BTE Master Plan 2015-2016
Worcester County Public Schools
Section A
Executive Summary and State Success Factors

I.   Introduction

With the adoption of the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards, Worcester County Public Schools is increasing rigor in all academic subjects and increasing expectations of students, teachers, and administrators. Curricula development is on schedule, but the first reliable PARCC assessment data, which relates directly to the new standards, will not be available until later in this calendar year. This year, Worcester County Public Schools' Bridge to Excellence Master Plan will look at the strategies that are underway to ensure that administrators, teachers, and students are well-prepared for these new high stakes assessments and that all students in Worcester County Public Schools will be college and/or career ready when they graduate from high school. This preparation starts in Pre-Kindergarten and is a continuous thread that winds through all goals, objectives, and strategies that are being put in place as part of this five-year plan.

In addition to being prepared for academic success, students in Worcester County Public Schools must also be ready to be good citizens who can work collaboratively with other students towards learning objectives and who will strive to be life-long learners. A renewed emphasis on SCHOOL CLIMATE will ensure that all students can develop academically, socially, and emotionally. There is a preponderance of research-based evidence that ties student academic achievement and student engagement directly to school climate. Several highlights are listed below:

 "School climate reform, an evidence-based strategy, supports K-12 students, school personnel, parents/guardians and community members learning and working together to promote pro-social education. Done well, these efforts will result in even safer, more supportive, engaging, helpfully challenging and harmonious schools. The U.S. Department of Education, The Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Institute for Educational Sciences, President Obama's Bullying Prevention Partnership, the U.S. Department of Justice and Education's School Discipline Consensus project, a growing number of State Departments of Education and foreign educational ministries support and/or endorse school climate renewal as a strategy to increase student academic achievement, enhance school connectedness, reduce high school dropout rates, prevent bullying and other forms of violence, and enhance teacher retention rates."[1]

"The school's climate supports or undermines educators' capacity to be adult learners, which in turn has an important impact on their capacity to promote student learning and achievement. In fact, school climate has a powerful effect on teacher retention. Research also supports the idea that a collaborative school climate focused on the well-being and growth of all children provides an essential foundation for effective teaching and supportive learning environments.[2]

"School performance is a complex phenomenon, shaped by a wide variety of factors intrinsic to students and their external environment. In addition to content knowledge and academic skills,

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[1] Thapa, Amrit, *School Climate Research*, National School Climate Center, February 2013.
[2] Cohen, J., McCabe, E.M., Michell, N.M. & Pickeral, T. (2009) School Climate: Research, Policy, Teacher Education and Practices. *Teachers College Record,* Volume 111: Issue 1: pp 180-213 *(from National School Climate Center Brief – Jonathan Cohen and Phillip Brown, February 2013.*

students must develop sets of behavioral skills, attitudes, and strategies that are crucial to academic performance in their classes …Economists refer to these factors as 'non-cognitive' because they are not measured by commonly administered cognitive tests such as IQ tests or academic examinations. In a wide range of studies, many of these non-cognitive attributes are shown to have a direct positive relationship with students' concurrent school performance as well as future academic outcomes.[3]

Publications such as these indicate that WCPS should be focusing not only on academics, but also on school safety. Many of the indicators of this Bridge to Excellence Master Plan will focus on school safety, as outlines in the 2015 requirements set forth by MSDE.

The following pages outline the goals and objectives/strategies for WCPS for the next five years; this worksheet is a compilation of the school system's strategic plan (Goals 2016) and the Bridge to Excellence requirements from the ESEA.

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[3] Allensworth, Elaine; Beechum; Nicole O.; Farrington, Camille A.; Johnson, David W.; Keyes, Tasha S.; Nagoake, Jenny; and Roderick, Melissa; *Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance: A Critical Literature Review* (June 2012).

Worcester 2016 Goals

Goal 1:

Academic Success for Every Student

Objectives/Strategies:

1.1 All students will achieve academic success by demonstrating growth on MSAs and benchmark assessments while preparing to be productive citizens.

1.2. Successfully transition to Common Core standards by providing professional development, revising instructional practices, and re-aligning benchmark assessments.

1.3. Implement Common Core and PARCC-aligned revised benchmark assessments and use results for systems improvement.

1.4. Each student will complete at least one class to earn post-secondary credit or an early college opportunity before graduation.

1.5. Develop a comprehensive curriculum that aligns with post-secondary readiness – emphasizing critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity.

ESEA Goal 1 (Academics)

Objective 1. 6: All WCPS students at all grade levels will be proficient in science.

Strategies:

Elementary:

- *Incorporate EIE into the curriculum;*
- *Develop and implement Cornerstone Integrated Assessment Tasks; and*
- *Procure textbooks with online components.*

Middle:

- *Transition from Maryland School Standards to Next Generation Science Standards;*
- *Local Assessments will include one mid-term benchmark assessment and two Performance Tasks; and*
- *Procure textbooks with online components.*

High School:

- *Re-write curricula for ALL high school science courses to ensure that all students entering high school beginning with the 2017-2018 school year will meet all the Next Generation Science Standards before they graduate in four years.*

Objective 1.7: All WCPS students at all grade levels will be proficient in social studies.

- *WCPS students will be able to read a variety of social studies informational sources including primary sources, secondary sources, and scholarly texts to gain relevant social science information.*
- *WCPS students will be able to use digital technology to identify and retrieve relevant social studies information sources.*
- *WCPS students will be able to conduct social studies investigations to learn relevant social science information.*

- *WCPS students will be able to utilize information, with appropriate attribution, gained from a variety of sources, to communicate their understanding of social science information by writing, speaking, and other appropriate means.*

(ESEA Goal 2 ELL)
Objective 1.8: WCPS Non-native speakers will become proficient in English in order to graduate ready for college or careers.
Strategies:
- *Increase the English Proficiency of ELLs by providing high-quality language instruction education programs aligned with research-based programs that have been determined to be effective in increasing English proficiency and student academic achievement;*
- *Provide high quality professional development to teachers principals, administrators, and other school and community-based organizations; and*
- *Provide community participation programs, family literacy services and parent outreach and training to ELL families including parents/guardians.*

Goal 2:
Multiple Pathway Opportunities and Connecting Classrooms to Future Work Environments
Objectives/Strategies:
2.1 Create clear pathways across high school boundaries encompassing the technical high school. Distance learning, and concurrent enrollment options for students to complete certificates of achievement, credits in post-secondary institutions, AP tests, and other assessments demonstrating post-secondary readiness.
2.2 Conduct a comprehensive internal review of high school course articulation to look at schedules and the alignment of programs between high schools and to recommend practices including a variety of pathway opportunities to include distance learning, online sharing and collaboration, and duel credit options to maximize the use of all WCPS high school classrooms.
2.3 Provide mini-grant incentives for teachers using virtual learning.
2.4 Develop an entrepreneurial curriculum for high school students.
2.5 Prepare students to compete for jobs on a world stage by providing students with classroom experiences that require a high level of creativity and innovation.
2.6 Personalize education so that students will develop a deep understanding of self, world, career, and their own pathway to success.
2.7 Strengthen relevancy and effectiveness of teaching through integrating content areas and incorporating the tools students will be required to use in the workforce.

(ESEA Goal 5 - Graduating from High School)
Objective 2.8: All students will graduate from high school ready for post-secondary education and/or careers.
Strategies:
Implement a consistent **early warning system to identify students at risk of dropping out to improve prevention strategies. The early warning system will include specified early warning indicators on attendance, suspensions, course failure, and low scores on county and/or statewide assessments. Schools can also identify additional early warning indicators.*

*Require use a College/Career Online Advisory/Tracking/Planning Program *for students in grades 6-12 to explore interests and related careers, create an educational plan to reflect their interests and career choices, explore postsecondary options, and complete college and scholarship applications.*
Expand opportunities for students to participate in internships that align with their interests and careers goals.
Offer diverse methods for students to recover credits and remain on track for high school graduation.

Goal 3:
High Quality Teaching and Learning
Objectives/Strategies:
3.1 Develop each school leader's capacity to provide constructive feedback for teachers about teaching and learning.
3.2 Develop pathways for succession planning.
3.3 Staff diversity should reflect students' diversity

(ESEA Goal 3 Teacher Quality):
Objective 3.4:   All WCPS teachers will be highly qualified in their content area. – Ensure that the Worcester County Public School has a "Highly Qualified Teacher Plan" in place.
Strategies:
- *Submit a plan that outlines the recruitment, hiring, and retention strategies/efforts that will help the school system reach highly qualified teachers.*
- *Expand efforts to attract highly qualified minority teachers and teachers in other critical shortage areas.*
- *Partner with colleges and universities in developing a support plan for teachers and paraprofessionals in becoming highly qualified.*
- *Recruit, hire, and support a diverse, highly qualified instructional staff.*

Outline how the school system plans to address the issues and circumstances that are impacting its ability to meet the highly qualified teacher goals. It will serve to put a plan and processes in place to address current and future problems related to educator quality.

(ESEA Goal 3 High Quality Professional Development)
Objective 3.5 All teachers at all grade levels in all schools will receive high quality professional development in order for students to achieve high academic standards.
Strategies:
- *Align professional learning with county goals for improving student learning.*
  Provide ongoing diverse professional learning opportunities for all staff.
- *Implement vibrant professional learning communities or collaborative professional learning in all schools throughout the year.*
- *Provide adequate resources to ensure all teachers have the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills to help all students achieve high standards.*
- *Provide effective professional learning that supports and builds leadership capacity in all staff.*

Goal 4:
Use Process Improvement and Safe, Healthy, Sustainable, Innovative Practices to Manage Resources
Objectives/Strategies:
4.1 Each program, service, department, and school will be responsible for answering this key question: Are we using resources to create the best education system in the world so that our students can achieve and compete globally?

4.2 Explore the development of initiatives to produce system savings in the areas of energy conservation and recycling. Find methods for savings based on close examination of processes and elimination of practices not integral to producing a world-class system.

4.3 Develop internal capacity for resource management and fiscal accountability.

4.4 Benchmark with similar Maryland districts around instructional and operational programs.

4.5 Develop performance improvement strategies for wellness, sustainability, and crisis management.

4.6Identify authentic measures, which lead to continuous improvement for students and allow stakeholders to remain informed.

(ESEA Goal 4 – Safe Schools)

Objective 1.9 All students in Worcester County Public Schools will be safe from:

- *Danger;*
- *Bullying;*
- *Harassment; or*
- *Intimidation.*

Objectives/Strategies:

- *WCPS will strive to decrease suspensions*
- *WCPS will strive to ensure student safety in schools*

Goal 5:

Partnerships to Enhance Student Success

Objectives/Strategies:

5.1 Value and strengthen a positive, self-renewing culture.

5.2 Form Superintendent advisory groups comprised of business leaders and community leaders.

5.3 Develop a process of student input on the quality of the education they are receiving and to consider their ideas for improvements.

5.4 Review and enhance outreach methods to senior citizens and increase volunteerism.

5.5 Explore the formation of a WCPS education foundation.

II.   Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework to improve teaching and learning for all students based on the idea of learner variability. No two students learn the same way so school systems should design curriculum, instruction and assessment to meet the needs of individual students.

- *Description of how students are included in or provided access to intervention/enrichment programs:*

Students are provided access to intervention and enrichment programs in a variety of ways in Worcester County. A universal screening tool is administered at the beginning of the school year to identify students' strengths and weaknesses. The data from the screening tool allows for educators to identify targeted interventions needed to support struggling students. Interventions and enrichment programs are provided to students outside of their core instruction to ensure that all students have access to high quality tier 1 core instructional programs, as well as, additional time and support when necessary. Students are also provided access to intervention and enrichment programs based on formative assessment data and classroom performance.

- *Description of goals, successes, and challenges in full implementation of UDL to eliminate barriers to learning for all students:*

WCPS Goal: By June 30, 2020, the processes for Universal Design for Learning will be embedded into curriculum and instruction in Worcester County Public Schools (as measured by the UDL Self-Assessment Tool).

Successes to Date:

o   UDL Community of Practice (CoP) was initially trained through MSDE in Cecil County in UDL during the spring of 2014. The cohort consisted of Supervisor of Special Education, Coordinator of Instruction for Special Education, general educators and special educators.
o   A UDL team has been established from the CoP.
o   The UDL team completed a book study of UDL Now! By Katie Novak to strengthen professional learning.
o   UDL training for central office and school-based administrators (A&S meeting)
o   Coordinator of Instruction for Special Education and instructional coaches attended the UDL Presenter's Academy at CAST in Wakefield, MA in October 2014.
o   UDL training was provided to teams of general and special educators November 2014.
o   Resources have been purchased, such as *Goalbook Toolkit* and *Goalbook Pathways* as a planning tool that incorporate UDL elements to share with teaching staff. All of the content found within the Toolkit and Pathways programs were developed in consideration of four research based catalysts for transforming instruction to improve outcomes for students: high standards and expectations, planning with academic rigor, Universal Design for Learning, and continuous professional development and support for educators. Teachers can identify UDL strategies that are aligned to each standard within the software. They are able to search for UDL strategies based on content area and learning barrier. This software also includes a standards-based IEP goal repository that embeds UDL into the writing of the SMART goal.
o   UDL Lesson Plan template developed by instructional staff and model lessons are being collected in all content areas as new Understanding by Design units are being written.
o   UDL embedded into the county RTI framework
o   WCPS is providing a mechanism for teachers to access UDL exemplars that support a full range of learner variability and multiple levels of content understanding with the purchase of *Engrade*. Professional

development on integrating technology use by students using UDL principles will be included in *Engrade* training.

o All new teachers are trained in UDL during the New Teacher Orientation.

How will WCPS ensure that instructional coordinators will infuse UDL training into the curriculum training?

UDL is a component of the Stage 3 Understanding by Design (UbD) lesson plan template that instructional coordinators are using to develop their curriculum units. In order for teachers to develop and teach using the UbD units, knowledge of UDL is required. Instructional coordinators have been provided a scripted UDL training to use with teachers in conjunction with the UbD training. Instructional Coordinators will sign and date the use of the training at the Instructional Staff meetings during the 2015-2016 school year. UDL training will also be evident in the lesson plans developed and collected as UDL model lessons.

Addressing the Challenges:

One of the challenges of fully implementing UDL is the misconception that Universal Design for Learning is something that Special Education teachers should be trained in to use solely with students with disabilities. One of the ways that WCPS is addressing this challenge is to ensure that all central office coordinators infuse UDL training into their curriculum training. In order to achieve this a UDL training has been developed for all instructional coordinators to deliver during their trainings. This will ensure that all WCPS staff understand that UDL is good for ALL students and not meant solely for students with disabilities.

SYSTEMATIC INTEGRATION OF

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

In COMAR 13A.03.06.01. 01, the purpose of the requirement is to promote the application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to maximize learning opportunities for students, including students with disabilities, students who are gifted and talented, and students who are English language learners, and guide local school systems in the development of curriculum, instructional planning, instructional delivery, material selection, and assessments.

UDL Point of Contact: Jennifer Dale	
UDL Principle/Mode	**Representation – Process**
Means of Representation: *providing the learner various ways of acquiring information and knowledge.*	• Materials and media to provide auditory equivalent for visual information • Offer ways to customize the display of information • Offer alternatives for auditory information • Offer alternatives for visual information • Illustrate through multiple media • Offer material at varied readability levels • Front-loading vocabulary • Offer video or audio notes for students • Leveled questioning • Offer tiered activities
	Expression/Action- Product

Means for Expressions: *providing the learner alternatives for demonstrating their knowledge and skills (what they know)*.	• Allow for embedded modeling • Offer varying the methods for response • Optimize access to tools and assistive technology • Offer multiple tools for construction and composition • Compose in multiple media such as text, speech, drawing, illustration, comics, storyboards, design, film, music, visual art, sculpture, or video • Solve problems using a variety of strategies • Provide graphic organizers and templates for data collection and organizing information • Embed prompts for categorizing and systematizing • Provide checklists and guides for note-taking

Means for Engagement: *tap into learners interests, challenge them appropriately, and motive them to learn.*	**Multiple Options for Engagement**
	
	• Allow choices on how to complete tasks such as choices in:
	    o The level of perceived challenge
	    o The type of rewards or recognition available
	    o The context or content used for practicing and assessing skills
	    o The tools used for information gathering or production
	    o The color, design, or graphics of layouts, etc.
	    o The sequence or timing for completion of subcomponents of tasks
	• Offer a variety of activities and sources of information so that they can be:
	    o Personalized and contextualized to learners' lives
	    o Culturally relevant and responsive
	    o Socially relevant
	    o Appropriate for different racial, cultural, ethnic, and gender groups
	• Foster collaboration and communication

III.   Budget Narrative:

(a) System Priorities

Digital conversion. Worcester County Public Schools (WCPS) is implementing the process of digital conversion for instruction at all grade levels and in all schools. Digital learning has widened the horizons of teaching and learning in rural districts across America. Digital learning is engaging for students at all grade levels and will enable students to meet the rigorous MCCRS, which will also be delivered digitally. Because of this, students require time to work on devices to solve problems and formulate appropriate responses. The vast majority of funding for the digital conversion is coming from the local budget, and this process is ongoing and incremental.

High quality professional development around the MCCRS and the NGSS. Both local and grant funding are being used to increase the quality and quantity of high quality professional development necessary for teachers to help their students reach new rigorous academic standards. In addition to the local budget, State and Federal grant resources include B-WET, Math and Science Partnerships, STEM, and Title II Part A (Preparing, Training and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals). Because highly effective teaching and teachers are important to the success of our students, high quality professional development is also a priority.

Development of new curricula in alignment to the MCCRS and NGSS. Local and grant funding is used strategically to offer as much support as possible to groups of instructional leaders and groups of teachers who are responsible for developing new grade-appropriate curricula for all content areas and related content areas. Grant funding includes Title I, B-WET, and the Math and Science Partnerships consortiums grants that WCPS leads.

Using data to drive instruction aligned with the MCCRS. Student data, including formative, benchmark, and Statewide assessment data, is used by WCPS by teachers to determine individualized instructional strategies to meet the needs of the students in their classrooms. Teachers and other instructional leaders have access to digital assessment data management systems (either *Engrade* or *Performance Matters*) to guide them with developing appropriate lesson plans and, as necessary, interventions, to assist all students with meeting the rigorous MCCRS indicators.

Expanding Bridges for Systems Change. This $1M grant is designed to assist WCPS in using the principles and practices from Implementation Science to help reduce the achievement gap and also to address disproportionality of referrals of minority students and students that are economically disadvantaged into special education programs. This effort includes an emphasis on early childhood intervention strategies, instructional coaching, professional learning communities (PLSs) and the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework.

21st Century Community Learning Centers. Since 2001, WCPS has continued the practice of providing intervention and enrichment activities after school and during the summer break. These programs are designed to target students who struggle with success on rigorous benchmark assessments and State-wide assessments. There are currently three grants operating in eight different sites.

(b) Fiscal Outlook

Based on the current Maryland formula utilized to allocate State funding for school systems, Worcester County is considered the wealthiest county in the State. As a result, Worcester County Public Schools (WCPS) is highly dependent on local appropriations to meet the needs of our students. Our local government provides approximately 76% of the budgeted funding for FY16.

Due to the economic downturn that started in FY09 and continued flat property tax assessments, increases in local funding continue to be minimal. For three years (FY10-FY12), WCPS received the minimal maintenance of effort (MOE) level of local funding and did not provide any salary increases for our employees. This has resulted in our starting teacher salary falling from 11th in the State to 16th. Employee step increments were also not recognized during those three years.

The number two budget priority identified by our parents in our annual parent survey this year was to provide competitive salaries to attract and maintain high quality teachers and staff. In response, our FY16 proposed operating budget included a local funding request for an employee salary increase. This request was not included in the final appropriations approved by our County. The Board of Education decided during re-negotiations with our union groups to grant a salary increase for FY16. Due to lack of local funding to support the salary package, it was funded by eliminating 32 positions in our FY16 budget.

Our FY16 budget also included a request in the amount of $200,000 for non-recurring technology costs. This request was to support infrastructure upgrades necessary as we continue to move to a 1:1 initiative. The non-recurring funding request was not approved. The infrastructure upgrades are being funded by the MOE increase, the increase in State aid and energy savings.

The current fiscal climate is expected to continue in FY17. The decision to eliminate positions to fund a salary package in FY16 is not a sustainable practice in future years if our goal is to maintain the same high-quality school system and graduate college and career ready students. The goals outlined in the Board of Education's Strategic Direction will continue to guide the allocation of resources in this challenging environment.

(c) Climate Changes

Worcester County is a largely rural county on Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore. With the exception of the Atlantic Ocean resorts and barrier islands that support a seasonal tourism industry, the main industrial employer in Worcester County is agriculture, specifically poultry and grain production. The seasonal tourism industry enhances employment for some residents during the summer months, but Worcester County still has Maryland's highest unemployment rate – 11.3% compared to the State average of 5.8% (2014 statistics). The county's projected 2014 population is 51,675. Of that population, 24.9% are over the age of 65 (compared to the Maryland percentage of 13.4% over the age of 65). The percentage of persons under the age of 18 is 17.9% (compared to the Maryland percentage of 11.7% under the age of 18). The median household income for Worcester County residents is $56,279 compared to the median household income for Maryland, which is $72,345.

The low median household income and the high unemployment rates make Worcester County one of the poorest areas in the State for the general population. In some communities in Worcester County, public schools are places to learn and grow, but they are also safe places free from crime and drugs, places where children are fed and cared for, and places where children are supervised by caring adults. The table below indicates some of the climate changes in the school county and the school system since the 2003 Bridge to Excellence Master Plan was developed.

	2003	**2015**	**Change Over 12 Years**
Student Population	6,900	6678	-3 percentage points
FARMS students	35%	44%	+9 percentage points
ELL students	1.3%	2%	+.7 percentage points
Students Receiving Special Education Services	12.9%	12.5%	-0.4 percentage points
Students Participating in Gifted and Talented Programs	14%	8%	-6 Percentage Points
County Population	45,543	51,675	+14 percentage points
Population 65 and over	20.5%	24.9%	+ 4.4 percentage points
Population 18 and under	22.8%	17.9%	- 4.9 percentage points

The above table shows a small school district where school enrollment is down slightly, as is the population aged 18 and under; and also an increase in citizens over the age of 65 (retirees). This has implications for major strategies and the fiscal outlook for the school system as well.

IV.   **Goal Progress**

a.   *Progress Towards Meeting Academic Targets*

English/Language Arts & Mathematics:

Due to the upcoming potential changes to ESEA, there is no assessment data for reading and mathematics, and there are no AMOs that is available for the Master Plan reporting period for reading and mathematics. The 2014-2015 school year was the final year for the HSAs in algebra and English. The PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) was administered, however until standard setting has been completed, the standard scores will not be available until the end of the year after the Master Plan is due.

Science & Social Studies:

The Science Maryland School Assessment (MSA) is aligned with the Maryland State Curriculum in Science. The MSA is a state-mandated testing program designed to comply with the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). All students in grades 5 and 8 take this assessment annually.

In the 2014-2015 school year 65.8% of Grade 5 WCPS students scored at the proficient or advanced level in science. During the 2013-2014 school year, the proficient or advanced percentage was 70.4. Overall, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the Science MSA decreased by 4.6 percentage points.

In the 2014-2015 school year 77.7% of Grade 8 students in WCPS scored at the proficient or advanced level in science compared to 76.3 during the 2013-2014 school year. Overall, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the Science MSA increased by 1.4 percentage points.

The High School Assessment (HSA) is a state-mandated testing program that includes end-of-course assessments in biology and government. Students are required to pass the HSA or meet an approved alternative pathway in order to graduate from high school.

During the 2014-2015 school year, the pass rate for Biology HSA test takers was 79.7% compared to the pass rate of 84.6% for the previous school year. The pass rate for Government HSA test takers was 75.4% during the 2014-2015 school year and 84.5% for the 2013-2014 school year.

b. *Maryland's Accountability System*

Worcester County Public Schools continues with the transition to a revised accountability system. Elementary and middle schools administered the Maryland School Assessments in Reading and Mathematics for the last time during the 2013-2014 school year. Curriculum, instruction, and assessments will now focus more clearly on the Maryland college and career standards aligned with the PARCC assessments.

For the 2015-2016 school year, PARCC assessments in reading and math will be administered to all students in grades three through eight. The Maryland School Assessments in Science will continue for students in grades five and eight.

High schools completed the High School Assessments (HSAs) for the final time in the areas of English and Algebra during the 2014-2015 school year. For the upcoming 2015-2016 school year, PARCC assessments will be administered in English for grades 9, 10, and 11. High school students enrolled in the courses of Algebra I, Algebra II and geometry will take the PARCC assessments for mathematics.

High Schools continue to focus on student achievement related to the High School Assessments (HSAs) in the content areas of Biology and Government.

Each of the fourteen schools that comprise the Worcester County Public School system have revised their School Improvement Plans to eliminate the outdated goals of No Child Left Behind and to focus their efforts on new plans to meet the needs of their individual schools during the transition to the new accountability system.

c. *Specific Student Groups in Bridge to Excellence*

Continuing to narrow the achievement gap across all disciplines is a priority for Worcester County Public Schools. Our students come from diverse backgrounds. WCPS recognizes this and has many programs and initiatives in place to ensure that students' diverse needs are being addressed. WCPS has adopted the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to maximize learning opportunities for all learners including English language learners, gifted and talented students, and students with disabilities. WCPS uses these principles to develop curriculum, plan instruction, select materials, and create formative and summative assessments.

English Language Learners**:**

Learning a new language takes time and LEP students continue to demonstrate the most difficulties with producing writing that meets standards set for their native English speaking counterparts. Professional development opportunities for teachers will focus on the development of listening and writing skills as tested on the new WIDA Assessment.

Career and Technology Education**:**

Worcester County Public Schools has prioritized college and career readiness for all students. Worcester Technical High School (WTHS) prepares students for a wide range of careers. These careers require varying levels of education, from high school diplomas to four-year college degrees. The programs at WTHS provide career-focused learning through hands-on classroom assignments and site-based work experiences. Twenty completer programs are offered at WTHS for articulated or transcripted credit and/or certification.

Early Learning:

This past school year WCPS transitioned from MMSR to the Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System. The first part of this change was the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) component, which was administered in the fall of 2014.
It measured four domains of learning: language and literacy, mathematics, social foundations, and physical well-being and motor development. During the first two months of school, kindergarten teachers closely observed all students and gathered data on each student. Forty-eight percent of WCPS' kindergarten were fully ready to enter kindergarten. These students demonstrated the skills and behaviors to fully participate in the kindergarten curriculum as measured by the KRA. A significant number of WCPS' children need support to do kindergarten work.

WCPS has identified some key initiatives to ensure that students are fully ready for the start of school. These include: pre-kindergarten and kindergarten curriculum development and professional development on MDCCRS

Gifted & Talented Programs:

WCPS provides a variety of services to gifted and talented students. At the elementary level, gifted and talented resource teachers provide direct services to identified students. The Gifted and Talented (GT) Program promotes student engagement through enrichment, opportunities to solve real-world problems and conduct original research. Middle schools offer accelerated courses and pullout sessions, and high schools afford gifted and talented students multiple opportunities in AP courses, dual enrollment courses, elective courses, and activities and clubs to address individual talents and strengths.

Special Education:

WCPS' approach to addressing the special education achievement gap is to continue to increase access to general education classes and use the special educator/general educator co-teaching model and collaborative planning to address the individual needs of all students. Increasing the effectiveness of inclusion classrooms is a high priority.

District-wide professional development opportunities focused on inclusive practices and the implementation of UDL instructional practices and teaching units to support both general and special educators along with their school based teams in order to support the instructional needs of students with disabilities in their schools. The Office of Special Education is utilizing data to strategically equip teachers and schools with instructional support for students with disabilities. Additionally, WCPS is taking a closer look at high school students who are identified as students with disabilities to ensure that they are prepared to graduate and exit schools with the appropriate skills to enable them to be productive citizens.

In 2014, WCPS was awarded the Bridges for Systems Change two-year grant that provides $1 million to the school system. Worcester was selected in part for its plan to improve outcomes for special education students by working to merge them with the general school population. School officials collaborated with MSDE to create an implementation plan for the grant. Much of the funding has been used on professional development, early intervention practices and better instruction materials for students with disabilities.

Education that is Multicultural and Achievement (ETMA):

Worcester County Public Schools continues to be committed to the academic achievement of all students. Teachers must use a wide range of instructional approaches and techniques to ensure equal access to learning. The recognition that culturally different students may prefer to learn in environments and through the presentation of content that differs from traditional instructional practices is the fundamental premise of Universal Design for Learning. Change in teaching practices requires ongoing high quality staff development that allows for educators to reflect critically on their teaching practices. WCPS continues to provide opportunities for staff to increase their cultural proficiency and to acquire strategies related to Education that is Multicultural.

d. Data Systems to Support Instruction

Worcester County Public Schools currently utilizes two data systems to guide data driven decision making to support effective instruction: *Unify* (formerly *Performance Matters*) and *Teach. Learn. Connect.* (TLC) powered by *Engrade*. *Unify* provides a platform for summative assessments and assessment data, as well as an early warning system that examines students' attendance, behavior, and discipline to inform non-academic interventions. All state assessment data and countywide assessment data, such as benchmarks and final exams, are housed in *Unify*. *TLC* is new for the 2015-16 school year and provides a platform for formative assessments that are created by teachers and other school-based staff and a learning management system.

Summative test data is analyzed to evaluate students' progress toward mastery of content, make curricular decisions, and inform professional development opportunities. An early warning system (part of Unify), new this school year, identifies students who may be in need of additional support, such as mentoring, counseling, and other non-academic services. Teachers analyze formative assessment data daily for classroom instruction. The data provides for personalization (offering student choice) and customization (meeting individual student's learning needs) of instruction.

Implementation of both platforms will require system-wide ongoing professional development. Although Unify has been in place for several years and has been used to analyze summative assessment data, the platform has changed and has many features that are new or have not been utilized in the past. TLC, Powered by Engrade, is a system-wide initiative and will be utilized by all teaching and administrative staff.

e. Culture and Climate

School climate and culture have a profound impact on student achievement and behavior. It is this culture and climate that is a true reflection on the school and the community that it represents. Positive and sustainable school climate fosters learning and youth development. School climate refers to the character and quality of school life that is centered on patterns of students, staff, and parents' experiences of school life. School culture is a set of goals, norms, values, beliefs, and teaching and learning practices that reflect the organizational structure. Research consistently recognizes the significance of viable data driven strategies to promote safe schools.

In accordance with Code of Maryland Regulations all students in Maryland's public schools, without exception and regardless of race, ethnicity, region, religion, gender, sexual orientation, language, socioeconomic status, age, or disability, have the right to educational environments that are: Safe; Appropriate for academic achievement; and Free from any form of harassment.

School Safety

Worcester County Public Schools is currently investigating methods to maintain and increase its school safety. One approach is adopting the use of a program called *TipSoft. TipSoft for Education* is a premier communication tool used by school and district administrators for accepting incident reports from students about bullying, drugs, and weapons on campus, and other student safety issues and incidents. Using this program, students can submit reports of bullying and other incidents with video, pictures, and descriptions using SMS text, Web forms, and/or a free mobile application.

Parent Outreach

Worcester County Public Schools values the parent community and looks to explore a variety of avenues to maintain and improve relations with parents in an effort to improve the climate and culture. During the 2014-2015 school year, WCPS explored the idea of having a parent's night out event which prove to be successful. At this event, parents were informed about topics such as families in transition (homelessness), resources available

in the community, and services provided by the school system. In an effort to build on this success, WCPS plans on collaborating with other community organizations to expand this parental information session in an effort to provide more services and support to the families we serve.

Persistently Dangerous Schools

NCLB requires states to identify persistently dangerous schools. In Maryland, a "persistently dangerous school" means a school in which each year for a period of three consecutive school years the total number of student suspensions for more than 10 days or expulsions equals two and one-half percent or more of the total number of students enrolled in the school, for any of the following offenses: arson or fire; drugs; explosives; firearms; other guns; other weapons; physical attack on a student; physical attack on a school system employee or other adult; and sexual assault. Schools are placed into "persistently dangerous" status in a given school year based on their suspension data in the prior year. There are currently no Worcester County Public Schools that are labelled as Persistently Dangerous Schools. In fact, the school system consistently takes system-wide measures to perform well in this area. Over the past three years, Worcester County data shows that it has consistently decreased or remained steady in the areas of in-school and out-of-school suspensions.

Worcester County is currently implementing a variety of approaches to adequately address these areas. The first strategy is implementing the approach *Restorative Practices* in an effort to improve the culture and climate. *Restorative Practices* is a philosophy that focuses on strengthening relationships as a means of preventing conflicts from escalating into harmful situations. It uses a set of communication tools which hold individuals accountable for their behavior, and encourage actions to repair the harm caused. The goals of *Restorative Practices* are:

   a. Build community;
   b. Address conflicts in a way that strengthens and restores relationships;
   c. Foster greater empathy and responsibility; and
   d. Engage in collaborative problem-solving. In an effort to facilitate these goals a set of communication tools which hold individuals accountable for their behavior, and encourage actions to repair the harm caused.

The second strategy is the implementation of *Student Threat Assessment*. A student threat assessment is a problem-solving approach to violence prevention that involves assessment and intervention with students who have threatened violence in some way. The threat assessment is a part of a comprehensive approach that personalizes behavioral interventions in the same manner at *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)*. The threat assessment process includes four steps to help facilitate a positive culture and climate. First, the team identifies whether or not a threat was made by the student. Second, the team evaluates the seriousness of the threat and danger it poses to other students, recognizing that all threats are not the same. Third, the team provides appropriate interventions to reduce the risk of violence in the future. The last step is for the team to provide consistent follow-up to assess the effectiveness of the interventions.

Staff Relations

A major focus of Worcester County Public Schools in improving staff relationships with students is on the culture and climate of race. In an effort to maintain and increase progress in this area, WCPS will implement a framework called *Courageous Conversations*. *Courageous Conversations* is a framework that uses professional development to help educational leaders examine the achievement gap through the prism of race. The staff development training addresses the relationship between race and achievement through discussions about personal agendas, multiple race perspectives, closing the racial achievement gap, and extension of leaders'

professional learning. The process allows leaders to construct a language and a process for addressing the relationship between race and achievement.

Habitual Truancy

The Code of Maryland Regulations states that a student is a habitual truant is unlawfully absent from school eight days a term; 15 days a semester; or 20 days a school year. Habitual truancy means a student is ages 5 through 20 during the school year and was in membership for 91 or more days. In an effort to address habitual truancy, Worcester County Public Schools adopted a new student attendance policy and procedure in May 2015. In addition, WCPS created a student attendance manual to provide support to teachers and administrators with addressing this area.

Suspension

In January 2014, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted new regulations guiding student discipline. The regulations are designed to keep students in school and maintain progress toward graduation, while strengthening school safety. The regulations changed the definition of short, long, and extended suspension, identified minimum educational services, and required local school systems to identify how and when suspension is a last resort. The regulations required local schools systems to update their codes of conduct. The new regulations also require school systems to collect data on school arrests, and to identify and eliminate disproportionate disciplinary practice for minority students and students with disabilities. Ultimately, the regulations address the elimination of the disproportionate impact of school discipline on minority students and students with disabilities.

Worcester County Public Schools has met all of these requirements and will continue to look for ways to improve school discipline as we move forward. WCPS has created and updated its own policies and procedures to be in compliance with the regulations. For the 2015-2016 school year, WCPS will use an *Administrative Guide to the Student Code of Conduct* document in order to provide administrators and teachers more clarity regarding the appropriate responses a variety of disciplinary issues. In addition, WCPS conducts monthly meetings to develop leadership capacity in dealing with disciplinary issues and effective interventions. Through this comprehensive approach we have noticed a positive trend in the suspension data.

1.1A: Current Year Variance Table	
Local School System:	**Worcester**

Revenue Category		FY 16 Budget
Local Appropriation		$78,718,960
Other Local Revenue		225,452
State Revenue		19,446,008
Federal Revenue	84.388: Title I - School Improvement	0
	84.395: Race to the Top	0
	84.010: Title I	1,629,000
	84.027: IDEA, Part B	2,100,000
Other Federal Funds		1,470,008
Other Resources/Transfers		567,011
Total		**$104,156,43** **9**

Instructions: Itemize FY 2016 expenditures by source (CFDA for ARRA funds, regular Title I and IDEA, restricted or unrestricted) in each of the assurance areas, mandatory cost of doing business, and other.

Section B - Standards and Assessments

Reform Area 1: Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy.

Expenditures:	Source	Amount	FTE
Testing Supplies / Scoring	Unrestricted	**63,153**	-
Textbooks and Supplies	Unrestricted	**3,065,841**	-
Textbooks and Supplies	Restricted	**120,900**	-
Textbooks and Supplies	84.010	**101,241**	-
Textbooks and Supplies	84.027	**239,673**	-
Subtotal:		**3,590,808**	-
-			-

Section C - Data Systems to support instruction

Reform Area 2: Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction.

Expenditures:	Source	Amount	FTE
Data Infrastructure Upgrades	Unrestricted	**325,000**	-
Student Data / Software	Unrestricted	**200,000**	-
Subtotal:		**525,000**	-
-			-

Section D: Great Teachers and Leaders

Reform Area 3: Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most.

Expenditures:	Source	Amount	FTE
Coordinators	Unrestricted	**2,428,103**	**16.5**
Coordinators	84.010	**56,775**	**1.5**
In-Service Pay	Unrestricted	**255,600**	-
Principals / Asst. Principals	Unrestricted	**4,567,783**	**37**
Teachers	Unrestricted	**58,910,681**	**678**

	Source	Amount		FTE
Teachers	Restricted	**919,300**		-
Teachers	84.010	**795,096**		-
Teachers	84.027	**926,280**		-
Tuition Reimbursements	Unrestricted	**343,300**		-
Subtotal:		**69,202,918**		-

Section E: Turning Around the Lowest Achieveing Schools
Reform Area 4: Turning around our lowest-achieving schools

Expenditures:	Source	Amount	FTE
			-

Mandatory Cost of Doing Business: Please itemize mandatory costs not attributable to an assurance area in this category. Refer to the guidance for items considered mandatory costs.

Expenditures:	Source	Amount	FTE
Ed. Asst, Hlth, Transport., Operation, Pupil Pers	Restricted	**429,808**	-
Ed. Asst, Hlth, Transport., Operation, Pupil Pers	84.010	**675,888**	-
Ed. Asst, Hlth, Transport., Operation, Pupil Pers	84.027	**934,047**	-
Ed. Asst, Hlth, Transport., Operation, Pupil Pers	84.395	**0**	-
Ed. Asst, Hlth, Transport., Operation, Pupil Pers	Unrestricted	**28,797,970**	**381**
Subtotal:		**30,837,713**	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Other: Please itemize only those expenditures not attributable to an assurance area or mandatory costs in this category. Transfers should be included in this section.

Expenditures:	Source	Amount	FTE
			-
Total		**104,156,43 9**	1114
-			

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1.1B Prior Year Variance Table (Comparison of Prior Year Expenditures)					
Local School System:	**Worcester**				

Revenue		FY 2015 Original Budget 7/1/2014	FY 2015 Final Budget 6/30/2015	Change	**%** Change
Local Appropriation		77,675,762	77,675,525	(237)	0.00%
State Revenue		19,138,092	19,110,691	(27,401)	-0.14%
Federal ARRA Funds 84.388 Title I - School Improvement Grants		-			
Federal ARRA Funds 84.395 Race to the Top		-	408,917	408,917	#DIV/0!
Federal Revenue 84.010 Title I		1,568,443	1,590,513	22,070	1.41%
Federal Revenue 84.027 IDEA		1,600,000	1,922,097	322,097	20.13%
Other Federal Funds		1,227,861	3,945,516	2,717,655	221.33%
Other Local Revenue		225,452	333,011	107,559	47.71%
Other Resources/Transfers		567,011	567,011	-	0.00%
Total		**102,002,621**	**105,553,281**	3,550,660	3.48%

Change in Expenditures - Instructions: Itemize FY 2015 actual expenditures and FTE by source (CFDA for ARRA funds, regular Title I and IDEA, restricted or unrestricted) in each of the assurance areas, mandatory cost of doing business, and other.

Assurance Area	Source	Planned Expenditure	Actual Expenditure	Variance	Planned FTE	Actual FTE
Section B - Standards and Assessments						
Reform Area 1: Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy.						
Expenditures:						
Testing Supplies / Scoring	Unrestricted	**63,153**	**23,445.00**	(39,708)		
Textbooks and Supplies	Unrestricted	**2,854,002**	**3,001,966.00**	147,964		
Textbooks and Supplies	Restricted	**162,358**	**813,571.00**	651,213		
Textbooks and Supplies	84.395	**0**	**139,148.00**	139,148		
Textbooks and Supplies	84.010	**191,135**	**241,152.00**	50,017		
Textbooks and Supplies	84.027	**26,711**	**121,469.00**	94,758		

Subtotal:		**3,297,359**	**4,340,751.00**	1,043,392		

Section C - Data Systems to support instruction
Reform Area 2: Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction.

Expenditures:

New Student Laptops	Unrestricted	**200,000**	**199,763**	(237)		
Student Data / Software	Unrestricted	**200,000**	**200,000**	-		
Subtotal:		**400,000**	**399,763**	(237)		

Section D: Great Teachers and Leaders
Reform Area 3: Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most.

Expenditures:

Coordinators	Unrestricted	**1,608,773**	**1,896,192**	287,419	**16.5**	**16.5**
Coordinators	Restricted	**102,913**	**10,030**	(92,883)	**1.5**	**1.5**
Coordinators	84.010	**56,223**	**73,088**	16,865		
Coordinators	84.027	**0**	**96,735**	96,735		
In-Service Pay	Unrestricted	**255,600**	**237,763**	(17,837)		
Principals / Asst. Principals	Unrestricted	**4,557,150**	**4,366,388**	(190,762)	**38**	**38**
Teachers	Unrestricted	**58,263,368**	**58,110,512**	(152,856)	**690**	**690**
Teachers	Restricted	**564,495**	**1,694,641**	1,130,146		
Teachers	84.010	**656,831**	**939,818**	282,987		
Teachers	84.027	**864,751**	**1,203,612**	338,861		
Teachers	84.395	**0**	**9,122**	9,122		
Tuition Reimbursements	Unrestricted	**343,300**	**409,400**	66,100		
Subtotal:		**67,273,404**	**69,047,301**	1,773,897		

Section E: Turning Around the Lowest Achieving Schools
Reform Area 4: Turning around our lowest-achieving schools

Expenditures:

Expenditures:					
Ed. Asst, Hlth, Transport., Operation, Pupil Pers	Restricted	**398,095**	**1,427,274**	1,029,179	
Ed. Asst, Hlth, Transport., Operation, Pupil Pers	84.010	**664,254**	**336,455**	(327,799)	
Ed. Asst, Hlth, Transport., Operation, Pupil Pers	84.027	**708,538**	**500,281**	(208,257)	
Ed. Asst, Hlth, Transport., Operation, Pupil Pers	84.395	**0**	**260,647**	260,647	
Ed. Asst, Hlth, Transport., Operation, Pupil Pers	Unrestricted	**29,260,971**	**29,240,809**	(20,162)	**394** **394**
		31,031,858	**31,765,466**		
Subtotal:				733,608	

Expenditures:		Source	

Total:	**102,002,621**	**105,553,281**	**1140** **1140**

Tables are not intended to be completed in accordance with GAAP. Add lines if necessary.

Revenue and Expenditure Analysis

1. Did actual FY 2015 revenue meet expectations as anticipated in the Master Plan Update for 2014? If not, identify the changes and the impact any changes had on the FY 2015 budget and on the system's progress towards achieving Master Plan goals. Please include any subsequent appropriations in your comparison table and narrative analysis.

    FY15 revenues exceeded original budget in the area of restricted grants. There were several factors related to revenues being higher than budgeted in this area. Our Special Education department applied for and was awarded a grant from the Maryland State Department of Education in the amount $1,000,000 over a two year period. Our school system was also awarded over $400,000 in additional Race to the Top funds to use for technology and staff development and received a Title II Math and Science partnership grant that was not included in our original budget.

2. For each assurance area, please provide a narrative discussion of the changes in expenditures and the impact of these changes on the Master Plan goals.

    In the area of Standards and Assessments, actual expenditures were $1,043,392 higher than planned. This was due to the award of the additional grants referenced above and our school system's decision to utilize a portion of these funds to purchase additional supplies and materials including instructional technology. E-rate funding was also utilized to purchase a portion of items needed to prepare for our 1:1 digital conversion initiative.

    In the area of Data Systems to Support Instruction, actual expenditures were within $237 of planned.

    In the area of Great Teachers and Leaders, actual expenditures were $1,773,897 higher than planned. This was due to our school system receiving additional grants as referenced in the response to question 1 above. The school system utilized a large portion of this funding for instructional salaries to support the instructional needs of our students.

    In the area of Mandatory Cost of Doing Business, expenditures were $733,608 higher than planned. This was related to the receipt of additional grants not included in our original planned expenditures. The additional grant funding was utilized to support educational assistants and student transportation.

3. Please describe the steps that the school system proposes to take to permit students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries to overcome barriers that impede access to, or participation in, a program or activity.

    N/A

4. How has the potential "funding cliff" impacted current discussions and subsequent decisions regarding the most effective use of ARRA funds?

    Worcester County Public Schools chose to utilize the majority of our ARRA funding for one-time costs such as technology. As a result, the "funding cliff" was not an issue for our school system.