initiatives.* The BCPSS’s Comprehensive Education Facilities Master Plan (CEFM) was submitted, according to the BCPSS Annual Report (December, 2007) (BCPSS, 2007o), prior to July 1, 2007. The process to develop the plan involved two phases and included the establishment of Planning Committees that represented each of the school areas. Although the CEFM is mentioned in the Facilities section of the Master Plan, the CEFM is developed and maintained as a separate document and is not specifically incorporated into the Master Plan as envisioned in 2002 by HB 853.

14.2 – School system's facilities master plan should include information about projects currently underway

*Summary of strategies and initiatives.* The primary Master Plan initiative related to this component is the implementation of Phase Two of the Facility Solutions Planning Process. The projects mentioned in the Master Plan Status Report included construction and improvements to 51 schools to ensure that the schools would be ready by the 2007-2008 school year.

14.3 – School system's facilities master plan should include information about projects planned pursuant to capital improvement program

*Summary of strategies and initiatives.* This component is not addressed in the Master Plan.

14.4 – Update information about current projects and planned projects annually as the master plan is updated

*Summary of strategies and initiatives.* This component is not addressed in the Master Plan.

14.5 – Use innovative approaches to reduce costs associated with existing facilities

*Summary of strategies and initiatives.* This component is not addressed in the Master Plan.

14.6 – Track completion of repair and maintenance services

*Summary of strategies and initiatives.* This component is not addressed in the Master Plan. However, testimony made in February 2008 by the BCPSS to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee (Lever, 2008) includes the following excerpt, indicating progress:

> When the maintenance inspection program was brought into our agency in 2006, the number of inspectors was reduced from as many as 13 part-time inspectors to two full-time individuals. Consequently, there has been a significant increase in the consistency and level of detail of individual school reports. Among other
changes, one additional category was added to the 34 items previously inspected; a method was developed to note specific deficiencies within building systems that were otherwise adequate; we instituted a re-inspection process for selective schools in every jurisdiction; and our follow-up communication with school system personnel has increased markedly. Moreover, we are constructing a database that will help us to track a number of maintenance items over a timeframe of years: general trends in the overall building ratings, specific building systems that consistently report either very high or very low scores, and the responsiveness of the school systems to the deficiencies that are identified.

Comprehensiveness

This legislative focus area has been partially addressed in the Master Plan. Two of six components are not addressed. Unaddressed components are:

- School system's facilities master plan should include information about projects planned pursuant to capital improvement program
- Update information about current projects and planned projects annually as the master plan is updated
- Use innovative approaches to reduce costs associated with existing facilities
- Track completion of repair and maintenance services

Master Plan Table 14. Master Plan Coverage of Focus Area 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Components</th>
<th># of Unique Strategies</th>
<th>Implementation Status</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14.1 - Incorporate the school system's facilities master plan (into the master plan)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fully 1 Partially 0 Not 1 Unclear 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.2 - School system's facilities master plan should include information about projects current underway</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fully 1 Partially 0 Not 1 Unclear 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.3 - School system's facilities master plan should include information about projects planned pursuant to capital improvement program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Fully 0 Partially 0 Not 0 Unclear 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.4 - Update information about current projects and planned projects annually as the master plan is updated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Fully 0 Partially 0 Not 0 Unclear 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.5 - Use innovative approaches to reduce costs associated with existing facilities (Westat 1.042)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Fully 0 Partially 0 Not 0 Unclear 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.6 - Track completion of repair and maintenance services (Westat 1.043)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Fully 0 Partially 0 Not 0 Unclear 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implementation Status

Because the facilities master plan was a separate document and not specifically incorporated into the Master Plan document, the strategy was categorized as not implemented. Much of the information in the Facilities section of the Status Report focused on the disposition about school closings and minimal information was provided about projects currently underway; therefore component 14.2 was assigned to the partially implemented category. A review of the CEFM and other documents related to facilities planning and maintenance is found in the Improvement of System Management section of this report.

Focus Area 15. Parental Involvement

The next focus area was to “develop a program to train principals and assistant principals in methods of increasing parental involvement at the school level, including strategies for connecting parents to the instructional program of the school and for measuring the level of parental involvement through meaningful indicators.”

Summary of context and meaning

The Westat (2001) evaluation included a survey of principals. The survey results indicated that a correlation exists between reported increase in parental involvement and the School Performance Index. Findings also indicated that one of the barriers to parental involvement is that principals do not encourage parents to participate in decision-making activities as the School Improvement Teams (SITs).

In the MGT (2007) evaluation, focus group participants and points of contact indicated that districts used a variety of means to communicate their major priorities to stakeholders, including media, websites, public forums, Parent Teacher Associations’ and School Improvement Teams’ annual reports, and outreach by the superintendents and assistant superintendents. Principals of the higher-performing schools cited parental involvement as an improvement strategy.

Key components and Master Plan initiatives for this legislative focus area are summarized below.

15.1 – Develop a program to train principals and assistant principals in methods of increasing parental involvement at the school level

Summary of strategies and initiatives. There are two Master Plan initiatives that address this component. The first is to provide training and professional development to staff regarding family and community involvement. The second, closely related, is to create professional development regarding family and community engagement.

15.2 – Train principals and assistant principals in strategies for connecting parents to the instructional program of the school (also see Westat 1.122)
Summary of strategies and initiatives. There are no Master Plan strategies aligned with this component.

15.3 – Train principals and assistant principals in strategies for measuring the level of parental involvement through meaningful indicators

Summary of strategies and initiatives. There are no Master Plan strategies aligned with this component.

15.4 – Increase number of parent liaisons in the schools (Westat 1.121)

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Parent liaisons are mentioned in the “Schools in School Improvement” narrative when best practices for middle level grades are discussed. Although this strategy is among best practices for middle schools and high schools, the lack of IST’s, attendance monitors, and parent liaisons are also mentioned as challenges that prohibit schools at all levels from exiting school improvement. The Master Plan does not include any strategies to address these challenges.

Comprehensiveness

This focus area is not comprehensively addressed. The Master Plan does not address the key components that concern training school administrators on strategies for increasing parental involvement or measuring parental involvement levels. There are also no strategies for increasing the number of parent liaisons in the schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Components</th>
<th># of Unique Strategies</th>
<th>Implementation Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.1 - Develop a program to train principals and assistant principals in methods of increasing parental involvement at the school level</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.2 - Train principals and assistant principals in strategies for connecting parents to the instructional program of the school (also see Westat 1.122)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.3 - Train principals and assistant principals in strategies for measuring the level of parental involvement through meaningful indicators</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.4 - Increase number of parent liaisons in the schools (Westat 1.121)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implementation Status

The strategy categorized as fully implemented involved developing, for school staff, professional development on family and community engagement. The Status Report information indicated that the strategy for providing training and professional development to leverage family and community involvement, a culturally responsive learning community, smaller learning community structures, etc., had not been implemented but was planned; therefore, the strategy was categorized as not implemented.

Focus Area 16. Implementation and Evaluation of Reforms

The sixteenth legislative focus area was to “include measurable outcomes and time lines for the implementation and evaluation of the reforms made in accordance with the Master Plan and the reporting of this information to the Governor, the Mayor of Baltimore City, and, in accordance with Section 2-1246 of the State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the General Assembly.”

Summary of context and meaning

The State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland states that the President and Speaker of the General Assembly have the right to request reports from any branch of the state government. As the Maryland State Department of Education is a branch of the state government, HB 853 set forth that the BCPSS, in developing the state-mandated Master Plan and responding to state-mandated corrective actions, must make provision in the Master Plan for satisfying any state legislative reporting requirements. In addition, the Master Plan was expected to provide for reports to the Mayor of Baltimore City and the Governor of Maryland.

This legislative focus area also includes the mandate that the Master Plan include measurable outcomes and timelines for implementation, as well as a strategy to evaluate the effectiveness of Master Plan reforms.

The key components and initiatives related to this focus area are summarized below. Please note that the entire Master Plan could be interpreted as responding to this legislative requirement, as each strategy in the document is linked with a time frame for implementation – in this case, the 2006-2007 academic year – as well as with a measurable objective. However, the analysis that follows highlights only the 58 Master Plan strategies that specifically mention evaluation and/or reporting activities within the text of the strategy itself.

16.1 – Measurable outcomes for implementation of Master Plan reforms

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The Master Plan includes initiation of several accountability and reporting processes in which reports of measurable outcomes are generated by the Division of Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Accountability (DREAA). These
measurement and reporting processes include: AttendanceStat, EnrollmentStat, MPStat, LearningStat, HRStat, RetentionStat, and InterruptionStat. Each of these is designed to report on measurable outcomes associated with the corresponding area of the Master Plan. Another key initiative for this focus area is the development and implementation of a new data reporting system. Additionally, several Master Plan strategies mention data, presumably based on measurable outcomes, for student and program performance. Along this line, one strategy calls for measurement and comparison for outcomes for students in LRE-A, -B, and -C.

16.2 – Evaluation of Master Plan reforms

Summary of strategies and initiatives. All of the “Stat” efforts listed above can also be interpreted as internal evaluation mechanisms. In addition, the Master Plan refers to several external evaluation strategies, including providing data access and guidance to the evaluator selected by the MSDE and receiving an external audit of systems and publications by the Stupski Foundation.

16.3 – Timelines for implementation of Master Plan reforms

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Here, there is one key strategy – the implementation of MasterPlanStat, the process by which departments report on the measurable outcomes of strategies in the Master Plan and Corrective Action Plan. MasterPlanStat is driven by the timelines for reform implementation that are in the Master Plan itself. The implementation evaluation data suggest that central office staff consider MasterPlanStat a helpful way to stay abreast of progress with respect to the Master Plan outcomes and timelines for which they and others are responsible (Bonham and Gorham, 2008).

16.4 - Timelines for evaluation of Master Plan reforms

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Although not specifically stated in the Master Plan, it can be presumed that the “Stat” processes occur on a regular basis according to timelines established by central office administrators. As such, this calendar for “Stat” meetings may function as a timeline for internal evaluation of Master Plan reforms.

16.5 - Reporting Master Plan reform outcomes to Governor

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The Master Plan’s only references to reporting are the strategies that refer to acquiring, implementing, testing, and adopting a new data integration and reporting system. This initiative is listed here and under the two key components that follow because it is assumed that any reports generated by the BCPSS for submission to external entities will rely on data that is stored and analyzed by this new data reporting system.

16.6 - Reporting Master Plan reform outcomes to Mayor

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Please refer to Component 16.5.
16.7 - Reporting Master Plan reform outcomes to General Assembly

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Please refer to Component 16.5.

16.8 - Continue collaborative relationship between the BCPSS and the MSDE (Westat 1.012)

Summary of strategies and initiatives. One of Westat’s (2001) key recommendations was that the BCPSS continue the City-State Partnership. Certain aspects of the Partnership are built into the system, such as the joint appointment of the School Board and the mix of city, state, and federal funding that undergirds the system. In addition, several Master Plan strategies mention partnership or collaboration with the MSDE. These include: partnering with the MSDE to provide professional development for teachers, bus drivers and school leadership teams; working with the MSDE to develop HSA Mastery courses for students who fail HSA exams; cooperating with MSDE’s outside evaluator; requesting MSDE funding for the Governor’s Academy and other programs; and partnering with the MSDE to increase the number of schools implementing the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS).

Comprehensiveness

Each component of this focus area is addressed by at least one strategy. However, the Master Plan does not explicitly describe evaluation and implementation timelines aligned with each strategy, which may leave these details in the hands of individual departments, schools, and staff members. In addition, the Master Plan does not outline reporting requirements for specific external entities such as the Governor, Mayor, and General Assembly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master Plan Table 16. Master Plan Coverage of Focus Area 16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.1 - Measurable outcomes for implementation of Master Plan reforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.2 - Evaluation of Master Plan reforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.3 - Timelines for implementation of Master Plan reforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.4 - Timelines for evaluation of Master Plan reforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.5 - Reporting Master Plan reform outcomes to Governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.6 - Reporting Master Plan reform outcomes to Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.7 - Reporting Master Plan reform outcomes to General Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.8 - Continue collaborative relationship between the BCPSS and the MSDE (Westat 1.012)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implementation Status

Evidence in the Status Report indicates that only six of the 58 strategies (10%) in this focus area have been fully implemented. Nearly 50% of the strategies for this focus area have been partially implemented. Those not implemented include: training staff to access and analyze data, implementing a “Stat” process to track teacher retention, and partnering with MSDE to support teacher leadership training and increased implementation of PBIS. Implementation status is unclear for five strategies.

Focus Area 17. School Reconstitution

The next focus area was to “improve the status of schools that are subject to a state reconstitution notice.”

Summary of context and meaning

At the time of the Westat evaluation, reconstitution was the process used by the MSDE to intervene when schools were not performing adequately. These schools were eligible for additional funding and technical assistance from the BCPSS and were required to have a school improvement team and develop a school improvement plan. “Reconstitution” has been replaced with “school improvement” as the NCLB-inspired terminology used for these schools. Following the timeline outlined in NCLB, current school improvement (SI) designations are: SI Year 1, SI Year 2, Corrective Action (CA), Restructuring Planning (RS Plan), and Restructuring Implementation (RS Implement). In 2006, 89 BCPSS schools were in some stage of improvement including 54 in restructuring implementation, the final step in the school improvement process, and nine more in the restructuring planning process.

17.1 – Improve the status of schools that are subject to a state reconstitution notice
(also see Westat 1.104)

Summary of strategies and initiatives. Master Plan strategies related to improving schools in improvement have been linked to this focus area. These 11 strategies include: establishing a School Improvement Office to implement a management structure for low-performing schools; implementing and monitoring alternative governance structures for schools in school improvement; providing technical support in the development, implementation, and monitoring of school improvement plans; instituting data-driven instructional programs; maximizing the use of State School Improvement Grant funds for low-performing schools; ensuring Title I compliance; and providing schools with Restructuring Implementation Specialists to support and monitor plans. At the school level, one Master Plan strategy calls for the development of instructional leadership teams, grade level teams, and school improvement teams to analyze student assessment and other data to determine causes and appropriate actions.
Comprehensiveness

This area has only one component and is, therefore, comprehensively addressed by the Master Plan.

Implementation Status

Seven of the 11 school improvement strategies were implemented and four were partially implemented. The corrective action, establishing a School Improvement Office, was among the fully implemented strategies although the director of the office retired from BCPSS in 2007 and the office is currently being managed by a School Improvement Coordinator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Components</th>
<th># of Unique Strategies</th>
<th>Implementation Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17.1- Improve the status of schools that are subject to a state reconstitution notice (also Westat 1.104)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Fully 7, Partially 4, Not Clear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus Area 18. Teacher Input

The eighteenth legislative focus area was to “develop an effective system of teacher input regarding implementation of school reform initiatives, curriculum, instruction, and professional development that includes active and ongoing consultation with classroom teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.”

Summary of context and meaning

One of the key recommendations of Westat (2001) was to reach out to teachers to obtain their input on curricula and professional development. This legislative focus area responds to and expands upon Westat’s recommendation, indicating that teachers’ input should be “active and ongoing” and should be obtained from teachers at all levels of the system.

In the MGT (2007) evaluation, many district officials and principals chose Professional Learning Communities (PLC) as their potential best practice. PLC is a collaborative process in which teachers work together to plan instruction and share experiences and learnings. MGT found that collaborative planning could be effective when combined with data-driven decision making.
18.1 – Develop effective system of teacher input regarding implementation of school reform initiatives

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The single Master Plan strategy that addresses this component is administration to teachers of a universal school climate survey.

18.2 – Develop effective system of teacher input regarding implementation of school curriculum and instruction (also see Westat 1.032)

Summary of strategies and initiatives. In addition to the universal school climate survey mentioned above, the Master Plan includes two strategies related to revision and implementation of the English I and II curricula per feedback of school-based educators and administrators and based on 2005-2006 benchmark results.

18.3 – Develop effective system of teacher input regarding implementation of professional development (also see Westat 1.031)

Summary of strategies and initiatives. The four key Master Plan initiatives aligned with this component are to administer a teacher professional development survey, collect online data from participants regarding professional development activities, and to use data from both sources to design a teacher evaluation-driven workshop menu designed to offer differentiated professional development. The universal school climate survey mentioned above is also a strategy to address this key component.

18.4 – Develop effective system of teacher input that includes active and ongoing consultation with classroom teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels

Summary of strategies and initiatives. This component is not addressed in the Master Plan. However, the need for an effective system of teacher input is highlighted by the findings of the evaluation of Master Plan implementation (Bonham and Gorham, 2008), in which several veteran teachers remarked to focus group facilitators that, in their years of service, they had never been invited to participate in a focus group where they were encouraged to share their experiences and perceptions about teaching. These teachers appreciated the opportunity to have their voices represented in the evaluation that would be read by central office administrators and other stakeholders. They also expressed excitement about the opportunity to listen to the views of their colleagues and to share their own experiences. One participant said, “I think this is a step in the right direction . . . being able to sit and hear constructive comments about policy from professional teachers because heretofore, we weren’t exactly able to do this.”
Comprehensiveness

This legislative focus area is partially addressed. One component, “develop effective system of teacher input that includes active and ongoing consultation with classroom teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels,” is not addressed.

Implementation Status

Evidence was documented for nearly all seven of the teacher input strategies. The specified evidence for evaluating strategy implementation was not documented for the strategy that focused on utilizing on-line data collection tools to evaluate staff development offerings and revise them based on participant feedback.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master Plan Table 18. Master Plan Coverage of Focus Area 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Components</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.1 - Develop effective system of teacher input regarding implementation of school reform initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.2 - Develop effective system of teacher input regarding implementation of school curriculum and instruction (also see Westat 1.032)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.3 - Develop effective system of teacher input regarding implementation of professional development (also see Westat 1.031)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.4 - Develop effective system of teacher input that includes active and ongoing consultation with classroom teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus Area 19. Mentoring Programs

The final legislative focus area was to “institute a formal procedure by which the directors of each of the school systems mentoring programs, including React, Blum, and Peer Mentoring, will provide semiannual reports to the Board and senior management concerning the perspectives of the mentoring programs.”

Summary of context and meaning

One of Westat’s (2001) recommendations related to teacher engagement was to continue mentoring programs in which experienced teachers provide support to new teachers and those experiencing challenges. This legislative focus area indicates that the directors of these teacher
mentoring programs should report regularly to the BCPSS Board and management regarding their unique perspectives and experiences working with teachers.

In the MGT (2007) evaluation, ten districts’ 2006 Master Plan Updates contained process strategies related to “Recruitment/Retention of Highly Qualified Personnel.” The majority of these strategies included mentoring of new teachers.

19.1 – Institute formal procedure by which the directors of each of the school systems' mentoring programs (React, Blum, Peer Mentoring) will provide semiannual reports to the Board concerning the perspectives of the mentoring programs (also see Westat 1.033)

Summary of strategies and initiatives. There are no Master Plan strategies that address this component.

19.2 – Institute formal procedure by which the directors of each of the school systems' mentoring programs will provide semiannual reports to the senior management concerning the perspectives of the mentoring programs

Summary of strategies and initiatives. There are no Master Plan strategies that address this component. However, the status report indicates that a summary of the mentoring program’s professional development assessment data will be shared during MasterPlanStat meetings.

Comprehensiveness

This focus area is not addressed by the Master Plan.

Implementation Status – Not applicable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master Plan Table 19. Master Plan Coverage of Focus Area 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Components</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.1 - Institute formal procedure by which the directors of each of the school systems' mentoring programs (React, Blum, Peer Mentoring) will provide semiannual reports to the Board concerning the perspectives of the mentoring programs (also see Westat 1.033)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.2 - Institute formal procedure by which the directors of each of the school systems' mentoring programs will provide semiannual reports to the senior management concerning the perspectives of the mentoring programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary and Discussion

**Question 1:** To what extent does the Master Plan include programs, policies, procedures, or initiatives that address each focus area?

**Master Plan Table 20** is a summary of findings about the number of key Master Plan strategies associated with each legislative focus area, the comprehensiveness with which each focus area was addressed by the strategies, and the percentage of total strategies for each focus area that were fully, partially, or not implemented. This assessment is based on written information contained in the Master Plan Status Report (BCPSS, 2007i). Other documents that may have been requested by MSDE staff were not reviewed in this section, although some of them may be reviewed in the following section on Improvement in System Management.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative Focus Area</th>
<th># of Unique Strategies</th>
<th>Comprehensiveness*</th>
<th>Implementation Status† (% of strategies)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Incorporate the key recommendations of the Westat Report</td>
<td>Continue city-state partnership</td>
<td>See Key Component 1.010</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase access to high quality IT</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upgrade communications between administrative levels and school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build staff capacity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>FA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluate extra supports for young learners and learners at risk</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to use Master Plan as a comprehensive blueprint</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Integrate special and general education, and measure impact on student performance</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Provide a balanced and efficient allocation of qualified educational and managerial staff</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Provide effective curriculum and instructional programs:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Citywide curriculum framework with a developmental sequence</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Professional development that involves school-based practitioners in the design and implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Educational program to meet the needs of students at risk of educational failure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Review student performance-based evaluation system with teacher/principal investment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement no longer exists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Provide systems to track student enrollment, attendance, academics, discipline, and compliance with IDEA</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>FA</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Master Plan Table 20. Legislative Focus Areas, Number of Master Plan Strategies, Comprehensiveness, and Implementation Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative Focus Area</th>
<th># of Unique Strategies</th>
<th>Comprehensive*</th>
<th>Implementation Status† (% of strategies)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 Provide financial management and budgeting system to maximize resource use</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>FA</td>
<td>60 0 20 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Provide effective hiring and assignment of teachers and staff</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>35 35 30 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Develop an effective system of providing instructional materials and support services</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>FA</td>
<td>40 53 5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Develop and evaluate model school reform initiatives</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>FA</td>
<td>25 75 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Develop a timely process to distribute, validate, and analyze student test data</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>FA</td>
<td>25 54 7 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Provide appropriate methods for student assessment and remediation</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>FA</td>
<td>41 48 9 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Develop and implement a student code of discipline</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>FA</td>
<td>0 0 0 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Incorporate the facilities’ Master Plan and update annually</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>0 50 50 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Train principals and assistant principals in increasing parental involvement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>50 0 50 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Implement and evaluate reforms included in the Master Plan</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>FA</td>
<td>10 64 17 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Improve the status of schools that are subject to a state reconstitution notice</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>FA</td>
<td>64 36 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Develop a system of teacher input on reforms, initiatives, curriculum, instruction, and professional development</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>14 57 14 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Institute a formal procedure for semiannual reports on the mentoring programs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The assessment scale for comprehensiveness is as follows: FA – Fully addressed; PA – Partially addressed; NA – Not addressed
† The numbers refer to the percentage of strategies that were fully implemented (F), partially implemented (P), not implemented (N), or unclear (U).

The table shows that the number of strategies associated with each focus area range from zero to 227 strategies, an average of almost 30 strategies per focus area. The two focus areas with the greatest number of strategies were Focus Areas 4 and 9 (227 and 124 strategies respectively). These two areas involve legislative requirements related to curriculum, instruction, and support services. Appendix D provides a list of all Master Plan strategies linked with each key component in the analysis.

Although the number of strategies associated with each focus area could be interpreted as evidence of the focus area’s importance in the Master Plan, it is our position that it is the nature
of the strategies rather than the number of strategies which has the greatest impact on the achievement of NCLB, BTE, and ESEA goals. Ideally, all strategies should reflect best practice, be supported by research, and developed in response to the data. The Master Plan was approved by the MSDE. Some central office staff have expressed to the evaluators the idea that the approval of the Master Plan is in itself an endorsement of the strategies and confirmation that the strategies represent best practice. If this is not the message that the MSDE wants to communicate, then it should be made clear to all the BCPSS stakeholders how the MSDE approval of the Master Plan should be interpreted.

No Master Plan strategies could be linked to several components in this analysis. However, as discussed in the background section of Focus Area 1 (Westat recommendations), this finding in some instances may be due to the fact that the Master Plan framework is primarily shaped by federal and state laws and regulations since the passage of HB 853. It is important to note that various other documents in addition to the Master Plan have been reviewed for this report (see next report section, “Improving Systems Management”). These additional documents may provide additional information about the recommended or required strategies and practices referred to by the legislature and Westat.
Question 2: To what extent is each focus area fully (comprehensively) addressed in the Master Plan?

Eleven focus areas (and all of their key components) were fully addressed in the Master Plan: These are shown in Master Plan Table 21.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Area</th>
<th>Key Component(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase access to high quality information technology (IT)</td>
<td>Integrate IT plans district-wide; expand and enhance IT related to instruction and operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build staff capacity</td>
<td>Provide leadership to principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student tracking system</td>
<td>Effective management information systems (MIS) that include the capacity to track student enrollment, attendance, academic records, discipline records, compliance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; continue development of compatibility between SETS and SASI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial management system</td>
<td>Provide effective financial management and budgeting system to ensure maximization and appropriate utilization of resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional materials and support</td>
<td>Develop effective system for providing and distributing instructional materials; develop effective system of providing support services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School reform</td>
<td>Develop and evaluate model school reform initiatives; expand reform efforts at middle and high schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributing student test data</td>
<td>Process for distributing student test data to area officers and principals; process for distributing central office resources to validate and analyze student test data; timelines for distribution of test data to area officers and principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student assessment and remediation</td>
<td>Appropriate methods for student assessment and remediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student code of discipline</td>
<td>Develop and implement a student code of discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation and evaluation of reforms</td>
<td>Measureable outcomes for implementation of Master Plan (MP); evaluation of MP reforms; timelines for implementation of MP and evaluation of MP reforms; reporting MP reform outcomes to Governor, Mayor, General Assembly; continue collaborative relationship between the BCPSS and MSDE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School restructuring</td>
<td>Improve the status of schools that are subject to restructuring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Master Plan Table 22 summarizes the focus areas partially addressed in the Master Plan: (Only the key components listed in the table below were addressed in the Master Plan; the remaining key components which were not addressed in the Master Plan are discussed later in this section.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Area</th>
<th>Key Component(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade communications between administrative levels and the schools</td>
<td>Improve process of providing financial data to schools and general public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra supports for young and at-risk learners</td>
<td>Provide additional funds to ready-to-learn initiatives that are successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate special and general education</td>
<td>Address compliance and system efforts to achieve organization and instructional integration of special and general education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocation of staff</td>
<td>Provide a balanced and efficient allocation of qualified staff to support managerial and educational functions of school system; develop and monitor class-size reduction plan for all elementary grade levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and instruction</td>
<td>Development and dissemination of citywide curriculum reflecting MSA and VSC standards and an appropriate developmental sequence for students; school-based practitioner involvement in design and implementation of high quality PD; differentiated PD activities; PD derived from analysis of student performance and needs; PD meeting NSDC standards; effective educational program for students at risk of educational failure; conduct audit of curricula; evaluate ready-to-learn initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher hiring and assignment</td>
<td>Provide effective hiring of teachers and staff; increase proportion of certified and tenured teachers serving middle and high schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities Master Plan</td>
<td>Incorporate facilities master plan into the Master Plan; facilities master plan should include information about project currently underway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>Develop a program to train principals and assistant principals in methods of increasing parental involvement at the school level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The focus areas (including the listed components) not addressed in the Master Plan are shown in Master Plan Table 23.

**Master Plan Table 23. Legislative Focus Areas Not Addressed in the Master Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Area</th>
<th>Key Component(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master Plan as a comprehensive blueprint</td>
<td>Improve level of coordination and alignment of budgeting process with Master Plan; align programs and resources and coordinate schedules for development and public presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher input</td>
<td>Formal procedure by which the directors of each of the school system’s mentoring programs will provide semiannual reports to the Board and to the senior management concerning mentoring program perspectives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A closer look at focus areas that were partially or not addressed in the Master Plan was undertaken in order to determine which key components were not addressed in the Master Plan resulted in the following list of key components:

**Sharing and reporting of data from the central office level to area and school level staff and/or external stakeholders.**

Westat recommendations 1.061 and 1.062 -- that concern reporting financial data to schools and ensuring timely data delivery -- are both unaddressed in the Master Plan. Similarly, the Master Plan does not provide a detailed process or timeline for distributing student test data to principals or area officers as required by Focus Area 11. The legislative reporting requirements that specifically mention the Governor (16.5), Mayor (16.6), and General Assembly (16.7) are likewise not specifically addressed in the Master Plan. Finally, the Master Plan does not address the legislative requirement that teacher mentoring programs present reports to the board and senior management (Focus Area 19).

**Measuring and evaluating the outcomes of reforms.**

Westat recommendation 1.105, that the system evaluate interventions related to its new promotion and retention policy, is not addressed in the Master Plan. Likewise, the Master Plan does not make provision for capturing program quality information to evaluate the integration of special and general education (Component 2.5) or for measuring the system-wide impact of this integration on student performance (Component 2.6). Another area of measurement and evaluation not addressed in the Master Plan is training school leaders to measure the level of parental involvement in their schools (15.3).

**Facilities components.**

The Facilities component of the Master Plan Status Report does not discuss innovative approaches for reducing costs associated with existing facilities (14.5) or mechanisms for
tracking completion of repair and maintenance services (14.6). Any discussion is these areas would be found in the Comprehensive Educational Facilities Master Plan.

Staff assignment and fiscal/qualitative analysis of staffing.

The Focus Area 8 components that concerned effective assignment of teachers and staff were not addressed in the Master Plan. Likewise, key components 3.3 and 3.4, which call for a qualitative and fiscal analysis, respectively, of central and area staffing were not addressed. Other documents discuss allocation of positions, but a separate evaluation (Bonham and Gorham, 2008) shows that not all allocated positions were filled. A more general discussion of the human resources system is found in the following section.

Training principals and assistant principals in specific parental involvement strategies.

Two key components related to professional development are not addressed in the Master Plan. There are no strategies to train principals and assistant principals in strategies for connecting parents to the instructional program of the school (15.2) or to involve teacher organization representatives in the design and implementation of professional development (4.5).

Alignment of budget process with Master Plan.

Two budgeting mandates are not met: there are no strategies to coordinate and align the system’s budgeting process with the Master Plan (1.111) or to coordinate schedules for the development and public presentation of budgets (1.112).

Alignment of assessments.

The only instructional mandate not addressed in the Master Plan is the alignment of assessments with state standards (12.1).

Teacher input.

The legislative requirement that the BCPSS institute an effective system of teacher input (18.4) is not addressed in the Master Plan.

Question 3: To what extent have Master Plan strategies for each focus area been implemented as of school year 2006-2007?

On average across the focus areas, 36% of strategies linked to focus areas were fully implemented, 34% were partially implemented, 11% were not implemented, and 8% were unclear (i.e., a determination could not be made about the implementation status of the strategy due to problematic, missing, or confusing information provided about the strategy in the Master Plan Status Report).
Focus areas with more than one strategy that had the three highest percentages of “fully implemented” strategies were:

- Evaluate extra supports for young learners and learners at risk (66%);
- Improve the status of schools that are subject to restructuring (64%);
- Provide financial management and budgeting system to maximize resource use (60%).

Focus areas with more than one strategy that had the three highest percentages of “not implemented” strategies were:

- Train principals and assistant principals in increasing parental involvement (50%);
- Incorporate the facilities Master Plan and update annually (50%);
- Provide effective hiring and assignment of teachers and staff (30%).

Determining the implementation status was not without difficulty because it was often unclear whether the information provided in the “Status Report” column of the document was referring to implementation of the strategy, the monitoring evidence, or the objective associated with the goal priority. The inter-rater reliability (percentage of agreement among raters) for the analysis of implementation status was 97%. When there were differences among raters about which implementation status category to assign to a strategy, the difference was resolved by assigning the strategy in question to the more favorable category.
Improvement of System Management

This evaluation assesses the improvement in efficiency and performance of the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) management functions from school year 2001-2002 through school year 2006-2007. These include:

- Financial Management, including Budgeting, Grant Management, and Reporting.
- Management Information Systems and Accountability.
- Facilities and Maintenance.
- Procurement.
- Performance (Human Resources) Management.
- System-wide Organization and Management.
- Communication, Public Relations, and Family and Community Engagement policies and strategies.

A number of organizational changes have occurred since the last assessment by Westat (2001). This evaluation primarily reports findings of the status of identified management functions as of school year 2006-2007. However, it also discusses how the school year 2006-2007 functions show improvement in efficiency and performance of the systems as defined at the time of the Westat report, and upon which the Westat recommendations applied. This evaluation addresses two key questions:

- To what extent have the BCPSS management functions improved in efficiency from school year 2001-2002 through school year 2006-2007?
- To what extent have the BCPSS management functions improved in performance from school year 2001-2002 through school year 2006-2007?

Methods

Below is System Table 1 that details the various reports/documents reviewed in order to conduct our evaluation of the identified management functions. The team conducted interviews in February 2008 with Dr. Benjamin Feldman (Research, Evaluation and Accountability Officer), Ms. Edie House (Director for Communications), Ms. JoAnne Koehler (Chief Human Resources), Mr. Blaine Libsky (Facilities Director), Mr. Jeff Parker (Procurement Director), Mr. Keith Scroggins (COO), and Mr. John Walker (CFO).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Function</th>
<th>Reports/Documents Reviewed (see reference section)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Management, including Budgeting, Grant Management and Reporting</strong></td>
<td>• Baltimore City Public School System (2002b; 2006i; 2006m; 2007f; 2007o)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Clifton Gunderson, LLP (2007a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Grasmick (2005b; 2005c; 2006a; 2006c; 2007a; 2007c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Greater Baltimore Committee (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Howe, Thompson &amp; Teplitzky (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maryland General Assembly (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maryland State Department of Education (2002; 2004; 2006a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• MGT of America, Inc. (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Thompson, Cobb, Bazilio &amp; Associates (2002c; 2003c; 2004c; 2005c; 2006c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Westat (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management Information Systems and Accountability</strong></td>
<td>• Interviews with BCPSS Administrative Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Baltimore City Public School System (2006i; 2006m; 2007n; 2007o)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Clifton Gunderson, LLP (2007a)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Westat (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilities and Maintenance</strong></td>
<td>• Interviews with BCPSS Administrative Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Baltimore City Public School System (2006i; 2006m; 2007b; 2007d; 2007o)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interagency Committee on School Construction (2007b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maryland General Assembly (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Westat (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Procurement</strong></td>
<td>• Interviews with BCPSS Administrative Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Baltimore City Public School System (2006i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Clifton Gunderson, LLP (2007a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maryland General Assembly (2006)</td>
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<td>• Thompson, Cobb, Bazilio &amp; Associates (2002c; 2003c; 2004c; 2005c; 2006c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Westat (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance (Human Resources) Management</strong></td>
<td>• Interviews with BCPSS Administrative Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Howe, Thompson and Teplitzky (2004)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Maryland State Board of Education (2003)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Maryland State Department of Education (2006b)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Westat (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication, Public Relations, and Family and Community Engagement Policies and Strategies</strong></td>
<td>• Interviews with BCPSS Administrative Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• BCPSS Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Baltimore City Public School System (2004b; 2006b; 2006i; 2006m; 2007d; 2007f; 2007n; 2007o)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Westat (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>System-wide Reorganization and Management</strong></td>
<td>• Interviews with BCPSS Administrative Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• American Federation of Teachers (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• BCPSS Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (2006)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Financial Management**

Using Westat (2001) as a foundation for our work, we note that the following summary statement from the report about financial management in the BCPSS that includes budgeting, grant management, and reporting:

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

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

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

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

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

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

With the above charge from Westat, the BCPSS began efforts to gain control of the budget process. In the first two years following Westat, the BCPSS grappled with three major issues; implementation of the Oracle Financial application and attempting to manage a deficit projected at $58 million at FY 2004.

**Oracle Financial Application**

The BCPSS purchased the Oracle Enterprise software prior to the end of FY 2002. The financial application was implemented in FY 2003. The Management Letter with the FY 2003 Audit Report reflected concerns from BCPSS officials that the implementation of the financial application did not go as planned. The Management Response, to a finding in the FY 2003 Audit Report that cited the system for not conducting a post implementation evaluation of the Oracle Financial System, stated:

*The initial implementation of the Oracle Financial Application was poorly done. Various intricate processes and procedures were not in place to appropriately take over the accounting from the City of Baltimore. The financial accounting system was not properly formatted to prepare basic financial statements, validation rules to limit invalid posting of expenditures were not created or implemented, funds budget checking and validation features were not turned on, etc. During fiscal year 2004 BCPSS will implement the Human Resources Management System, which includes payroll and Public Sector Budgeting. These additional modules will enhance and further centralize the accounting system. The Finance and Accounting departments will perform an evaluation on the accounting system to ascertain if the set objectives have been achieved and to determine what steps need to be taken to improve FinnApps. This evaluation and list of recommendations will be completed by December 31, 2005 by the Chief Financial Officer and the reporting staff members.*

The Three-Member Panel Audit Report (Howe, Thompson and Teplitzky, 2004) made the following finding:
BCPS’s Oracle financial management system did not have adequate control -- BCPS’s Oracle financial accounting system allowed any cost center\(^1\) to post expenditures to any valid budget account, whether or not that cost center was included in the approved grant-spending plan.\(^2\) Furthermore, BCPS’s Oracle financial accounting system did not prevent employees from posting to accounts with insufficient funds to cover the expenditures. During the audit period, BCPS’s Oracle financial accounting system permitted a total of $170,508 to be charged to the 21\(^{st}\) CCLC grant that were either over budget, unallowable, unsupported, or unallocable. According to BCPS’s Budget Office personnel, BCPS management minimized validation controls within its Oracle financial accounting system in order to decrease the number of system rejects and exceptions.

The post-implementation was not conducted by FY 2006. It appears, however, that the post implementation evaluation was done in FY 2007, since the finding does not repeat itself in the FY 2007 audit. Problems in the financial application if undetected could create major financial and/or budget problems. A successfully implemented financial application can well document improvements in both performance and efficiency.

There was a decrease in the time required for the reconciliation of the BCPSS bank statements with the use of Oracle Cash Management Module, from six weeks to three weeks. The reduction in time was first noted in the reporting period ending December 2006 and continued to be maintained as of June 2007.

The Deficit

The FY 2002 Audit Report indicated that the BCPSS ended the year with a $9.7 M deficit. By the end of FY 2004, the deficit had increased to $58 M. The Report of the Maryland State Department of Education panel on the BCPSS finances stated:

> During fiscal year 2004, it was disclosed that BCPSS was facing accumulative budget deficit of approximately $58 million. In response to this situation, the City of Baltimore and BCPSS negotiated a short-term loan of $42 million in March 2004 to fund most of the shortfall, with BCPSS agreeing to additional City oversight of its financial operations. Of this $42 million loan, $34 million was repaid to the City in August 2004, with the remaining $8 million to be repaid by June 30, 2006. Also to address the deficit situation, BCPSS decided to terminate approximately 1,000 employees (about half from its North Avenue headquarters). In response to the disclosure of BCPSS financial condition, MSDE in February 2004, appointed a three-person panel to investigate BCPSS financial practices and budget deficit. On July 20, 2004, the panel issued the

\(^1\) A cost center is an organizational unit, such as a school site or departmental office, for which costs are incurred.

\(^2\) A spending plan is the budget for the grant.
results of its investigation, concluding that it found no indication that criminal misconduct contributed in any significant way to the deficit. A MSDE summarization of the problems highlighted in the report included the following conditions:

• Severe breakdowns in communications within BCPSS as well as between BCPSS staff and the Board with respect to the most important aspects of budget priorities.
• A lack of overall structure, discipline and accountability within BCPSS, particularly at the management level.
• A lack of communication among various parties to the City-State “Partnership.”
• Inadequate attention within the 1997 State legislation (SB795) to the practical aspects of transitioning BCPSS from a city agency to an independent school system, and a perception among many stakeholders that the transition was temporary.
• A failure both within BCPSS and externally to respond with urgency to the various alarms that were raised over the course of several years about the financial situation. It should be noted that as the then incoming BCPSS executive management team (including the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer) was being put in place, the deficit situation was coming to light, compelling them to deal with this important issue. Due to BCPSS efforts, according to the audited fiscal year 2005 financial statements, the cumulative deficit had been eliminated.

The BCPSS took aggressive actions to eliminate the deficit once it was discovered. According to reports, once the $58 M deficit was identified in FY 2004, a plan was implemented to eliminate the deficit in two years and improve management processes to reduce the likelihood that a deficit could occur again. The Audit Office of the Maryland State Department of Education, which performs a review of the biannual financial status of the 24 Local Education Agencies, found that the BCPSS was no longer in a deficit situation.

A series of improved management processes have been implemented to more effectively manage the BCPSS budget and reduce the likelihood of the reoccurrence of a deficit situation.

Grant Management

The Westat report noted that a new Office of Grants Management had just been formed to address deficiencies in grants administration. Each annual report subsequent detailed strategies to improve grant administration.

**2002 Finding - Grants Accounting and Management:** We understand that management took steps over the past year to improve grants accounting and management procedures; however, some weaknesses still exist. The System was not able to accurately track accounts receivable or deferred revenue balances by grant. Expenses, in some instances, were charged to the incorrect grant year.
or charged in excess of the grant awards. In addition, during our testing of cash receipts, we noted that approximately $12.3 million was posted to the wrong accounts and was subsequently corrected. This was due to a lack of supervisory review. The System generally records all cash receipts as revenue.

2003 Finding - Expenditures reports and monthly grant reports: During our review of the cash receipts and grants monthly reporting processes, we noted the following:

- Reimbursements for expenditures of three programs were not supported by expenditure reports to support the invoices billed or the draw downs made
- Monthly grant reports were not timely prepared and submitted to grant managers by the Grants Administration. Feedback from grant managers was not documented properly to provide evidence of review
- Payroll detail reports attached to monthly grant reports and submitted to grant managers, were based on only payroll data processed by the payroll system, which does not include major adjusting journal entries posted by the Finance and Grants Administration
- The 770 Grants Expenditure Report is reconciled to the trial balance only when there is a financial statement presentation to the Board.

The auditor expressed a qualified opinion in the 2004 fiscal year audit report on the BCPSS compliance with numerous requirements related to major federal programs. A qualified opinion means that the auditor detected material instances of noncompliance with major program requirements.

2005 Finding - Improve Grants Management Accounting: The accounting for grant activity does not reflect the nature of the activity. All receipts are recorded as revenue without regard to whether they relate to previously recorded receivables, and deferred revenue is not reversed as the revenue is earned. In addition, a year-end entry is made to match revenues with expenditures without reviewing each grant to determine if the expenditures will be reimbursed. If grants that have been overspent are identified, staff from the Grants Office will make the necessary adjustments, but there is no systemic process for reviewing all grants at year-end to determine if there are excess expenditures that should be transferred to the general fund. We recommend that a process be implemented whereby staff from the Finance and Grants Offices review each grant to:

- determine whether unbilled expenditures should be recorded as revenue or transferred to the General Fund;
- determine whether receivables have been collected and properly recorded;
- determine whether deferred revenues have been earned and properly recorded; and reconcile the year-end receivable and deferred balances.
Grant accounting controls appear to be in place and working since no material grant management findings are present in the 2006 and 2007 fiscal year audits.

The changes that have been implemented since 2002 with the implementation of the Oracle Financial application, elimination of the $58 M deficit, improvements in grant management, and other improvements in the financial function document that this function has improved in performance and efficiency. The BCPSS went from deficits to periods of award-winning financial reporting and received a certificate of achievement and excellence from both the Government Finance Officers Association and the Association of School Business Officials.

### Management Information Systems and Accountability

The Westat (2001) report made the following summary statement about Management Information Systems and Accountability in the BCPSS:

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

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

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

### 5. Increase Access to High Quality IT

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

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

Many of the improvements in efficiency and performance in the BCPSS are predicated on access to and the effective use of technology throughout the system. Our review of audit reports from FY 2002 through FY 2007 noted several findings relating to the Information Technology department. The notes on when the findings were corrected are based on management’s response to the finding, and on audit requirements to follow-up on prior year finding, and to repeat the finding if the condition continues to exist.


• Audit FY 2002 - Incompatible Duties (Some IT staff were performing updates to the payroll production files. These updates are the responsibilities of payroll staff). CORRECTED BY Audit FY 2003.


• Audit FY 2005 - Improve Password Administration Policy in the Oracle FMS. CORRECTED BY Audit FY 2006.

• Audit FY 2005 - Strengthen Account Management Controls. CORRECTED BY Audit FY 2006.


• Audit FY 2007 – Information Technology Security, Our review of security related parameters of the System’s operating environments or applications revealed that individuals without access authorization forms to support their
access rights as well as terminated employees were not being prevented access to the system in a timely manner. Other security weaknesses included security parameters not being set to the recommended settings, the System not having a formal patch management policy in place and limited physical access controls to limit unauthorized access to the System’s data center. Management Response indicated that the BCPSS had made corrections to Information Technology Security prior to the Auditor’s recommendation.


All findings were quickly addressed by the Information Technology department, with the exception of the Post implementation Review of the Oracle Financial Application (identified in the FY 2003 Audit) and the development of a Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity plan (identified in the FY 2002 Audit). According to the management response to the FY 2006 audit, large turnovers in the finance office were responsible for the delay in conducting the post implementation review of the Oracle Financial Application. A plan was developed to put together a team from Finance and Information Technology and complete this evaluation by FY 2007. All indications are that this was done. The Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Plan had not been done as of FY 2007, but management response to the FY 2007 Audit stated that a bid would be let in FY 2008 to develop this plan to meet the requirements of legislative audits, external audits and best practice standards.

*The Office of Legislative Audits - Financial Management Practices Performance Audit Report January 2006* included a review of the Information Technology function. In the report, it was noted that the IT department operates an extensive computer system with numerous financial and academic applications. Many applications had been put in place since FY 2002. The report also cited the BCPSS for:

*Having a number of industry-accepted IT application development best practices in place. BCPSS, in implementing the ERP system, made use of a number of best practices including: dedicating an experienced project manager to the project, developing clear business objectives, adopting standard software infrastructure, and specifying a formal project management methodology.*

The BCPSS Master Plan 2006-2008 has a number of Information Technology strategies to support student achievement. They are:

- SASI/SETS Upgrade and Convergence,
- Digitize all student records,
- Develop Prevention Plan application,
- Develop application to manage school rezoning for the Office of Student Placement,
• Develop comprehensive Data Management System to integrate accessibility of Enterprise Data Systems,
• Complete the Wide Area Network (WAN) upgrade,
• Complete the Enterprise Server upgrade,
• Provide full access to computers, connectivity, and technology tools,
• Ensure Universal 508 compliance for students with special needs,
• Provide e-Learning opportunities for staff,
• Support classroom and administrative uses of technology,
• Create new look and feel of the Internet and Intranet web pages,
• Implement a Disaster Recovery/Business Continuity plan,
• Provide ongoing training and support for all mission-critical BCPSS applications,
• Provide services and support to the School Board.

Per review of the Baltimore City Public School System Annual Report (BCPSS, 2006m), the Information Technology department is making consistent progress toward achieving the above-listed goals to support student achievement.

The changes that have been implemented since 2002 with the installation and support of financial and instructional computer software and hardware, the implementation of policies around the security of the systems technology infrastructure, and the ability of the department to adjust quickly to course changes and corrections documents that this function has improved in both performance and efficiency.

**Facilities and Maintenance**

The Westat (2001) report made the following summary statement about Facilities and Maintenance in the BCPSS:

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

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

*The study findings indicate varying levels of satisfaction with the services among school administrators. While there was widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of the maintenance and repair services available to the schools, there was widespread satisfaction with grounds keeping and waste management services. Improvements have also been made in Food Services and Mail Distribution.*
There remains a substantial need for finding ways to address deferred maintenance. Many school buildings have serious problems that interfere with the instructional mission.

**Recommendation 4. Improve Facilities Management**—BCPSS must grapple with several challenges related to facilities management, the solutions to which often appear to conflict with one another. BCPSS operates more facilities than are currently necessary or will be necessary in the foreseeable future. At the same time, many existing facilities are in need of repair and retrofitting if they are expected to meet the changing needs of school staff and students. There also may be a legitimate need for new construction as the student population shifts between different regions of the district. Finally, there are other community and neighborhood concerns that will influence the level of local support for any actions taken in response to these needs. The concerns of the public need to be heard and addressed.

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

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

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

The Office of Legislative Audits (Maryland General Assembly, 2006) reported the following as it relates to BCPSS’ facilities:

*As of March 2005, BCPSS 169 schools had an approximate 123,000 seat / student capacity (based on State standards) compared to an actual student enrollment of approximately 88,000 students. The difference is an estimated excess capacity of approximately 35,000 seats. A trend of declining enrollment has been occurring for several years and is predicted by BCPSS to continue into the foreseeable future. From 1998 to 2005 student enrollment decreased by approximately 18,000 students; BCPSS has projected additional declines in student enrollment totaling 6,400 students by 2013.*
According the same report referenced above, the BCPSS had been plagued by delays in implementing approved Capital projects due to indecisiveness over which schools would actually be closed. It was reported that in April 2005, $56.5 M in state funding had been approved for BCPSS projects with half of this amount approved in 2001 or 2002. The delays over this period of time resulted in significant expense to the BCPSS. Again, from the above referenced report:

_Examples of delayed or deferred projects included 78 projects (most of which relate to wiring for computers) that were approved by the Board during fiscal year 2001, but had not been started as of October 2004. One specific project had been deferred for five years due to potential closure of the school. We also noted capital projects approved for fiscal years 2005 and 2006 related to eight of the schools recommended for closure in the the 2001 Facility Study conducted by an independent consultant._

The Board of Commissioners on October 3, 2005 voted to reduce building capacity in the BCPSS by 15% in three years. The Board charged BCPSS staff with engaging the community to develop a ten-year plan for BCPSS facilities that meets this goal as well as develop a blueprint to modernize all of its school buildings, making recommendations for each BCPSS building, including renovations, additions and new construction. Although the charge does include school closures, an often painful process for communities, the Board’s comprehensive view of the process provides remarkable opportunities for rethinking how a system can best provide quality education programs and additional choices of programs for the students.

To undertake this new master planning effort — _Facility Solutions: the New Vision for Baltimore City Schools_ — the BCPSS reached out to the Baltimore community beginning in the Fall of 2005 through the Spring of 2006 for guidance in what schools to close, renovate and rebuild. The Board of School Commissioners approved the resulting Facilities Master Plan (BCPSS, 2006e) in March 2006. That master plan established a ten-year vision for improving BCPSS facilities, at an estimated cost of $2.7 billion. It also identified 16 facilities to be closed over the next three years to meet the School Board’s directive of reducing the BCPSS facility inventory by 15%, or by 2.7 million square feet.

The Office of Legislative Audits (Maryland General Assembly, 2006) made the following recommendation:

_**BCPSS should take action to ensure the efficient use of resources from a capital planning and maintenance perspective. This should include identifying excess capacity and closing unneeded schools. After closures are finalized, all capital projects should be reassessed to determine continuing justification as well as priorities. Also, BCPSS needs to automate and enhance its capital project tracking capabilities, as well as implement significant changes to its facilities**_
maintenance program. The program should address these issues: preventive maintenance, cost estimates, planning, and staff training and performance.

In February 2007, Facility Solutions II (BCPSS, 2007d) was approved by the Board of Commissioners. Facility Solutions II is designed to guide closures and relocations for the 2007-2008 school year.

The BCPSS was required to report every 60 days on the progress of facility issues to the State of Maryland Public School Construction Program Interagency Committee on School Construction (IAC), when in early 2004 it was found that the BCPSS had made very little progress in addressing the broad spectrum of facility issues. Their report had to address facility issues such as school closures to significantly reduce system-wide capacity, a comprehensive facility plan, progress on school construction projects, environmental safety management programs, inspections and preventive maintenance, and BCPSS staff capacity. An MSDE staff member said that reporting ceased after the 22nd Report of September 2002, since the process had improved immensely.

According to a report from the State of Maryland Public School Construction Program Interagency Committee on School Construction (2007b), the BCPSS had made significant progress in reducing system-wide square footage. As the board approved goal was 15% in three years beginning October 2005, the Board of Commissioners decisions in 2006 and early 2007 had resulted in closures of 2,095,359 square feet, or 11.5% of the total area of the school system. The report also noted progress on construction projects. So noteworthy was the progress on construction projects, that it made it possible for the IAC to approve July 1, 2007, 49 of 51 approved FY 2007 systemic renovation projects, the largest number of systemic renovations that had ever been approved for a school system in a single capital budget.

In regards to the overall management of maintenance in each facility, the report noted improvement as result of committed leadership in the Facilities department, FacilitesStat and CapStat. However, large inconsistencies between reported completed maintenance work and actual completed maintenance work still existed at the time of the review. More time will be necessary to change the culture of maintenance worker and to put in place strong procedures to insure accuracy in reporting the status of maintenance work requests.

The report stressed the urgent concern that the continuity of executive and upper management be maintained in order to carry forward a large range of facility initiatives that have already begun.

The progress in the Facilities department reported in the BCPSS 2007 City-State Partnership Annual Report included the following improvements:
• **Led Facilities Solutions Phase I and Phase II** citywide planning meetings to close, phase-out, and consolidate schools. Made progress towards achieving the School Board’s goal to reduce square footage by 15 percent by 2008; increased the percentage of 6.9 percent from Phase I 2006 recommendations to 12.6 percent in Facilities Solutions Phase II 2007.

• **Relocated over 2,500 students in 30 receiving schools** as a result of Facilities Solutions.

• **Completed $30M in Phase I renovations and $28.5M in Phase II renovations,** respectfully, within a two-month timeframe, and successfully opened all schools on time.

• **Reduced the backlog of capital projects in one year,** 42 capital projects were completed in a six-month period during the 2006-2007 school year, 60 percent more than the previous year, with all the backlog of projects to be completely eliminated by March 2008. In June 2007, there were a total of 18 outstanding projects; 17 have been awarded to date; the remaining one project will be awarded by December 2007.

• **Enhanced preventive maintenance efforts and energy saving installations** in all schools (e.g., the following upgrades were performed: electrical, mechanical, plumbing, boilers, roofing, and windows).

• **Developed the ten-year Comprehensive Educational Facilities Master Plan,** submitted to the State IAC prior to July 1, 2007

The Chief Operating Officer stated during our interview that he has assembled a dynamic leadership team committed to improvements. The team meets every other week to review their performance stats to document progress and make adjustments where needed.

It is very clear from the information provided, that the Facilities and Maintenance function has made significant improvements in performance and efficiency.

**Procurement**

The Westat (2001) report made the following summary statement about Procurement in the BCPSS:

> Since the passage of SB 795, responsibility for procurement has shifted from the City of Baltimore to the district and individual schools. The current policies specify threshold amounts that determine the level of authorization needed for the procurement: any purchase under $5,000 can be authorized at the school level, purchases between $5,000 and $15,000 must be authorized by the Procurement Department and those greater than $15,000 must be authorized by the Board and put out for bid.
Interview and survey findings point to widespread appreciation of the new process. While school personnel recognize that the change has placed additional burden on the schools, they believe that the benefits are more significant. Vendors that serve the district also noted positive effects of the changed policies.

In our evaluation of the improvement in the area of Procurement, we started with a review of findings relating to procurement and looked at whether or not these finding were resolved in a timely manner. Below is a list of findings from review of FY2002 through FY2006 audit report management letters (Thompson, Cobb, Bazilio, 2002c, 2003c, 2004c, 2005c, 2006c):

**2002 Finding - Monitoring of Expenditures.** There are no controls in place to ensure that there is sufficient unencumbered budget prior to procurement. The System's budget personnel do not verify available budget prior to purchase requisitions being submitted by the requesting department to the Procurement Department for processing and approval. In addition, we observed that encumbrances are not recorded timely. Encumbrances are not reconciled until the end of the year for reporting budgetary balances. There are no written policies and procedures for periodically reviewing encumbrances and closing old encumbrances for unliquidated purchase order balances. This lack of budgetary controls contributed to the System's general fund deficit of $9.7 million for the year ended June 30, 2002.

**2003 Finding - Expenditure Monitoring.** There are no effective controls in place to ensure that there is sufficient unencumbered budget prior to procurement, as demonstrated by the following deficiencies:

- The School System's budget personnel do not verify available budget, prior to purchase requisitions being submitted by the requesting department to the Procurement Department for processing and approval
- Encumbrances are not recorded timely;
- Encumbrances are not reconciled until the end of the year for reporting budgetary balances;
- There are no written policies and procedures for periodically reviewing encumbrances and closing old encumbrances for unliquidated purchase order balances.

This lack of budgetary control contributed to the School System's general fund deficit.

**2003 Finding - Purchase order review, compliance with procurement regulations, and approval process of purchase order.** During our review of the procurement processes, we noted the following:

- Instances of approval of purchase orders after goods or services were received.
The controls for ensuring that old outstanding and unliquidated purchase orders are closed and removed from the encumbrance balances needs to be strengthened. During the year, a purchase order that was approved for approximately $4 million and not liquidated had to be adjusted at the end of the audit to reflect a reasonable encumbrance balance.

An affidavit of debarment and suspension of vendors is required by the procurement division only from construction providers. Process of verification is needed to effectively comply with state and federal regulations.

The noted weaknesses in control over purchase orders could result in:

- Unauthorized expenditures being processed.
- Budgetary basis expenditure reports being misstated if encumbrances are not reviewed periodically.
- Noncompliance with state and federal regulations resulting in questioned costs by federal grantors.

The following BCPSS management response to the audit finding is significant here because it points to the establishment of policies and procedures over procurement:

- A new Policy was issued (Financial Controls Circular 27) during the 4th quarter of FY 2003. Those procedures require all purchases greater than $5,000 have a purchase order.
- Since April 2003, the Purchasing Department has run an encumbrance report quarterly. The report summarizes all purchase orders and accounts payable transactions that have not had any activity within the last 12 months. That list is then reviewed with Capital accounting. Once finalized, the purchase orders are closed and the encumbrances are relieved.
- The Materials Management and Logistics Department now requires all vendors bidding for construction procurements, regardless of the sources of funds, to complete a Debarment Affidavit. This document is maintained as part of the bid package.

The above findings were not repeated in the 2006 and 2007 fiscal year audits. This indicates that better processes were in place at that time.

The Maryland General Assembly (2006) audit made the following observations and recommendations:

According to BCPSS records, for $25 million of the $184 million in purchases during fiscal year 2004, BCPSS used a “requisition only” process that did not lead to the creation of a purchase order or an encumbrance in the accounting records. This made tracking of purchase commitments difficult, which in turn could have led to overspending budgets. This “requisition only” process is to be replaced with an internet-based procurement system that will identify...
purchase commitments timely; however, assurances had not been obtained regarding the adequacy of the new system’s security. Other procurement controls were found lacking. For example, in BCPSS automated accounts payable system, five employees were assigned incompatible capabilities over payment processing. We also noted contract-monitoring problems, including a failure to ensure that all services billed were received and were consistent with the terms of the related contracts. BCPSS also needs to modify its employee ethics policy to provide for timely receipt of annual disclosure statements. We did however find several best practices in use, such as employee travel restrictions and attempts to increase procurement efficiency by participation in regional buying consortiums. Recommendations:

1. BCPSS should ensure that corrective action is completed as soon as possible to address all of the findings of the fiscal year 2004 Single Audit. In addition, once the fiscal year 2005 Single Audit is issued; BCPSS should take the necessary corrective actions to address all findings.

2. BCPSS should improve procurement-related controls by ensuring that adequate security/safeguards are in place in the new internet-based procurement system, segregating employee capabilities to initiate and approve payments and securing vendor bid documents.

3. BCPSS should develop a formal process to ensure that all services are obtained at the best price and that monitoring procedures are adequate to ensure that all services are in accordance with key contract provisions.

4. BCPSS should consider requiring new employees to file financial disclosure statements upon their hiring and should ensure that statements for all designated employees are filed timely.

The Director of Materials, who is responsible for all procurement over $500.00, discussed the improvements that had been made in the area of procurement during our interview in February 2008. The district piloted a new Internet-based procurement system called K-12 Buy.com for a year before they launched it throughout the district in October 2007. The system procurement staff negotiates prices and contracts for goods made available in the system. The new system requires an available budget before purchase, requires administrative approval, and the system encumbers the purchasing amount. The Director for Materials believes that staff throughout the system has warmly received the change to an Internet-based procurement system.

To improve the contract process, the Director of Materials has put in place a contract administration group to review and establish all contracts in the district. This has made the contract negotiation process more efficient and has increased the speed of the purchasing process because all contracts are now in the internet-based procurement system.
The new system became operational after the period covered in this evaluation, so sufficient data are not available to determine how effective or efficient the new system is. As well, the contract administration groups are also newly operating and thus sufficient data are not available to determine its effectiveness. These changes are very promising and should over time yield improvements over performance and efficiency.

**Performance (Human Resource) Management**

The major recommendation from Westat (2001) in regards to Performance (Human Resources) was to continue emphasis on building staff capacity.

As identified in Westat and subsequent reports, the BCPSS has devoted significant attention and effort to the vital tasks of recruiting and retaining a “highly qualified” teaching workforce. The Performance (Human) Resources Management function implemented several initiatives that contributed to increased efficiency and performance, thereby, resulting in the department’s ability to make considerable progress in its capacity to recruit and retain its teaching workforce. Improvements in the human resource (HR) function are summarized in terms of efficiency and performance in regard to the following two categories: 1) organization and staffing and 2) recruitment and retention.

**Organization and Staffing**

The Performance (Human) Resources Management function experienced significant improvement in efficiency, due in large measure to its improved use of technology and its ability to reorganize to meet the system’s priorities and most pressing needs. In 2003, the Human Resources Management System (HRMS) was implemented, allowing the department to automate records and procedures and to increase the overall coordination of HR functioning (BCPSS, 2004f). The major benefits of the system include increasing the propriety of personnel transactions and improving administrative efficiency.

In addition to technological enhancements, HR also addressed efficiency by adapting new organizational structures as necessary to handle the system’s changing priorities. These changes include reorganization and expansion of its Certification Office in school year 2003-2004, which was done in part to prepare for the demands associated with the certification documentation requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (BCPSS, 2004f). And, most recently, the Department of Personnel transitioned to dedicated staffing, which permits personnel staff to focus their efforts specifically on one designated school level (i.e. elementary, middle, or high), rather than have their efforts divided among different types of schools with different personnel needs (e.g. grade 4 teachers, grade 7, and grade 10) (HR Interview).
HR also exhibits improvement in efficiency through its success in scanning personnel documents for the past 10 years, thus eliminating paper files as well as the associated cost and personnel power needed to store and manage the records. Similar to the benefits of the HRMS system, this process will decrease the time needed to retrieve, access, and manage information.

**Recruitment and Retention**

Improvements in efficiency as they relate to recruitment and retention strategies and practices also relate to technology. First, HR implemented the *Teacher Track* software which streamlines the teacher application and selection process, decreasing the time required to process and review applications.

Secondly, in collaboration with the MSDE, HR piloted a scanning process to manage teacher certification credentials (HR Interview). Through this process, teacher credentials can easily and accurately be matched to classes to be taught, thus ensuring compliance with requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

**Organization and Staffing**

The system’s progress in the area of staffing is evidenced by three significant performance outcomes. In reference to special education teachers, an MSDE (2006b) report for the 2005-2006 school year, listed as a key accomplishment that the BCPSS: *Ensured that every special education teacher vacancy was filled on the first day of school and related service providers were assigned to every case in BCPSS (p.6).*

Grasnick (2007b) disagreed that this had occurred at the beginning of school year 2005-2006, but said that zero vacancies had been reached by the beginning of school year 2006-2007. Principals’ involvement in and contribution to the teacher selection process has been enhanced through a collaboration with the Baltimore Model Schools Initiative. This initiative offers training in best practices for screening, identifying, and interviewing highly qualified candidates (HR Interview). The training equips principals with the knowledge and skills needed to select strong and effective candidates. Lastly, there was consistent growth in the number of core academic subject classes taught by highly qualified teachers, increasing from 34.3% in the 2003-2004 school year to 46.8% in school year 2005-2006, and finally to 53.0% in school year 2006-2007 (BCPSS, 2007a). These indicators demonstrate systemic progress in improvements related to building staff capacity through a highly qualified teaching staff.

**Recruitment and Retention**

Findings indicate an expanded range of recruitment strategies, which appear likely to yield positive results. Several continued and new initiatives are in place to attract a
broader range and increased number of candidates. Efforts in this area include Alternative Certification routes, the Parato-Teacher model, an emphasis on teachers in high needs areas, and an international recruiting strategy that has resulted in more than 175 teachers from the Philippines joining the BCPSS teaching staff (HR Interview). Being cognizant of the limited supply and high demand for highly qualified teachers, the BCPSS assembled a competitive package of incentives for new teachers that includes benefits and resources ranging from eligibility for a $2,000 early signing bonus (Website), transitional co-teaching opportunities with full salary and benefits, accelerated placement (six step credits) on the salary scale for teachers. (Website). Significantly, the BCPSS has succeeded in increasing the percentage of new teachers hired who meet the highly qualified eligibility status, from just 67% in 2005 to 92% for the 2006-2007 school year (BCPSS, 2007f).

Moreover, retention efforts were improved through expanded reimbursement policies and resources to assist teachers in attaining highly qualified status. Specifically, in 2003-2004 the reimbursement policy was revised to allow teachers reimbursement for PRAXIS fees when they achieved passing exam scores. Also, teachers can now receive 100% tuition reimbursement towards coursework needed for certification, compared to 75% previously. There was also solid participation in programs such as the Maryland Practitioners Teaching Program (MPTP), which assists teachers in qualifying for certification by focusing on coursework needed. In the 14-month period from January 2006 to March 2007, the goal of 200 formally enrolled participants was achieved, demonstrating the program’s relevance to teachers’ professional interest and needs (BCPSS, 2007l). Further, mentors were made available to support new teachers working in schools identified as having fewer than 65 percent experienced teachers or schools in improvement status (BCPSS, 2006m).

The Performance (Human Resources) Management strategies and practices that have been used since 2002 including, the implementation of the HRMS system, the enhanced process and staffing capability for handling teacher certification credentials, the competitive new teacher incentive package, and the implementation of programs to assist teachers in qualifying for professional certification, document the function’s improvement in both efficiency and performance.

**Communication and Engagement**

A major recommendation from Westat (2001) was to Continue Efforts to Involve Parents and Support the Work of the Parent and Community Advisory Committee. The area of communication includes public relations and family and community engagement policies and strategies.

Based on the reports and documents reviewed, the Communication Management System was designed and strategies implemented that have high potential to improve communication and public relation functions, and to increase parental and community
engagement. Their efforts continue to focus on establishing a brand for the BCPSS, telling the story of the district, and fostering meaningful involvement and collaboration with families, the community, and business partners. Improvements in the Communication function are summarized in terms of efficiency and performance in regard to the following: 1) communication and public relations, 2) family and community engagement, 3) partnerships, and 4) listening to the community. Highlights of improvements include the following: the development of two new system-wide publications, the re-launch of Educational Channel 77, and implementation of partnership appreciation/recognition events to nurture existing partnerships and to encourage new collaborations.

Communication and Public Relations.

During the past five years, the communications and public relations areas have revamped their strategies in order to reach a broader audience and to continue to improve the quality of the tools used to share information with internal and external stakeholders. The re-launch of Educational Channel 77 and the development and dissemination of a new publication and a monthly e-newsletter represent the effort to reach greater numbers of individuals using popular and easy to access communication modes (i.e., cable television and the internet). Expanded use of the Teacher Support System (TSS) and publication of the system’s first course catalog exemplify communication improvements that relate specifically to the instructional focus.

Additional improvements in efficiency and performance can be expected when the online newsroom is established via the BCPSS website, to provide the media with convenient and timely access to news and information about the system, and when the master calendar of all BCPSS events is developed.

Family and Community Engagement

The BCPSS continues to develop policies and practices aimed at overcoming the challenges of securing desired levels of family and community engagement. Improvements were noted in the participation level of initiatives such as the Parent and Community Leadership Development resource session and the system’s resourcefulness in providing translators at activities sponsored by the Office of Parent and Community Involvement. Examples of strategies and policies implemented to promote family and community involvement are described below:

- Board approval of the Family Community Engagement policy reflects the collaborative environment desired by the system and provides strategies to assist schools in achieving higher levels of family and community engagement. The policy was approval in May 2004, after a year of discussions with partners and stakeholders and incorporated state and federal parental involvement mandates. Moreover, it includes specific directives for schools such as the requirement of a
family and community engagement team at each school and that there should be a team leader for each school (BCPSS, 2006m).

- The Office of Parent and Community Involvement sponsored a variety of initiatives designed to enhance parental engagement, including the Family Friendly Schools Institute, a “Conversation” with the mayor, and a training session on the role and function of School Improvement Team representatives (BCPSS, 2006m).

- The Office of Parent and Community Involvement provides translators at all of its department and system meetings to decrease the potential for language to serve as a barrier to family engagement for those with limited English proficiency (BCPSS, 2007o).

- Participation in the 2007 Parent and Community Leadership Development Resource session increased by 25% over the previous year, with representation from 84 schools (BCPSS, 2007o).

- *The Breakfast Club* was created to support parents in boosting student attendance, punctuality, and academic performance by providing a healthy, nutritious breakfast every school day…The program expanded this year to include all students in grades Pre-K -12” (BCPSS, 2007f).

- Guidelines pertaining to the School Improvement Plan (administered by the Office of Student Support) now require that the Family and Community Engagement policy be integrated into School Improvement plans, providing evidence of the value placed on family engagement and the cooperation across departments (BCPSS, 2006m).

- A twelve-week ESOL Family Literacy class was implemented to strengthen the home-to-school bond and to decrease barriers to parental involvement.

**Partnerships**

*There is growing evidence that school/business partnerships improve the capacity of individual families, schools and communities to support teaching and learning. When students connect school work with the world of work, they are motivated to learn* (BCPSS Website).

As reflected in the quote, school/business partnerships can provide valuable resources and opportunities for students, schools, and communities. The BCPSS continues to seek out partnerships that increase its capacity to provide students a high quality educational experience and that permit it to maximize its resources. Notably, there was a 17 percent increase in private sector donations from school year 2005-2006 to school year 2006-2007, when donations totaled $1,487,485 (BCPSS, 2007o).

Selected highlights of continued, expanded and new partnerships include the following:

- The Human Resources Department, the Teacher/Principal Quality Office, Towson University, and the Cherry Hill community collaborated to implement
the Cherry Hill Learning Zone. The initiative provides services such as parent workshops, free school supplies, teacher parent meet and greets, and opportunities for immunizations. Additionally, it is designed to provide community access for teachers seeking to meet highly qualified requirements (BCPSS, 2007o).

- In collaboration with consultants from the California-based Stupski Foundation, the Office of Communications developed a comprehensive draft Communications Plan that articulates vital information in a format that is relevant to internal and external stakeholders (BCPSS, 2007o).
- Dual enrollment at Baltimore City Community College consisted of 151 students completing 230 courses in the spring semester of 2007. These students represented 25 BCPSS high schools. Out of the 151 students enrolled, 11 were receiving special education services.
- The Twilight School credit-recovery program expanded, providing more teacher-supported on-line education, for students who have repeatedly failed to meet course requirements successfully. The program provides accelerated courses for students who are over-age and under-credentialed; provides ninth grade transitional students with opportunities to earn credits to move to grade with peers; provides high school programming for dropouts and/or students removed from school or returning from the Juvenile Justice System. In 2007, the following sites received mobile labs/laptops to assist students in accessing the MSDE-approved on-line instruction: Youth Opportunity Academy, Baltimore Urban League Academy, and Acceleration Academy (BCPSS, 2007f).

Listening

The BCPSS began administering the system-wide school climate initiative in the 2004-2005 school year supported by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The BCPSS school climate surveys were developed collaboratively by a large panel of internal and external stakeholders. Among the groups that participated in the development of these instruments were the major labor unions, area academic offices, the Parent Community Advisory Board, local universities, local student services providers, school police, facilities, and advocacy groups. During the second year of the survey, 50% more parents, 69% more students, and 59% more staff completed the survey than during the first year. Almost every climate indicator improved by the second year of administration.

The Communications Management System demonstrated improved efficiency and performance by adapting strategies that allow it to reach a broader audience and by using communication mechanisms that are convenient and attractive to students, teachers, and the general public.
System-wide Organization and Management

A major recommendation from Westat (2001) was to improve the management of people and information to fulfill BCPSS’ primary objective—educating students. The demand for, and use of, data to make informed decisions regarding system organization and management increased significantly during the period under review. Improvements were achieved in developing the infrastructure to collect, assess, and disseminate data on key indicators of student performance and system management. This occurred while the system experienced high turnover rates in top leadership positions, coupled with a series of restructuring events, comprised of creating, eliminating, and revamping positions.

Leadership and Organization

The BCPSS experienced a lack of consistency in the Superintendent/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) position and the key positions reporting directly to the CEO. Four changes in the CEO position occurred between 2002 and 2007, often resulting in a climate of instability, difficulty maintaining morale and commitment to initiatives, and frequent personnel changes in the top administrative positions. In some instances, multiple top positions were vacant simultaneously. The most recent change came at the end of the period included in this evaluation, with the appointment of Dr. Andres Alonso as CEO.

In addition to frequent changes in the CEO position, the system endured numerous changes in organizational structure and management philosophy. Throughout the period there were vacillating cycles of centralization and decentralization, which were exemplified by phases of expansion and phases of layoffs at the central office. Greater improvements in the system’s organization and management functions may be achieved with greater stability in the system’s top administrative positions.

Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Accountability

The Division of Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Accountability (DREAA) was developed as a result of a mandate of the city-state partnership legislation. It was created to provide accurate, timely, and relevant data to inform decision making and to support evaluation of the BCPSS/MSDE Master Plan Implementation. DREAA contributed to improvements in several ways including the following: 1) use of benchmarks to monitor student progress and to target deficit areas; 2) initiating the development of a comprehensive integrated data management system; 3) providing internally generated enrollment projections; 4) publishing detailed and aggregated student data; 5) administration of systemic school climate surveys; 6) increasing its own capacity through the addition of two new full time equivalent program evaluators; 7) collaborating with the departments of Facilities and Budget and Finance to fund a
full time equivalent position dedicated to enrollment projections; and 8) collaborating with agencies such as the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the Gates Foundation, and the Stupski Foundation to enhance its capacity. Additionally, DREAA worked with school staff to produce custom datasets and trained staff to access and use data. **Figure 16** lists some of the reports produced by DREAA.

### School Stat

SchoolStat began in 2001, expanded each year, and serves as the BCPSS’ data-driven accountability system. It is guided by four tenets: (1) timely intelligence shared by all; (2) effective tactics and strategies; (3) rapid deployment of resources; and (4) relentless follow-up and assessment. SchoolStat measures and tracks key indicators related to efficiency and performance in operations and instruction. Specifically, it assists district and school management teams in identifying and prioritizing needs, generating and selecting solutions, and executing and evaluating outcomes. SchoolStat’s central aim is to raise the level of accountability by assessing performance against a standard set of management principles and by providing a structured and collaborative process by which employees work together to assess and address challenges. In school year 2005-2006, BCPSS operations assumed primary responsibility for the Stat processes related to operations, and established priorities related to recruitment of highly qualified teachers, school attendance monitoring, uninterrupted delivery of special education services, and master plan compliance supervision.

SchoolStat achieved a number of measurable accomplishments that indicate enhanced management efficiency and performance for the system. In school year 2005-2006, school leadership teams identified and executed best practice strategies that resulting in improved school attendance across grades. After just a few months of implementation, middle schools’ attendance rose 0.62 percentage points, citywide high schools’ attendance rose by 1.46 percentage points, and neighborhood high schools’ attendance rose by 0.72 percentage points. In addition, the 2006-2007 SchoolStat processes are associated with the reduction of teacher vacancies by approximately 105

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**Figure 16. Sample of DREAA Research Reports**

- 9T Transition Program
- Why Students Leave?
- Direct Instruction
- Class Size Reduction
- Baraka School
- ESOL (Annual Updates for OCR)
- School Profiles
- 21st Century After-school Program
- Smaller Learning Communities: Cohorts I and II
- Charter Schools Year 1
- Special Education Elementary Reading Intervention
- Annual reports on SAT, ACT, and AP
- System Projection Reports: 1-year out; 10-year out
- Roland Park: New Cohort Analysis
- Student Promotion Policy: Impact of Multiple Year Retention
FTEs. Consequently, the organizational benefits of SchoolStat center around its responsiveness to issues, its efficiency in producing options and solutions, and its transparency or openness in sharing information on challenges, approaches, and successes.

Special Education

The Vaughn G vs. Mayor and City Council of Baltimore case resulted in special monitoring of special education. The Special Master’s Report for the 2006-2007 school year stated:

*The Special Master views BCPSS elementary schools as at the cusp of meeting substantial compliance standards for Outcomes 8 and 9 (United States District Court, 2007).*

Some of the system improvements made since the Westat (2001) report that contributed to this finding were the establishment of a Special Education Data Management Unit to provide support to end-users and to monitor compliancy, and a new computer system to track services to special education services that students are receiving, crediting more than 10,000 hours for these services during a three month period in 2006. Nevertheless,

*BCPSS must strengthen its institutional mechanisms for support, monitoring, and intervention relative to delivery of inclusive instructional practices in the elementary (and all) schools.*

Transportation Services

Transportation services were not specifically mentioned in the Westat (2001) report but are important for overall system management, especially with respect to students in special education. Improvements in the system include:

- The number of calls to the Command Center (transportation for students with disabilities) declined from 500 in the start of school year 2005-2006 to less than 50 in the start of school year 2006-2007.
- The incidence of emergency taxicab use declined from 150 during the first few weeks of school year 2005-2006 to 27 during the same period in school year 2006-2007.
- A global positioning tracking system was implemented to provide real-time reporting of all bus locations and students on board the bus, via a bar coded card that is swiped upon entry. The system will increase the BCPSS’ ability to assess performance and efficiency, in that transportation coordinators in each school are able to evaluate service received in comparison to conditions specified in vendors’ contracts.
• A web-based student transportation request system decreased the number of days between service request and approval and the provision of service, from approximately 10 days to 5, and ultimately to 3.

Summary and Discussion

The Westat (2001) report included twelve major recommendations. Half of them related to improvement of system management:

• Improve facilities management;
• Increase access to high quality IT;
• Upgrade communications between the administrative levels and the schools;
• Continue emphasis on building staff capacity;
• Continue to use and develop the master plan as a comprehensive blueprint for system functioning; and
• Continue efforts to involve parents and support the work of the Parent and Community Advisory Committee.

This evaluation reviewed 112 audits, reports, studies, and other documents to the improvement in seven functions of system management over school years 2001-2002 through 2006-2007.

Financial Management, Including Budgeting, Grant Management and Reporting

The Westat report recommended improvement in the level of coordination and alignment of the budget process. The BCPSS faced two major challenges to meet the Westat recommendation. The first challenge was in implementing the new Oracle financial application software. General financial and grant management audits, reports, and studies over the years documented the challenge. The BCPSS appears to have addressed these challenges and the Oracle financial application seems to be working with adequate controls in place to insure proper budgeting, general financial management, and grant management.

The second major challenge was overcoming a reported $58 million deficit reported at the end of FY 2004. The system responded aggressively and eliminated the deficit by the end of FY 2006. In addition, the BCPSS improved its management processes and linked the budget to the Master Plan. The changes put in place have improved the performance and efficiency of the financial management function.

Management Information Systems and Accountability

The Westat report noted that the Information Technology department and IT functions were improving, but recommended that it work in greater partnership with school staff to integrate IT plans district-wide. The IT department and IT functions have made major strides to provide support for software and hardware application throughout the BCPSS. Responding to the Master Plan and other reports and studies, this function has made adjustments to meet the needs of the systems for improved technology support.
For these reasons and others more fully explained in our review, we note that the Management Information and Accountability function has made improvements in performance and efficiency.

Facilities and Maintenance

Westat (2001) identified major needs throughout the BCPSS in the Facilities and Maintenance function. Its major recommendation was to develop a plan that addressed building closures, building construction, and facility maintenance. Since then, major changes have occurred in the leadership of the Facilities and Maintenance functions and the responsiveness of this leadership. Plans have been put in place and adhered to with goals for facility closures, construction, renovation, and maintenance. While there are still areas for improvements that need to be addressed, such as feedback from customers of progress in this function, there have been significant improvements made in the performance and efficiency in the Facilities and Maintenance function.

Procurement

Westat (2001) noted that procurement for the BCPSS had shifted from the City of Baltimore to the BCPSS, and found widespread appreciation of the new process. Findings and recommendations from the subsequent annual financial audits and other reports and studies indicated that weak procurement internal controls caused items to be expended in excess of budget and contributed to deficits in school year 2002-2003 and school year 2003-2004. The BCPSS has responded to these recommendations and strengthened controls over the procurement process. The BCPSS improved the budgeting and encumbrance controls in the Oracle Financial application and moved from a paper process to an electronic process. It piloted a web-based e-commerce procurement application in school year 2006-2007 that integrates with the system’s financial application. Full implementation occurred several months after the period covered in this evaluation. Processes have also been put in place to review and establish all contracts in the districts. This has made the contract negotiation process more efficient and has increased the speed of the purchasing process.

Our review of the progress made in this function indicates that the district has a strong commitment to improve the controls over the procurement process and a commitment to improve the ease of use of the process for the end user. For these reasons, we believe the BCPSS has made improvements in performance and efficiency in the Procurement function.

Performance (Human Resource) Management

The Performance (Human Resources) Management function demonstrated improvement in efficiency and performance as a function of the expanded use of technology, the ability to reorganize its personnel structure to align with the system’s priorities, and the use of innovative recruitment and retention strategies. The 2003 implementation of
the Human Resources Management System (HRMS) allowed for enhanced operational efficiency by integrating the major human resource functions such as payroll, position control, and budget into one coordinated system. HRMS facilitated the generation of audits and reports that increased access to data and increased propriety of transactions. Another measure that contributed to greater efficiency was the collaboration with MSDE to pilot a scanning process to manage teacher certification credentials for compliance with the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. Scanning was also used to convert general personnel records from the past ten years from paper to electronic form, eliminating those paper records. The teacher application and selection efforts were made more efficient with the use of Teacher Track software, which streamlines the application process. Lastly, the Human Resources Department experienced two major reorganizations to meet the system’s most pressing priorities. The first, which related to teacher certification credentials, consisted of restructuring and expanding the Certification Office. The second involved the Department of Personnel transitioning to a dedicated staffing model to improve relationships between human resource staff and school principals with the goal of enhancing the teacher recruitment process.

In terms of performance in building staffing capacity, the Performance (Human Resources) Management function realized improvement in the areas of organization and staffing, and in teacher recruitment and retention. The 2005-2006 school year began with collaboration with the Baltimore Model Schools Initiative to train principals in best practices for selecting effective teacher candidates. At least by the start of the 2006-2007 school year, every special education teacher position was filled. In terms of recruitment, the BCPSS has managed to offer a more competitive package of incentives for new teachers, with benefits ranging from eligibility for an early signing bonus to opportunities for transitional co-teaching. Several initiatives are in place to attract and develop teachers, including international recruitment efforts targeting the Philippines, Alternative Certification Routes, and the Parato-Teacher model. Retention practices improved to assist teachers in attaining highly qualified eligibility. Specifically, the reimbursement policy was revised to lower teachers’ out of pocket expenses associated with Praxis fees and coursework needed for certification. Significantly, the expanded recruitment and retention practices contributed to an 18.7 percentage point increase in the number of classes taught by highly qualified teachers between school years 2003-2004 and 2006-2007.

Communication and Engagement

The Communication Management System was designed and strategies implemented that have strong potential to improve communication and public relation functions, and to increase parental and community engagement. Their efforts continue to focus on establishing a brand for the BCPSS, telling the story of the district and fostering meaningful involvement and collaboration with families, the community, and business partners. The successful re-launch of Educational Channel 77 allows the system to reach a broad audience via cable television, with a full complement of BCPSS inspired
programming that involves students, staff, and administrators. Two new publications, the *Baltimore City Educator* and the *Schools Monthly* e-newsletter have been published and disseminated with the goals of sharing information and publicizing the BCPSS’ successes and accolades. The use of the Teacher Support System (TSS), an electronic portal facilitating teachers’ and students’ access to instructional resources, increased over the period and now includes a course catalog of the system’s classes.

The BCPSS developed several initiatives in the area of Family and Community Engagement to help overcome historical barriers to family and community involvement, and assist schools in meeting state and federal parental involvement mandates. The Board approved the Family Community Engagement policy in May of 2004 that outlined the requirement to have a family and community engagement team at each school. Workshops and informational sessions were offered to provide parents with the opportunity to learn about ways to get involved in their children’s education and to talk with school and Board administrators. In order to decrease the potential of language serving as a barrier to involvement, translators were provided at all meetings sponsored by the Office of Parent and Community Involvement, and a 12-week Family Literacy class was offered for speakers of other languages. The BCPSS began offering breakfast every school day to students through the *Breakfast Club* in order to assist parents in ensuring that students receive a healthy breakfast. One measure of success in parental and community engagement is the 25 percent increase in school representation at the 2007 Parent and Community Leadership Development Resource session compared with the previous year.

In terms of partnerships, the BCPSS has developed meaningful collaborations with higher education institutions, community groups, businesses, and non-profits. The Human Resources Department, the Teacher/Principal Quality Office, Towson University, and the Cherry Hill community joined together to form the Cherry Hill Learning Zone which serves as a community resource for teachers working toward certification, and as a place where parents and students receive information and services. The partnerships with the Stupski Foundation helped in conducting organizational audits, assisting in developing a communication plan, and enhancing research and evaluation capability. Partnerships allow BCPSS to increase other capacities by leveraging additional resources and opportunities.

*System-wide Organization and Management*

The demand for, and use of, data to make informed decisions regarding systemic organization and management increased significantly during the period under review. The infrastructure to collect, assess, and disseminate data on key indicators of student performance and system management improved despite the challenges to stability from a high turnover rates in top leadership positions and a series of restructuring events that created, eliminated, and revamped positions. Four changes in the Superintendent/Chief Executive Office (CEO) position occurred between 2002 and 2007, along with key positions reporting directly to the CEO. These changes often
resulted in a climate of instability, making it difficult to maintain morale and commitment to initiatives. During the period, the system endured vacillating cycles of centralization and decentralization, which were exemplified by phases of expansion and phases of layoffs at the central office.

The Division of Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Accountability (DREAA) was developed as a result of a mandate of the city-state partnership legislation. It exists to provide accurate, timely, and relevant data to inform decision making and to support evaluation of the master plan Implementation. DREAA contributed to system improvements in several ways: administering benchmarks to monitor student progress and to inform instructional planning, providing internally generated enrollment projections, publishing detailed and aggregated student data, and administering school climate surveys. Additionally, DREAA worked with school staff to produced custom datasets and train them on accessing and using data.

SchoolStat serves as the BCPSS’ data-driven accountability system. It began in 2001 and expanded each year thereafter. SchoolStat’s central aim is to raise the level of accountability by assessing performance against a standard set of management principles and by providing a structured and collaborative process by which staff work together to assess and address challenges. SchoolStat achieved a number of measurable accomplishments that indicate enhanced management efficiency and performance for the system. For example, in school year 2005-2006, school leadership teams identified and executed best practice strategies that resulted in improved school attendance across grades. Thus, despite changes in top position, the system achieved improvements in infrastructure to collect, assess, and disseminate data on key indicators of student performance and system management, and increased commitment to use data to inform decision-making.
Public Comments

The BCPSS held four public hearings on the draft report from the evaluation from April 2 to April 7, 2008. These were announced on its website on March 10 in the primary position in the Information & Updates column. (See Figure.) This announcement led to a link to the public hearing announcement. (See Appendix E.) The Executive Summary and Volume 1 of the report were made available through the link on March 29, 2008. The Baltimore Sun included the announcement on April 1, and The Examiner had an article on March 31, 2008, that included the announcement of the public hearings. Representatives from the Baltimore Board of School Commissioners, the Maryland State Board of Education, the Baltimore City Public Schools, and the Maryland State Department of Education were present at each hearing to listen to what the public said. The announcements resulted in limited response from the public. The response is summarized in this section, with full text of the comments included in Appendix F.

Methods

The BCPSS announced and arranged for four public hearings at four locations in various parts of the city. One hearing occurred during the day (11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.); three hearings occurred in the evening (7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.). Copies of the Draft 2 Final Report: Volume 1 and Draft 2 Final Report: Volume 2 were available at the sign-in desk, along with a separate Draft 2 Final Report: Executive Summary for individuals who might only be interested in the Executive Summary and not the full Volume 1.

The evaluation team made a fifteen minute PowerPoint presentation at the beginning of each public hearing to summarize the findings in the report, and then gave the public an opportunity to comment on the evaluation and the report. The President of the Baltimore City Council of PTA Presidents gave brief comments at the second hearing and more complete comments at the fourth hearing. No one else commented during the four hearings. The following three sections contain the major points made by the Council President.
Student Achievement

PTAs look at an evaluation as a process to identify opportunities for everyone. This evaluation does not identify opportunities and did not collect information from the key stakeholders—parents and the community. It did not listen to parents’ concerns. MSDE rejected the master plan for 2004-2005 because it omitted gifted and talented programs (GATE). The Renzulli plan that resulted was not followed in the time frame laid out, and is still not in place. The GATE, Primary Talent Development, and Ingenuity Project are out of compliance. The PTA supports GATE in all the schools.

Key Master Plan Initiatives

The PTA would like to know if the Master Plan drives the budget or does the budget drive the Master Plan. The BCPSS has not given a clear explanation to the process since FY2001. Over that time, many strategies have been eliminated or streamlined. Part of this is due to changes in leadership, but not all. The Board of School Commissioners is not enforcing its own policies, perhaps because it is not knowledgeable about them and the compliance requirement. If policies are not enforced, how can we expect students to achieve? The Master Plan is not even promoting current technologies. It should be promoting smart boards rather than blackboards.

Improvement of Management Systems

The system was reviewed by the legislature in 2006, and all areas stand in need of improvement. While the system may have improved over the years, moving from nothing (e.g., 0%) to something (e.g., 36%) is still not at the place where it should be. The system should be at 100% on all measures of compliance.

Summary and Discussion

The public hearings resulted in one person making comments on the evaluation of improvements in the BCPSS. This leader of parent-teacher associations stated that the evaluation was not much help in identifying areas and opportunities for improvement, and did not collect information from parents, teachers, and the community. Each of these stakeholder groups has their own perspective to the schools and their relationships with their communities. He felt the evaluation was too limited in scope to be useful.
**Discussion and Conclusions**

This evaluation is a requirement of HB 853 of 2002, an extension of the 1997 SB 795 that established the City-State Partnership to improve the Baltimore City Public Schools. It updates an evaluation by Westat in 2001. HB 853 requires the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners and the Maryland State Board of Education to conduct an independent evaluation every five years of the improvements since the previous evaluation. It listed a number of areas that should be evaluated, including improvements recommended by the previous evaluation. The evaluation team of Bonham Research, Paraklete Consulting, and BANKK Management Systems was asked to review and summarize over 100 audits, reports, and assessments that had been conducted between 2002 and 2007, and prepare a report that the two boards could submit to the Maryland legislature. The team was asked to review and evaluate:

1. Improvement in student achievement as represented by MSA and HSA scores;
2. How the Master Plan incorporated areas listed in the legislation; and
3. Improvements in seven management systems that the previous evaluation said needed to improve.

The evaluation of the improvement in student achievement used scores from the student assessments given in the spring of 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007. Different student assessments were given in earlier years that are not compatible with these last four years. The evaluation considered how Baltimore City students in grades one and two compared to the national average on the Stanford Achievement Test in reading and mathematics. For grades 3-8, it looked at the percent of students who scored proficient or advanced on the Maryland School Assessments in reading and mathematics. For high school students, it looked at the percent of students who scored proficient or advanced on the High School Assessment for English II. The evaluation also considered whether the improvements of students in grades three and above were sufficiently large to reach the 100% proficiency goal of the federal No Child Left Behind legislation if they were maintained.

MSA reading proficiency improved between 2004 and 2007 for students in the elementary grades, particularly in grades 3 and 4. This reading improvement was greater in Baltimore City than in Maryland as a whole and, if continued at the same pace for the next seven years, would result in elementary grade students reaching the goal set by the No Child Left Behind legislation. Academic achievement changed little for grades seven and eight, and improved for grade six only in 2007. This contrasts with the improvement observed during these years among middle-grade students in Maryland as a whole. However, education is cumulative. What a student learns in one grade should provide the basis for learning in the next grade. Reading improvement started in grades one and two, and these students came closer to the national norm during the years 2004 to 2007. Slightly over half of sixth grade students in 2007
achieved proficient or advanced scores on the reading MSA. Many of these students were in the third grade in 2004 when slightly over half of the students achieved proficiency or higher. If this pattern holds for current third grade students as they progress through their education, the BCPSS might expect to see almost 70% of sixth-graders in 2010 achieving reading proficiency.

Students in elementary grades also improved in mathematics between 2004 and 2007. The greatest improvement came in the fourth grade, increasing from about half to about three-fourths of the students testing as proficient or advanced in mathematics. As with reading, the improvement in mathematics in the elementary grades was greater in Baltimore City than in Maryland as a whole, and the improvement for the fourth and fifth grades could reach the goal of No Child Left Behind if improvement continues at the same pace for the next seven years. Mathematics proficiency in the seventh and eighth grades remains very low, with such slight improvement that the goal of No Child Left Behind cannot be reached without dramatic change. However, education is cumulative. BCPSS first grade students in 2007 actually scored higher than the national average in mathematics. The pattern of past changes as students move from one grade to the next suggests that the proficiency level of seventh- and eighth-graders could increase substantially as students in fourth and fifth grades in 2007 progress through their education.

Academic achievement of high school students increased slightly between 2004 and 2007, but high school students in Baltimore City remain substantially behind those in Maryland as a whole. They cannot reach the No Child Left Behind goal by 2014 without dramatic change.

The second part of our evaluation considered whether the Master Plan that covered school year 2006-2007 included the areas identified in the HB 853 legislation. The legislation listed 19 topics, but one was no longer applicable and one differed from the others because it referred to recommendations of the previous evaluation. All but four of these recommendations were included in the other areas of the legislation. The evaluation therefore focused on 21 areas. MSDE approved the Master Plan, indicating that it contained what the state, in 2006, thought it should contain. This evaluation, however, was directed at what the 2002 legislation expected it to contain. It considered the approximately 500 strategies that related to school year 2006-2007, the first year of the two-year Master Plan and the last year of the evaluation period. This part of the evaluation focused on three questions:

1. To what extent does the Master Plan include programs, policies, procedures, or initiatives that address each focus area?
2. To what extend is each focus area fully, or comprehensively, addressed in the Master Plan?
3. To what extent have Master Plan strategies for each focus area been implemented during school year 2006-2007?
The Master Plan fully addressed eleven of the twenty-one focus areas: information technology, building staff capacity, student tracking, financial management, instructional materials, school reform, distributing test data, assessment and remediation for students, student code of discipline, and school restructuring. The Master Plan partially addressed eight of the focus areas, meaning that the Master Plan included strategies that addressed some parts of the focus area (such as the instructional integration of special and general education), but not other parts of the focus area (such as involving teacher organizations in designing professional development). The Master Plan did not contain specific strategies to address two focus areas: teacher input concerning the teacher mentoring programs, and improved coordination and alignment of the budgeting process with the Master Plan.

About one-third of the strategies were fully implemented, according to the BCPSS Implementation Status Report for the 2006-2007 school year. About one-third of the strategies were partially implemented. The information about the implementation of most of the remaining strategies indicated that they had not been implemented, or it was unclear if they had. About two-thirds of the strategies in three focus areas were fully implemented:

- Strategies to evaluate extra supports for young learners and learners at risk;
- Strategies to improve the status of schools that are subject to restructuring;
- Strategies to provide financial management and budgeting system to maximize resource use.

About half of the strategies in three focus areas were not implemented:

- Strategies to train principals and assistant principals in increasing parental involvement in decision-making activities, connecting parents to the instructional program of the school, and measuring the level of parental involvement;
- Strategies to incorporate the facilities master plan and annual updates;
- Strategies to provide effective hiring and assignment of teachers and staff.

The third major area of the evaluation was improvement in system management. The Westat report in 2001 identified seven management systems that still needed improvement. The task of this evaluation was to determine if improvements had been made based upon numerous reviews and assessments that have been conducted since then. The team also interviewed a few key staff in these systems to learn of recent changes that may not have been reflected in the reviewed material. The documents and material were reviewed for improvement in performance and improvement in efficiency.

Improvements in financial management were specifically seen in implementing the Oracle financial application software, and in identifying the $58 million deficit in FY2004 and overcoming this deficit in two years. Improvements in information systems were seen in the hardware and software support in a number of financial and academic applications, using a number of industry-accepted best practices. In facilities
and maintenance, major improvements have been made in closing excess building capacity, completing capital renovation projects, and putting procedures in place to monitor facility maintenance. Procurement has improved in performance and efficiency by instituting budget and encumbrance controls, moving to electronic processes, and reviewing contracts regularly. Performance (human resource) management improved with implementation of the HRMS system, organizing for responsiveness, and increasing the number of highly qualified teachers through recruitment strategies and incentives. Communication and engagement within the system, with parents, and with the community has improved with channel 77, new publications, the website, internet, intranet, and increasing private sector donations. Overall system-wide organization has been challenged by high turnover in top leadership and a series of restructuring, yet has improved significantly in the availability and use of data for management and accountability.

After reviewing all the information, the evaluation team reached these conclusions:

• **Student achievement** has improved:
  • Greatly in elementary grades, with some grades on track to reach the No Child Left Behind Goals if the recent pace of improvements can be maintained for another seven years;
  • A small amount in the middle and high school grades, but not enough to catch up with the rest of Maryland, nor to reach the No Child Left Behind goals without substantially greater amounts of improvement in the future.

• **The 2006-2007 Master Plan:**
  • Addressed most of the areas included in HB 853;
  • Most of the strategies associated with the legislative focus areas had been fully or partially implemented by the end of the school year. Changes in federal and state legislation and policy since the passage of HB 853 may account for some focus areas not being addressed in the state-approved Master Plan.

• **System Management** has improved since 2001:
  • In efficiency and performance in all seven areas that were reviewed;
  • These improvement appear to provide a solid foundation for continuing improvement

These conclusion, however, take into account only whether improvements during the six-year period were documented in written audits, reports and other material. The evaluation included new data only from a few interviews with key BCPSS staff. No new data were collected from parents, students, or teachers. The evaluation also did not attempt to address whether the BCPSS is currently at the level various stakeholders think it should be.
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Volume II. Appendix

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