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TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Nancy S. Grasmick *Nancy*
DATE: April 27, 2010
SUBJECT: Race to the Top

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this item is to continue to provide updates to the Maryland State Board of Education regarding Race to the Top, a competitive federal grant program designed to encourage and reward States that are creating conditions for education innovation and reform.

BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). The ARRA lays a foundation for educational reform in four areas and provides \$4.35 billion for the Race to the Top Fund. This grant rewards states for implementing ambitious plans in four core educational reform areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in a global economy.
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success; and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed the most; and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools.

The Maryland State Department of Education is submitting an application during the second round of competition, due on June 1, 2010. Maryland's application for the grant is part of an overall reform effort that will continue with or without the Race to the Top funding. However, an award of funds



would enable Maryland to accelerate its reform efforts. Maryland's unifying theme for reform is closing the achievement gap. This vision for reform has the following elements which are aligned with the four areas of reform identified by United States Department of Education:

- Revise the Maryland State PreK-12 curriculum, assessments, and accountability system based on the Common Core Standards to assure that all graduates are college and career ready;
- Build a statewide Technology Infrastructure that links the current data system elements with analytic elements and the Online Instructional Toolkit to monitor and promote student achievement;
- Redesign Maryland's model for the preparation, development, retention, and evaluation of teachers and principals; and
- Expand implementation of Maryland's innovative statewide system of support with the Breakthrough Center approach for transforming low-achieving schools and LEAs.

Maryland's vision of reform is based on a foundation of reform in Maryland that began with the Sondheim Commission Report (1989) and continued through a second wave of reform which began with the Report of the Visionary Panel (2002). These previous reforms resulted in such actions as the Voluntary State Curriculum, the Maryland School Assessments, and the consolidation of early childhood programs. At the same time, the Maryland General Assembly increased funding for public education by \$1.3 billion over 6 years.

These reform efforts have earned Maryland the number one ranking on overall education quality by *Education Week Quality Counts* for both 2009 and 2010. Additionally, Maryland has been cited for first place ranking in the nation by the College Board for the number of students participating in and earning passing scores on Advanced Placement Exams by *Newsweek* magazine (June 2009) for the number of rigorous programs offered in high schools. The State recognizes, however, that there is still room for improvement in order to meet the needs of all Maryland students and prepare them for college and the workforce in the 21st century.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Board will receive an update on the following aspects of Maryland's reform efforts and the Race to the Top application process:

- Unifying theme
- Common Core (www.corestandards.org)
- Our approach regarding low-performing schools (Attachment 1)
- Teacher and principal evaluation systems and input from focus groups (Attachments 2 and 3)
- Draft application (<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/8C395384-4D13-4716-A2EA-DC394E70E987/23657/DraftRTTApplicationApril132010.pdf>)
- Memorandum of Understanding and LEA signatures

ACTION:

This report is for information only.

Attachments

NSG/mc/tm

1003(g) School Improvement Grants

The School Improvement Grants (SIG) program, authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, provides funding through State educational agencies (SEAs) to local educational agencies (LEAs) with the lowest-achieving schools that have the greatest need for the funds and demonstrate the strongest commitment to use the funds to raise significantly the achievement of their students. **Through a rigorous and comprehensive application process, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) developed an application of over two-hundred pages which was formally approved by United States Department of Education on March 26, 2010.**

Maryland's application reflects Secretary Duncan's determination to ensure that SIG funds are used to implement one of four rigorous school intervention models—turnaround model, restart model, school closure, and transformation model—in each State's persistently lowest-achieving Tier I and Tier II schools.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010, which was signed into law by President Obama on December 16, 2009, included two critical changes to the SIG program. The Act allows SEAs and LEAs to use SIG funds to serve certain “newly eligible” schools (certain low-achieving schools that are not Title I). Also, the law increases the amount that an SEA may award for each Tier I and Tier II school participating in the SIG Program from \$500,000 annually to \$2 million annually.

Tier I: Maryland defines “persistently lowest performing Tier I schools” as those Title I schools (elementary school grade levels Pre-K through five, and middle school grade levels 6-8, and combination schools, PreK-8 at the LEA's discretion) that are the five lowest achieving (or five percent) of all Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in the State. The five identified Tier I schools are in Baltimore City Public Schools.

Tier II: Maryland defines “persistently lowest performing Tier II schools” as those Title I eligible secondary schools (middle school grade levels 6-8, combination schools (grades PreK-8 at the LEA's discretion, and high school grades 9-12) that are the lowest 5% of all secondary Title I eligible schools in the State. Based on performance on the Maryland School Assessment in Math/Algebra/Data Analysis and Reading/Language Arts combined, Maryland would identify eleven (11) Title I eligible secondary schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring operating in school year 2009-2010 for Tier II designation. Maryland will exercise the option to apply for a waiver to include two Title I combination schools as Tier II schools because these schools fall lower in performance than some of the identified Tier II secondary schools. Of the eleven identified Tier II schools, seven schools are in Baltimore City Public Schools and four are in Prince George's County Public Schools.

Tier III: Maryland defines Tier III schools as any Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that are not identified as persistently lowest-achieving schools in Tier I. Baltimore City, Prince George's County, Baltimore County, Dorchester County, and Kent County have identified schools in Tier III.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is currently working with identified LEAs to begin the application process in order to distribute approximately \$47 million in SIG funds to identified districts and schools for implementation in the 2010-2011 school year.

Maryland Teacher Evaluation Framework
Teacher Focus Groups
Discussion Document

Domain	What's Measured?	How is it Measured?
Planning and Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating Knowledge of Content & Pedagogy • Demonstrating Knowledge of Students • Setting Instructional Outcomes • Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources • Designing Coherent Instruction • Designing Student Assessments 	
Classroom Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport • Establishing a Culture for Learning • Managing Classroom Procedures • Managing Student Behavior • Organizing Physical Space 	
Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating with Students • Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques • Engaging Students in Learning • Using Assessment in Instruction • Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness 	
Professional Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting on Teaching • Maintaining Accurate Records • Communicating with Families • Participating in a Professional Community • Growing and Developing Professionally • Showing Professionalism 	
Student Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual student growth between two points in time • Overall student growth by grade-level or subject team • Student readiness for college and career readiness • Desired characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Test/non-tested ▪ Elementary, middle school and high school ▪ Individual teacher/Team ▪ Closing achievement gaps 	

Possible Focus Group Questions

1. Are the domains listed clear and understandable?
2. Taken together, is this a reasonable set of expectations for effective teaching?
 - Are these the key attributes we should be looking at to determine whether a teacher is effective?
 - Are there things you would add to the list?
3. If the Maryland framework included the following categories, what percentages or weights of the total evaluation should each one have?
 - Planning and Preparation
 - Classroom Environment
 - Instruction
 - Professional Responsibility
 - Student Achievement (federal guidelines and current Maryland legislation requires this category to be at least 50%)
4. How should evidence in these areas be collected?
 - By observation? If so, by principals, school-based administrators, curriculum supervisors, peer teachers?
 - Other methods?
5. For the “student achievement” domain specifically, what measures could be used?
 - How might we develop a system that measures both student growth (across at least two points in time) and student performance against a set standard (grade level achievement) and readiness (ready to begin kindergarten/grade 1, ready to transition from elementary to middle and middle to high and high to college and career ready)
 - Should a teacher’s evaluation include a standard or goals to address closing achievement gaps between all student subgroups?
 - How can we handle both tested areas with state summative assessments like MSA/HSA and non-tested areas?
 - Should there be differences between the measurements for elementary vs. middle vs. high school teachers?
6. Should the student achievement component include a review of school-level growth data, grade or team-level growth data, or focus solely on student-level growth data by teacher?
7. How would you respond to proposed rating categories – 4 levels?
 - Ineffective
 - Developing
 - Effective
 - Highly Effective

**Statewide Evaluation System for Principals
Principal Focus Groups
Discussion Document**

	Measurement for Effective & Highly Effective	Standards	Rating Categories	Frequency of Evaluations
MSDE Required Components	School Performance Index of multiple measures similar to the one used during Maryland School Performance Program 50% (Minimum)	<i>Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework:</i> 8 Outcomes 25% (Minimum)	A continuum of rating categories to include Highly Effective, Effective, Needs Improvement, and Ineffective	Annual Evaluations
LEA Components	Additional measures determined by LEA (e.g. system benchmark assessments)	Additional standards based on local priorities (e.g. management, ethics)	LEA determines additional rating categories	LEA determines the context, format, and structure for the evaluation

Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework Outcomes:

1. Facilitate the Development of a School Vision
2. Align All Aspects of a School Culture to Student and Adult Learning
3. Monitor the Alignment of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
4. Improve Instructional Practices Through the Purposeful Observation and Evaluation of Teachers
5. Ensure the Regular Integration of Appropriate Assessments into Daily Classroom Instruction
6. Use Technology and Multiple Sources of Data to Improve Classroom Instruction
7. Provide Staff with Focused, Sustained, Research-based Professional Development
8. Engage All Community Stakeholders in a Shared Responsibility for Student and School Success

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Statewide Standards

Principals have, thus far, been very positive about the *Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework* outcomes becoming the state standards that would be integrated into local evaluation instruments designed by LEA's. This positive response is probably because the *Framework* outcomes have been in existence since 2005, and many LEA's have already integrated the outcomes into their evaluation instruments. Please note that LEAs would be able to include additional standards based on local priorities.

What are your comments on the inclusion of the *Framework* outcomes being the state standards that are required as part of the local evaluation instruments for principals?

Measurement for Effective and Ineffective

Principals have also reacted positively, thus far, to approaching the measurement of student achievement to determine the effectiveness of a principal by way of a School Performance Index similar to the one used during the Maryland School Performance Program.

What are your reactions to a School Performance Index approach? To the suggested percentages?

Ratings

We must include effective and highly effective as part of any rating scale, and the ratings need to include a continuum.

What are your comments about the suggested state ratings?

Annual Evaluations

Requiring a formal, annual evaluation of **teachers** every year has been expressed as a concern during conversations with principals.

What are your ideas on how to make feedback to teachers an on-going, yearly process that maintains its purpose without resulting in presenting principals with an overwhelming task?