MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Preparing World-Class Students

Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD • MarylandPublicSchools.org

TO: Members of the Maryland State Board of Education

FROM: Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D. LMLowery

DATE: December 17, 2012

SUBJECT: 2012 Bridge to Excellence Master Plan Updates

PURPOSE:

To provide an overview of the 2012 Bridge to Excellence Master Plan Updates and the implementation of Maryland's Race to the Top Initiative for local school systems.

BACKGROUND:

In 2002, the Maryland General Assembly enacted the *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act* (BTE), which restructured Maryland's public school finance system and increased State Aid to public schools by an estimated $1.3 billion over six fiscal years (FY 2003-2008). As a result of this legislation, Maryland adopted a standards-based approach to public school financing based on the premise that when students have access to rigorous curriculum, highly qualified teachers, and programs that employ proven strategies and methods for student learning, all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, or socioeconomic background, can achieve.

In 2003, local school systems were required under BTE to develop a comprehensive Master Plan that outlined strategies for improving student achievement and eliminating achievement gaps. Each year, an update to the plan is submitted to the Maryland State Department of Education and reviewed to determine if sufficient progress is being made by individual school systems. During the 2004 legislative session, the General Assembly expanded the scope of the Annual Updates to include a detailed summary of how the local board of education's current year budget and increases in expenditures over the prior year are consistent with the goals, objectives, and strategies detailed in the Master Plan.

In August 2010, Maryland was awarded one of the Race to the Top education grants. The grant is worth $250 million over four years and will be used to implement Maryland's Third Wave of Reform, which will ensure that all students are college and career ready in the 21st Century; build a statewide technology infrastructure that links all data elements with analytic and instructional

tools to support student achievement; develop and support great teachers and leaders; turn around low-achieving schools; and promote Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). This year, for the first time, these Race to the Top elements have been integrated into the local Master Plan Updates and were analyzed as part of the Master Plan review process.

In 2012, Maryland's ESEA Flexibility Waiver was approved by the United States Department of Education. The Flexibility Waiver includes four key principles:

Principle 1: College- and Career-Ready Expectations for All Students
Principle 2: State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support
Principle 3: Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership
Principle 4: Reducing Duplication and Unnecessary Burden

The following requests were added to the Master Plan Guidance document to ensure alignment with the new requirements of the ESEA Flexibility Waiver:

1. If applicable, school systems should include a description of the LEA's strategies to recognize Reward schools.
2. Include a description of how the system will organize internally to support schools in Strands 1-5.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In the 2012 Master Plan Annual Update, school systems have conducted a thorough and detailed analysis of performance relative to federal and State standards, developed programs, practices, and strategies to address challenges and, through their budgets, and have demonstrated alignment between system priorities and resource allocations. Additionally, Maryland's school systems have successfully developed and integrated local Race to the Top scopes of work, which are closely aligned with Maryland's State Race to the Top plan, into their Master Plan Updates. Each scope of work contains a narrative, a detailed action plan, and budget.

The Department, through eight Master Plan review panels and over 80 reviewers internal and external to MSDE, has completed the review of the 2012 Annual Updates and the attached report reveals what was found as a result of the in-depth review. All 24 school systems are recommended for approval.

ACTION:

This report is for informational purposes only. No action is required.

Attachment