DATE: October 9, 2012

TO: BOARD OF EDUCATION

FROM: S. Dallas Dance, Ph.D., Superintendent

SUBJECT: TRANSITION REPORT

ORIGINATOR: Michele Prumo, Chief of Staff

RESOURCE PERSON(S):

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Education receives the Transition Report.

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Attachment I – Executive Summary
Attachment II – PowerPoint
Attachment III – Transition Report 2012
Executive Summary
Transition Report 2012

October 9, 2012

Upon his appointment as superintendent, Dr. S. Dallas Dance selected a 21-person Transition Team to provide him with short- and long-range recommendations to make Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) the best school system in the nation. Co-chaired by Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick, Presidential Scholar for Innovation in Teacher and Leader Education at Towson University, and Dr. William Bosher, Distinguished Professor of Public Policy and Education at the Virginia Commonwealth University, the transition team was divided into four subcommittees. The subcommittees—Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness, Teaching and Learning, Culture and Context, and Operations and Finance—worked with approximately 20 focus groups of approximately 160 internal and external stakeholders to solicit public opinion on the school system’s areas of strength, areas in need of improvement, and opportunities for the future. Based on this input, each subcommittee developed short-range and long-range recommendations to present to Dr. Dance.

The Transition Report is divided into ten overall areas: Organization; Communication; Teaching and Learning; Program Evaluation and Effectiveness; Recruiting, Retaining, Growing and Developing Excellent Employees; Equity; Budget Development and Finances; Technology; Strategic Planning; and Creating Healthy, Safe, and Orderly Environments. The short-range and long-range recommendations under each area are a compilation from all four subcommittees. The Transition Team recognized that Dr. Dance needed to make some immediate organizational changes in order to start the 2012-2013 school year effectively, such as the creation of the positions of Chief Academic Officer, Chief Operations Officer, Chief Accountability Officer, and additional assistant superintendents for schools. Therefore, some of the organizational recommendations in the report affirm and support his actions.

The following examples highlight some of the short-range and long-range recommendations from each area.

Short-Term Recommendations 2012-2013

- Adopt a systemwide framework that outlines effective teaching and learning.
- Identify all current achievement gaps and implement additional strategies to accelerate the elimination of the achievement gaps.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of all academic and enrichment programs to determine whether these programs are effective, support student learning, and are being implemented consistently throughout the system.
- Reevaluate the BCPS staffing model.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the system’s policies and procedures related to student discipline and assure that the system’s policies and procedures are consistently applied among all sub groups.
Long Term Recommendations 2013-2015

- Conduct a comprehensive review of the entire organizational model. BCPS should be particularly focused on identifying functional redundancies.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan, with input from all major constituencies, to significantly increase the avenues and flow of information.
- Expand and target relevant, differentiated, high-quality professional development opportunities for teachers, school leaders, and support staff.
- Determine whether inequities in funding, resources, and programming exist and resolve any inequities, or communicate the rationale for certain inequities that further the legitimate needs within the school system.
- Undertake a joint study with Baltimore County government representatives to identify areas where additional cooperative agreements could be executed that would generate cost savings and would be beneficial to the interests of both the school system and county government.

Dr. Dance has appointed an internal team to begin the development of Blueprint 2.0. The Transition Report will inform that work and will serve as a foundation for Blueprint 2.0, which will provide direction and focus for the school system over the next five years.
Transition Report

- Organization
- Communication
- Teaching and Learning
- Program Evaluation and Effectiveness
- Recruiting, Retaining, Growing, and Developing Excellent Employees
- Equity
- Budget Development and Finances
- Technology
- Strategic Planning
- Creating Healthy, Safe, and Orderly Environments
SHORT-RANGE RECOMMENDATIONS
2012-2013

- Adopt a systemwide framework for effective teaching and learning.
- Identify achievement gaps and implement strategies to eliminate the gaps.
- Conduct a comprehensive review for all academic and enrichment programs.
- Reevaluate the BCPS’ staffing model.
- Monitor and evaluate the system’s policies and procedures related to student discipline.
LONG-RANGE RECOMMENDATIONS 2012-2015

- Conduct a comprehensive review of the entire organizational model.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan.
- Expand and target relevant, differentiated, high-quality professional development for all staff.
- Determine whether inequities in funding, resources, and programming exist.
- Undertake a study with Baltimore County government to identify areas for which cooperative agreements could be executed for cost savings.
FOREWORD

The purpose of the Transition Report is to provide the superintendent of Baltimore County Public Schools, Dr. S. Dallas Dance, with short-range and long-range recommendations for consideration as he assumes the leadership of the school system. This report is the result of not only the meetings of the Transition Team but numerous meetings of the four subcommittees. The four subcommittees – Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness, Teaching and Learning, Culture and Context, and Operations and Finance—held many focus groups with internal and external stakeholders to gather as much information as possible. The report is not an evaluation of the school system but a compilation of information for the superintendent from the Baltimore County community.

The members of the Transition Team are to be applauded for the time and expertise that they contributed to the development of the report. The team’s first meeting was in June 2012, and the team concluded its work in August 2012. The timeline was aggressive but necessary in order to provide Dr. Dance with community input as soon as possible.

It is with great pleasure that we submit the Transition Report to the superintendent and Board of Education.

Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick
Co-Chair, Transition Team

Dr. William Bosher
Co-Chair, Transition Team
TRANSITION REPORT PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
October 9, 2012

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TRANSITION TEAM MEMBERS

Dr. Nancy Grasmick – Co-chair
Presidential Scholar for Innovation in Teacher and Leader Education, Towson University

Dr. William Bosher – Co-chair
Distinguished Professor of Public Policy and Education, Virginia Commonwealth University

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Chair, Education Foundation, BCPS

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MISSION AND VISION

Mission
The mission of the Baltimore County Public Schools is to provide a quality education that develops the content knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will enable all students to reach their maximum potential as responsible, lifelong learners and productive citizens.¹

Vision
As a public educational system, our vision is to produce graduates who have the content knowledge, skills, and attitudes to reach their full potential as responsible, productive citizens. The Baltimore County Public Schools believes that all students can and will learn and achieve when the necessary conditions for that learning are provided: a rigorous curriculum, highly qualified teachers, and proven strategies for learning. While student success ultimately depends on the individual, it is the relationship between and among teacher, child, and parent/guardian that will provide the supportive environment necessary for high achievement. The continuing commitment of the school system in support of this relationship will have a significant effect on ensuring that all students succeed at high levels.

As an educational system, what do we want for all of our children? We want all students to reach high academic standards, to meet the state and local proficiency levels established for reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, and to graduate from high school well prepared for further education, a meaningful career, and a productive life. We want all students to be taught by highly qualified teachers and to be educated in school environments that are safe and conducive to learning. Above all, we want every student to receive a quality education.

To reach these challenging goals, we commit to engaging stakeholders in the educational and decision-making processes and to using our resources effectively and efficiently in the delivery of services that support our core business: teaching and learning.²

¹ http://www.bcps.org/system/master_plan/pdf/profile.pdf
² Excerpt from the Executive Summary, BCPS Master Plan 2011-2012
THE SYSTEM AT A GLANCE

For 12 years, until his retirement in June 2012, Dr. Joe A. Hairston headed the Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS). This longevity and continuity of leadership contributed to BCPS’ proud legacy of success in raising student achievement levels; attracting and retaining talented staff; maintaining a balanced budget and maximizing resources; upgrading operations and facilities; instituting effective and efficient management practices; and building partnerships with families, communities, institutions of higher learning, advocacy groups, service providers, elected officials, and government leaders. In an open letter to the community on the school system’s Web site, Dr. Hairston proudly acknowledged that BCPS is “highly regarded for the strength of our college-bound culture and college preparatory activities” and commended the community as “trailblazers in educating students for the future.”

BCPS is the 26th largest school system in the United States and the third largest school system in Maryland. Baltimore County covers 610 square miles in the north central part of the state, and combines urban, suburban, and business regions with vast farmland and waterfront areas.

For the 2012–2013 school year, BCPS’ enrollment is projected to reach over 106,000 students in 174 schools, centers, and programs. The student population is majority minority enrollment and 44.8% of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. English language learners represent 3.5% of the student population, and students with disabilities represent 11.4% of the student population. The system employs 17,000 employees, including 8,850 classroom teachers, making BCPS one of the largest employers in the region. More than 15,000 volunteers support student achievement throughout the school system.

Student Achievement

Excellence in teaching and learning have long been hallmarks of BCPS. Since 2003, BCPS students have shown significant increases in academic achievement on the Maryland School Assessments. Over 90% of elementary students reached the advanced or proficient level in reading and mathematics in 2012. For the first time, BCPS was Maryland’s top-scoring local school system in elementary mathematics. In fact, with the exception of seventh grade reading, which saw an increase of 9 percentage points, all elementary and middle school grades posted double digit increases in their advanced and proficient reading and mathematics scores during this timeframe.

High school students have also demonstrated progress. By the end of the twelfth grade, 100% of the Class of 2010 met the high school graduation requirements. The BCPS high school graduation rate of 86% continues to exceed state targets. In 2011, BCPS was recognized by Education Week as having the fourth highest graduation rate among the nation’s largest school districts. In national surveys of top high schools, from The Washington Post, Newsweek, and U.S. News and World Report, half of BCPS’ high schools were named among the best.

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3 http://www.bcps.org/system/about_us.html
5 Source: BCPS Office of Food and Student Nutrition
6 See publication: Blueprint for Progress: Report on Results 2010-2011
7 http://www.bcps.org/system/about_us.html
10 See brochure: Baltimore County Public Schools, Making the Right Things Happen
11 Dance Speech, A&S 2012
Advanced Placement (AP) participation has continued to increase from 12% in 2007 to 17% in 2011, the highest level in five years. For the Class of 2011, 71% of BCPS high schools met or exceeded the national SAT participation rate compared to 67% for the Class of 2010.12

Dr. Dance has characterized BCPS as “good, clearly very good, but….not yet great.” Dr. Dance has set forth a vision to move forward to create a culture of “deliberate excellence.” BCPS will strive to increase its mean SAT score of 1458 to the college- and career-ready benchmark of 1550. In order to post the highest four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate in Maryland, BCPS must raise its graduation rate by 9 percentage points. Middle school reading and mathematics performance continues to lag behind Maryland’s highest performing school districts, and special education students are not achieving at their highest levels.13 BCPS continues to identify interventions to focus support and resources toward at-risk students and schools. Closing the minority achievement gap continues to receive priority attention, as do the 23 schools that have been identified as in need of improvement.

**Recruiting and Retaining Talent**

In the past, the national teacher shortage caused great concern among the nation’s largest school districts. It was not unusual for large districts to scramble to hire over 1,000 new teachers each year. Many Maryland school districts experienced difficulty in hiring highly qualified staff and in attracting teachers in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) disciplines and in special education.

BCPS is highly successful in recruiting and retaining highly qualified and competent staff. For the 2010–2011 school year, BCPS successfully recruited staff in 10 states and at 39 colleges and universities. This recruitment effort resulted in 99% of the teaching positions being filled prior to the opening of school. The percentage of highly qualified teachers employed increased from 95% in 2007 to 98% in 2011. The percentage of highly qualified paraprofessionals employed increased from 92% to 98% during the same timeframe. The percentage of highly qualified middle school mathematics teachers, one of the hardest recruitment content areas across the nation, was sustained at 99% over the past three years. Similarly, the system sustained the percentage of highly qualified teachers among those newly hired in Title I schools, a federal mandate, at 100% over the past three years.14

**Budget and Maximizing Resources**15

Between 2003 and 2008, Maryland embarked on a bold initiative to increase and equalize education funding across the state’s 24 school districts. This effort succeeded in placing Maryland’s K–12 public school system at the top of several national rankings. Federal stimulus funds have allowed the state to maintain its formula-driven funding mechanism for aid to education from FY2010 through FY2012.

The governor’s FY2013 budget includes a modest 3.1% increase in aid to education for BCPS, funded by increased tax revenue. However, the budget also includes increased school board contributions for teacher pensions to be funded by local government. Recent legislation has strengthened maintenance of effort funding requirements needed to ensure that increased revenue is directed to education. Baltimore County government will provide local education authorities with funding at the maintenance of effort level for FY2013. Even with these revenue limitations, the FY2013 budget will

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12 [http://www.bcps.org/system/about_us.html](http://www.bcps.org/system/about_us.html)
14 See publication: *Blueprint for Progress: Report on Results 2010-2011*
advance student achievement, reduce administrative expenditures, hold the line on fixed costs, preserve jobs, and improve the efficiency of existing programs and services.

Facilities\textsuperscript{16}
BCPS strives to provide every student with a learning environment that supports excellent teaching and learning. Between 1997 and 2012, a total of $1.4 billion has been invested in school facilities to address critical infrastructure, population shifts, and enrollment growth. Since 2001, six (6) new schools have opened, 10 schools have seen major additions, 26 middle schools have been renovated, 12 high school science rooms have been upgraded, and Chesapeake High School and Kenwood High School have received major technology labs.

However, aging facilities and pockets of population growth, resulting in both overcrowding and underutilization, continue to challenge BCPS. Eighty percent (80\%) of BCPS' original school buildings are over 40 years old. Nearly 30\% of the existing BCPS' school facilities have been renovated. Seventy percent (70\%) of the existing BCPS' school facilities have exceeded the 40-year life cycle, without benefit of a major renovation. The condition and operational capacity of the critical infrastructure in all schools is of paramount importance in sustaining the long-term integrity of the school system. An estimated $1.7 billion is needed to address critical deficiencies and current code requirements. For FY2013, BCPS has requested $70 million in capital funding from the state of Maryland and $15.5 million from Baltimore County. Starting with the 2012–2013 school year and over the next several years, the BCPS will open the George Washington Carver Center for Arts and Technology and build Dundalk High School, Sollers Point Technical High School, and an elementary school on the Mays Chapel site. Major additions will be completed at Hampton Elementary School and Stoneleigh Elementary School, and renovations will be completed at Parkville High School and Milford Mill Academy.

Management and Operations\textsuperscript{17}
BCPS continues to focus on continuous quality improvement in all areas of operation. BCPS is the only school system in Maryland to have achieved the prestigious ISO 9001 International Certification for Management. In 2009, Education Week recognized BCPS for the launch of its first-of-a-kind virtual learning environment. This initiative was the result of a ground-breaking partnership among Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, The Johns Hopkins University, and area software developers.

Recognizing that transparency and communication are hallmarks of a well-managed school system, the Government Finance Officers Association and the Association of School Business Officials International continue to recognize BCPS for the excellence of its budget presentations and financial reporting.

\textsuperscript{16} Source: Department of Physical Facilities, Office of Engineering and Construction
\textsuperscript{17} See brochure: \textit{Baltimore County Public Schools – Making the Right Things Happen}
DR. DANCE’S OVERARCHING THEMES

On July 2, 2012, Dr. Dance’s second official day on the job, he held a briefing for the community to give his first impressions and to discuss four priority focus areas that would be central to his administration during the first year of his tenure. Dr. Dance discussed the enormity of transitioning to the new Common Core State Standards and curriculum in order to prepare students for new assessments in 2014–2015. Dr. Dance discussed the essential component of supporting teachers and principals by providing content-rich professional development focusing on the new Common Core State Standards and curriculum. Dr. Dance spoke of the need to continually improve and to measure success. He applauded the work of BCPS in piloting new teacher and principal evaluation systems that identify student achievement as one measure of success. He spoke about the need to implement the evaluation systems over the next two years in a fair and consistent manner so that they become valued tools for professional growth and development. Educators are communicators, and Dr. Dance highlighted his desire to explore and expand the way BCPS communicates with its key constituencies. Lastly, Dr. Dance referred to the BCPS Master Plan, Blueprint for Progress, and its value in charting a course for continuous improvement that could be embraced by the entire BCPS community. Dr. Dance expressed his intention to build on this blueprint to accelerate BCPS’ effort to become the best school district in the country.

The Common Core State Standards and Assessments

Maryland was one of the first states in the nation to adopt the Common Core State Standards in reading/English language arts and mathematics. The State Board of Education adopted the standards by unanimous vote in June 2010. The Common Core State Standards initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors’ Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. These rigorous education standards establish a set of shared goals and expectations for what students should understand and be able to do in grades K–12 in order to be prepared for success in college and the workplace. The standards are research- and evidence-based and internationally benchmarked. They have been voluntarily adopted by a total of 45 states and the District of Columbia. The Common Core State Standards form the foundation for Maryland's new state curriculum. The new state curriculum will be implemented in all Maryland schools in the 2013–2014 school year.18

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is developing new assessments that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. PARCC is a consortium of 25 states working together to develop an assessment system aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Maryland is a governing state in the PARCC consortium. The new assessments will be anchored in college and career readiness; provide comparability across states; and be able to assess and measure higher-order skills such as critical thinking, communications, and problem solving. The PARCC assessments will be implemented in Maryland in the 2014–2015 school year and will replace the Maryland School Assessments.19

Dr. Dance acknowledges that the transition to the Common Core State Standards and assessments is one of the most significant challenges facing school districts across the nation. Dr. Dance firmly believes that the best curriculum is written by teachers. He will be engaging the best BCPS teachers to develop curriculum and to develop instructional supports, interventions, and resources to support the new curriculum.

For Dr. Dance, the path ahead is clear. BCPS must use every single minute of class time to give its students the college- and career-ready tools to succeed post-high school. Students need to know how

18 http://www.msde.maryland.gov/MSDE/programs/ccss/
19 http://www.msde.maryland.gov/MSDE/programs/ccss/
to learn as well as how to access and analyze information. Students need to be critical thinkers and problem solvers. Relevant and rigorous curriculum must address the whole child. Classes must be rigorous, relevant, and engaging, with enough differentiation to meet the needs of all students.  

Dr. Dance also acknowledges that sound decision making must be based on data. Collecting and reporting data is not enough. Leaders must be able to analyze data, use data to inform decisions, and hold each other accountable for those decisions and the subsequent results.  

Professional Growth and Development

During the 2010 General Assembly Session, the Maryland legislature passed the Education Reform Act of 2010. The legislation required the State Board of Education to adopt regulations that established general standards for performance evaluations for certificated teachers and principals and included model performance evaluation criteria. Further, the legislation required local boards to establish performance evaluation criteria for certificated teachers and principals that included data on student growth as a significant component of evaluation and as one of multiple measures.

Local districts were required to implement new teacher and principal evaluations in fall 2013. Since the start of the 2011–2012 school year, seven local school systems, including BCPS, have been participating in a no-fault pilot of a new evaluation model. The pilot process was designed as an important step to ensuring the fairness, reliability, and rigor of the new evaluations. Pilot districts are collecting information, examining lessons learned, and studying the impact and validity of the new evaluation model. The results and feedback from the pilots will inform the no-fault, statewide field test of the evaluation model in 2012–2013. The yearlong field test will also provide local districts with the time to develop and test their own local evaluation models and to provide high-quality professional development to teachers, principals, and administrators on the design and use of the new evaluation systems.

Dr. Dance, acknowledging the need for accountability and fair and appropriate evaluation systems, intends to focus on providing the leadership to assure that “everyone at BCPS, from the Board to every employee, is given the tools and resources to get better at doing their job every day.”

One of the key elements in BCPS’ pursuit of deliberate excellence is committed and effective people working as a team. For Dr. Dance, “leadership is all about people….continuing to recruit, hire, support, develop, and retain the best possible people. The most important question will be how BCPS cultivates talent at every level, across every department.”

Communications

Education depends greatly on communication. In this day of ever-expanding technology, the message of “taking BCPS from good to great” and conveying that message fully and consistently take on renewed importance. Dr. Dance’s philosophy is to “keep the voices of kids always in the forefront and not lose sight of what motivates them.” Dr. Dance will continue to expand and enhance the system’s Web site so that it is more user-friendly and will open up the responsible use of social media. Dr. Dance intends to communicate “effectively, consistently, calmly, and accurately” with all BCPS constituencies.

20 Dance Speech, A&S 2012
21 Dance Speech, A&S 2012
23 http://www.msde.state.md.us/mdclassroom/Vol17_No3_052012.pdf
Dr. Dance plans to craft the BCPS message and communicate it throughout the diverse community, thereby energizing and engaging the community in keeping its meaning vibrant. Part of crafting that message will involve “confronting the brutal facts – the gaps between where BCPS is and where it wants to be.” BCPS will create a culture where people have the opportunity to be heard, where shared understanding and acceptance of the vision and goals occur, and where full community buy-in is valued and sought.25

**Blueprint 2.0**

In 2002, the Maryland General Assembly passed the historic *Bridge to Excellence Act*, which provided over a billion dollars in new funding revenue to local school districts. This legislation also codified the practice already in place in many Maryland school districts of developing and implementing a strategic plan that tied goals and expectations to identified performance indicators for measuring success. To drive its districtwide reform efforts, BCPS adopted its *Blueprint for Progress* in 2001. The *Blueprint* touched on all aspects of BCPS, covering eight broad goals and nearly 60 performance indicators. There is consensus among the BCPS community that the *Blueprint* has been a valuable tool by articulating a common vision, prioritizing reform initiatives, and measuring progress. Dr. Dance intends to build on this momentum. *Blueprint 2.0* will sharpen the focus, be more data-driven, and accelerate reform by moving from awareness into action.

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With the aforementioned information in mind, Dr. S. Dallas Dance took up leadership of the BCPS on July 1, 2012. Having previously served as the Houston Independent School District's chief middle schools officer, Dr. Dance is no stranger to large, diverse school systems. Dr. Dance immediately appointed a Transition Team of 21 internal and external education experts to provide insight into BCPS' successes and opportunities and to provide a roadmap for continued and accelerated improvement. He further charged the Transition Team to provide short- and long-range recommendations to make BCPS the premiere school system in the country.

Dr. Dance appointed Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick and Dr. William Bosher to co-chair the Transition Team. Dr. Grasmick, the current Presidential Scholar for Innovation in Teacher and Leader Education at Towson University, is the former Maryland State Superintendent of Schools. Dr. Bosher is the current Distinguished Professor of Public Policy and Education at the Virginia Commonwealth University.

Under their leadership, the Transition Team met for the first time on June 21, 2012, and to best facilitate its work, organized into four subcommittees: Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness, Teaching and Learning, Culture and Context, and Operations and Finance. The subcommittees were given full access to all BCPS staff and data. The subcommittees were also asked to identify members of the public to inform their work. Working with approximately 20 focus groups of over 160 internal and external stakeholders, the subcommittees solicited public opinion on areas of strength, areas in need of improvement, opportunities, and short-range and long-range focus areas to achieve effectiveness, efficiencies, and consolidation of services.

The Teaching and Learning Subcommittee was charged to determine the current status of BCPS' efforts to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality instructional environment that prepares them for college and the world of work. The subcommittee was also asked to analyze BCPS' efforts toward the transition to the Common Core State Standards, including the written, taught, and assessed curriculum.

Members: Dr. Diane Lee (chairperson), Ms. Sandra Reid, Mr. Shawn Joseph, Mr. Logan McNaney, and Mr. Joshua Parker

Meetings Conducted: July 16, July 20, August 10

Focus Groups Engaged: Central office and administration staff, principals, teachers, students

The Operations and Finance Subcommittee was charged to assess the current status of operations and finance in BCPS, including efficiency and effectiveness of fiscal, human resources, facilities, strategic planning, communications, transportation, and information technology functions.

Members: Dr. Michael Hickey (chairperson), Mr. Donald Arnold, Mr. Joe Coughlin, Mr. Keith Dorsey, Mr. Tom Evans, and Mr. Michael Sines

Meetings Conducted: June 29, July 11, July 18, July 25, August 1, August 8, August 22

Focus Groups Engaged: Principals and facilities managers

The Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness Subcommittee was charged to analyze the current organizational structure to determine whether the district was structured to achieve its desire to be

26 http://www.bcps.org/supTransitionTeam.html
the best school district in the country. In addition, the subcommittee was asked to identify any organizational efficiencies that could be studied further to streamline operations to support schools.

Members: Dr. Marcus Newsome (chairperson), Mr. John Desmone, Ms. Lora Williams, and Ms. Michele Prumo

Meetings Conducted: June 21, July 16, August 9

Focus Groups Engaged: Central office administrators/principals/other stakeholders, parents, teachers

The Culture and Context Subcommittee was charged to identify the dynamics within BCPS’ communities that contribute to, or detract from, the system’s efforts to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality instructional environment. The subcommittee was directed to consider the district context as it relates to internal and external factors that impact the school district’s organizational climate and culture, and influence the key purposes and work of the school district.

Members: Dr. Anthony Marchione (chairperson), Dr. Cathy Gantz, Ms. Abby Beytin, and Ms. Nancy Ostrow

Meetings Conducted: June 21, June 25, July 6, July 23, July 30

Focus Groups Engaged: Board of Education members, County Council members, Baltimore County General Assembly Delegation members, school-based administrators, central office administrators, advisory council members, business/chamber of commerce representatives, teachers, support staff, students, retired personnel, parents, minority/faith-based representatives.

The Transition Team met on June 21, July 24, August 13, and August 29. The work of the Transition Team centered on 10 major areas of focus, including organization; communication; teaching and learning; program evaluation and effectiveness; recruiting, retaining, growing, and developing excellent employees; equity; budget development and finance; technology; strategic planning; and creating healthy, safe, and orderly environments. On August 29, 2012, the Transition Team approved its short-term and long-term recommendations and directed that its report be prepared for transmittal to Dr. Dance. The Transition Team offers the following short-term and long-term recommendations to inform the path to deliberate excellence and to accelerate BCPS’ movement “from good to great.”
ISSUE #1 – ORGANIZATION

What Our Focus Groups Told Us
BCPS should be organized to foster collaboration and teamwork and to operate effectively as a school system, rather than a system of individual schools. BCPS should take the opportunity to reevaluate staff within the Office of the Superintendent to assure that Dr. Dance is fully supported by highly skilled executive and administrative staff.

BCPS should be sensitive to the timing of major changes so that students, teachers, staff, and the community are not trying to adjust to too many major changes at the same time. BCPS should be organized so that decision making is proactive and not reactive. Consideration should be given to whether there is too much central bureaucracy and not enough autonomy for principals to make decisions for their schools. Principals need clarity on organizational structure in regard to what issues to resolve through the assistant superintendents, the deputy superintendent, a chief academic officer, and the chief of staff, and what issues to take directly to the superintendent.

BCPS should hire a new chief academic officer who possesses experience and expertise in curriculum and instruction design and implementation. This position is critical as BCPS transitions to the new Common Core State Standards and assessments. The person in this position should be responsible for teaching and learning, and for supervision of all curriculum and instruction offices. All curriculum and instruction offices should be coordinated and consolidated into one facility that encourages maximum coordination. Curriculum and instruction offices may need additional staff to best support schools.

BCPS should establish the position of chief operations officer. The current organization is too inefficient with too many direct reports to the superintendent. Executive leadership under a new chief operations officer would be helpful in addressing and accelerating ongoing facilities issues, including aging schools, school construction and renovation, energy management, overcrowding, the lack of air conditioning in all schools, and improving the technology infrastructure.

BCPS should consider supporting the current research and accountability office by creating an executive level chief accountability officer. This position is necessary to oversee the development and implementation of the new Common Core assessments, to support leaders in using data to inform decision making, and to effectively evaluate ongoing and new programs.

There is considerable confusion over which organizational model—zone or area—best supports schools. A zone model is structured by grade level, and an area model is structured geographically. Some parents and advisory council members prefer the area organization because it allows for one point of contract. High school principals especially prefer the zone organization. The system should reevaluate which school organizational model (zoned, area, or a combination) provides the best support to schools. The system should also reevaluate the need for additional support staff at the assistant superintendent level and the need for additional assistant superintendent positions.

Dr. Dance’s Entry Plan Focus
In July 2012, Dr. Dance released an Entry Plan setting forth a number of initiatives to guide his administration through the first year of his tenure. As part of its work, the Transition Team considered and discussed these initiatives. Many of the entry plan initiatives have been validated by the independent work of the Transition Team. In looking at the BCPS organization, the Transition Team considered the following six initiatives of the Entry Plan:
• Appoint/hire a chief academic officer who will be responsible for all aspects of teaching and learning throughout the school district.
• Conduct central office position and department review.
• Review level of autonomy in current principal structure and decision-making authority.
• Review current leadership team.
• Determine feasibility of administering survey to all principals on central office support functions and operations.
• Administer a survey of organizational effectiveness and efficiency to all employees.

Other Considerations
Over the past decade, BCPS has undergone a number of curriculum and management audits. The Transition Team reviewed and discussed the major recommendations from these audits to determine the level of acceptance and implementation of the recommendations and whether the previous recommendations were still valid today. The major recommendations related to organization are as follows:

The Phi Delta Kappa Curriculum Management Audit, Recommendation 1 – Bring district curriculum and program development and the change process under system control; conduct a national search and hire a chief academic officer (CAO) who reports directly to the superintendent; bring curriculum development, professional development, and assessment into alignment. Develop a systemwide curriculum management plan.

An Organizational Study for Baltimore County Public Schools, MGT of America – Recommendation 4–1 – Reorganize the Central Office of Baltimore County Public Schools.

Transition Report for the Superintendent of Baltimore County Public Schools, 2000 – Consider having two deputies, with one in charge of the instructional side of the house and the other in charge of the operational side of the house. Consolidate all business functions under the deputy superintendent for operations or the chief operations officer, including the Division of Fiscal Services, the Division of Physical Facilities, and the Department of Personnel. Consolidate all educational functions under the deputy superintendent for instruction or the chief academic officer, including the Division of Instructional Support Services, Minority Achievement, the Department of Professional Development, and the area offices.

Questions Asked
The Transition Team considered questions in seven areas related to the district’s organizational structure. Particular attention was directed to the organizational structure needed to support teaching and learning, manage the district’s business services, support the superintendent, provide a manageable span of control, facilitate decision making, support schools, and communicate effectively with all stakeholders.

1. Is BCPS currently organized to support integrated decision making at the highest level, and is the superintendent adequately supported by his assistants and direct reports?

2. Should the district hire a chief academic officer?
3. Should a chief operations officer position be created to supervise and manage the Division of Business Services?

4. Are the lines of authority clear so that all employees know who manages the day-to-day operations related to teaching and learning? Is there clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the deputy superintendent, a possible chief academic officer, the curriculum and instruction offices, and the assistant superintendents as they relate to the day-to-day operation of schools?

5. Should the district move toward an organization that clusters schools geographically by area and away from a support model organized by school-level zones (elementary, middle, and high school)? Can the district adequately support and staff these models?

6. Is there functional overlap within BCPS? What is the organizational relationship among information technology, instructional technology, and media services? Could all strategic planning duties and responsibilities be consolidated?

7. Is BCPS adequately organized and staffed to communicate effectively with the district’s various constituencies?

Short-Term Recommendations – 2012–2013

- Establish an organization and culture where the primary work of the district takes place in schools and where the central office provides schools with clear expectations, facilitates shared decision making, and supports the work in schools while honoring the overarching goals of the system.

- Realign the organization to move away from the fragmentation that currently exists, toward a structure that supports a more strategic integration of decision making.

- Develop a working relationship with the school board that fosters communication. Provide meaningful orientation activities for new school board members and professional development opportunities for existing school board members. Assist the school board in developing a meaningful process of board self-assessment.

- Make permanent the role of the chief of staff as a direct report to the superintendent, with authority to speak on his behalf and to direct the flow of work and communications into and out of the superintendent’s office. Clarify the role and responsibility of the chief of staff to make clear that this position functions as the chief of the “superintendent’s staff.”

- Review and reclassify, if appropriate, the administrative assistant positions that support the superintendent and the direct reports to the superintendent. BCPS should determine the skill level needed for these executive-level administrative assistant positions and assure that the positions are filled by employees possessing the appropriate skills.

- Limit the direct reports to the superintendent to 4–6 individuals. Consider the following as direct reports: deputy superintendent, chief of staff, chief academic officer, chief operations officer, chief communications officer, and general counsel. The chief fiscal officer, chief information officer, the executive director of Physical Facilities, and the executive director of Planning and Support Operations could report to the chief operations officer. This executive team should have integrated decision-making authority for the day-to-day management of the school system.
Affirm Dr. Dance’s appointment of a chief academic officer. The chief academic officer must be a proven leader who will make a long-term commitment to BCPS. The chief academic officer must possess expertise in curriculum and instruction and be responsible for leading all aspects of curriculum and instruction within BCPS. This position is critical as BCPS transitions to the new Common Core State Standards and assessments.

Create a new position of chief accountability officer that reports to the deputy superintendent and works closely with the chief academic officer. The new position is critical to meet the needs of schools as the Common Core State Standards and assessments are implemented.

Clarify the role and responsibility and reporting authority of the assistant superintendents related to decision making about curriculum and instruction. The relationship among the assistant superintendents, chief academic officer, and deputy superintendent needs to be clearly defined.

Involve the school community in examining the efficacy of zone versus area offices. BCPS should consider the best articulation to balance grade-level teaming with the benefit of creating a sense of community within the structure.

Reexamine the staff of the current zoned offices to determine whether there is adequate administrative support. BCPS should determine whether additional assistant superintendent positions are needed to best support schools. BCPS should also conduct a position review to determine whether the position of assistant to an assistant superintendent is appropriately classified. Specifically, BCPS should determine whether this classification has the skill level and experience qualifications to adequately support schools.

Establish a process to assure that the training ground for school leadership takes place in schools.

Establish the position of chief operations officer.

Determine the proper placement of the Department of Human Resources within the structure, being mindful that the Department of Human Resources provides support to the entire district and is a full-service department, not merely a hiring agency. BCPS should consider whether the Department of Human Resources should report to a new chief operations officer.

**Long-Term Recommendations – 2013–2015**

- Conduct a comprehensive review of the entire organizational model. BCPS should be particularly focused on identifying functional redundancies.

- Examine and clarify the duties and responsibilities of the Office of Communications, the Office of Community Outreach, and the ombudsman, and reorganize these communications functions as appropriate.

- Review BCPS’ advocacy before the Maryland General Assembly, the County Council, and the State Board of Education to determine the appropriate placement of this function within the organization. Analyzing best practices among the larger Maryland school districts, BCPS should determine whether it would benefit from creating the position of legislative liaison/governmental relations.
- Conduct a review of the areas of information technology, instructional technology, and media support to determine what organizational structure would best support students, teachers, and staff.

- Review and evaluate the structure and efficiency of the Department of Student Support Services, paying particular attention to whether Alternative Programs would be better supported by the Division of Curriculum and Instruction, and whether certain elementary programs could be consolidated with early childhood programs in curriculum and instruction.

- Consider where early childhood and school counseling services should be housed within the organization.

- Undertake a review of the Department of Research, Accountability, and Assessment to determine whether staffing and infrastructure are appropriate and sufficient to implement the new Common Core assessments. As part of this review, conduct a review of the structure and implementation of strategic planning throughout the district with particular emphasis on whether staffing is sufficient to perform the type of data analysis and forecasting needed to drive decision making at every level within the district.

- Consider reorganizing and redirecting the offices within the Department of Planning and Support Services. BCPS should consider whether facility and capacity planning are better aligned with the Department of Research, Accountability, and Assessment, or the Department of Physical Facilities. BCPS should consider whether the function of distribution services is better aligned with the Department of Physical Facilities. BCPS should consider whether Risk Management is better aligned with Human Resources. BCPS should consider whether Transportation and Nutrition Services should be separate units reporting directly to a chief operations officer.

- Consider moving the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity to the Office of General Counsel.

- Consider making the Office of Special Education a separate department. BCPS should consider whether special education compliance functions should be separated from special education teaching and learning functions.
ISSUE #2 – COMMUNICATION

What Our Focus Groups Told Us

Communication is key to BCPS’ success. Communication needs to be frequent, consistent, and audience-friendly. E-mail was the preferred method of communication. BCPS needs to develop its “message” and invite all stakeholders to be advocates for that message. In order to be stronger advocates for the school system, members of the Baltimore County Delegation to the General Assembly and members of the County Council need to be provided timely, accurate information and would benefit from one point of contact to facilitate the sharing of information.

The continuous flow of information needs to stream from all levels, including the school board, superintendent, central office, staff, schools, students, parents, and the community. BCPS must impart information and explain the rationale for certain decisions to students and parents. BCPS should create a culture where all voices are valued and not subject to reprimand or reprisal. BCPS needs to welcome community and parent advisory councils to be true partners. BCPS must increase parental involvement. Stakeholders should be included in the decision-making process. A fair process should be developed and communicated to address parent/community concerns.

BCPS should embrace technology to open up new avenues for communication. E-mail is valued as a means of communication. BCPS should continue ConnectEd as a communication tool. BCPS should find innovative ways to communicate with constituencies that are not technology savvy, or for whom English is not their native language.

Principals reiterated the need for more and better communication at all levels. BCPS should develop a marketing strategy to highlight the value and benefits of a Baltimore County public education. This type of marketing strategy should unify the county rather than fragment it. The system’s ability to identify and compete for private grants is hampered by the lack of a grant writer. The system should employ a grant writer. The BCPS community should be made aware of the existence of the Baltimore County Education Foundation and its role and benefits.

Dr. Dance’s Focus

Dr. Dance’s Entry Plan contained the following two initiatives related to communication:

- Review communication of best practices by level and feeder pattern.
- Assess quality, quantity, and effectiveness of all forms of communication with various stakeholders.

Other Considerations

An Organizational Study for Baltimore County Public Schools, MGT of America – Recommendation 4–20 – BCPS should develop a comprehensively designed public relations and marketing plan that can be incorporated in a systemwide strategic planning document.

Questions Asked

The Transition Team considered four questions related to the effectiveness of BCPS communication.

1. Does BCPS communicate effectively with students, parents, employees, the community, and its partners at the school level?
2. Who determines best practices and how is this information disseminated to school leaders and teachers?

3. How is a critical consciousness developed among all those in the BCPS community?

4. Is the BCPS community knowledgeable about the new Common Core State Standards and how they will impact student learning?

**Short-Term Recommendations – 2012–2013**

- Develop a consistent message that clearly and continuously communicates that BCPS is a school system where individuals are valued.

- Support open communication and teamwork to help build morale.

- Craft an easily understood message about BCPS' operating and capital needs and costs to allow the school system’s major constituencies to become effective advocates for adequate funding.

- Educate the entire BCPS community on the impact of the Common Core State Standards on teaching and learning, student assessment, and teacher evaluation and development. The size of BCPS requires creative ways of gathering and disseminating information and building relationships with internal and external stakeholders to build support for the adoption of the Common Core State Standards.

- Develop a process for appointing members to mandated advisory committees to assure the membership is representative of the diverse community and to provide opportunities for new members to rotate onto the committees.

**Long-Term Recommendations – 2013–2015**

- Develop and implement a comprehensive communication plan, with input from all major constituencies, to significantly increase the avenues and flow of information. The plan should detail the process that will be used to communicate decisions that are made, including the rationale for those decisions and the structure for implementation of the decisions. The plan should also require meaningful stakeholder involvement in the decision-making process.

- Seek new and non-traditional ways to increase the frequency, level, and effectiveness of communication to and among the board, superintendent, staff, students, parents, governmental leaders, and the community. BCPS should utilize e-mail and social networks to provide and gather information. BCPS should continue to develop its Web pages. BCPS should expand its use of stakeholder meetings and focus groups to both gather and impart information.

- Increase parental engagement significantly by developing a fair process to address parent/community concerns.

- Develop and implement an annual survey to all central and school-based staff to monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of the organizational structure.
ISSUE #3 – TEACHING AND LEARNING

What Our Focus Groups Told Us

BCPS should be a world-class school system focused on seeing that every child reaches her or his full potential. BCPS must implement all instructional programs consistently across the district. BCPS should be ready to fully implement the new Common Core State Standards, curriculum, and assessments, but should not be so tied to accountability that the art of teaching is diminished or lost.

Teachers and schools should be fully supported by BCPS curriculum and instruction professionals. BCPS has a history of increasing student achievement, but not all student population groups or schools are achieving at the same level. BCPS needs to accelerate its efforts to close those achievement gaps.

Particular attention needs to be paid to raising achievement levels in reading and language arts. BCPS needs to assure that all students are college- and career-ready. All students need to be prepared to handle rigorous Advanced Placement courses, which must be better aligned to what students need to be successful in the 21st century. Advanced Placement courses must be available for all students in a consistent, equitable manner. There must be appropriate preparation for teachers to offer high quality Advanced Placement courses, with fidelity.

Differentiated instruction must be strengthened for special needs populations and creative interventions need to be introduced for at-risk students and schools.

BCPS should continue to be invested in its students after graduation, evaluating success through college and career.

Dr. Dance’s Focus

Dr. Dance’s Entry Plan contained the following ten initiatives related to teaching and learning:

- Communicate school system’s expectations for all students’ academic success and review and evaluate how discipline procedures are followed.
- Review all student achievement and other pertinent data for all student populations.
- Meet with deputy superintendent and assistant superintendents to discuss academic performance and culture and climate to determine quality of actions to support principals and improve schools.
- Review and evaluate protocol for supporting low-performing schools.
- Evaluate systems for improving graduation rates for all students.
- Meet with students to learn their perceptions of the quality of relationships and access to academic rigor.
- Assess districtwide literacy initiatives.
- Review response to interventions and Positive Behavior Interventions and Support model and process to determine impact.
- Provide appropriate transitional opportunities from elementary to middle, middle to high, and high to post-secondary.
- Evaluate current practices related to meeting the needs of the whole child.
- Review current organization, schedule, and format of principals’ meetings.
Other Considerations

*Phi Delta Kappa Curriculum Management Audit Recommendation 3* – Develop and execute a curriculum management plan that produces high-quality curriculum guides to promote alignment and content rigor, provides a consistent format for guides to focus and normalize systemwide use, and establishes curriculum guides for non-core areas for systemic quality control.

Questions Asked

The Transition Team considered seven questions related to effective teaching and learning.

1. Who are our teachers and students, and what do we know about them?

2. Does BCPS have a common expectation for what every student should know and be able to do?

3. How will the district fully adopt and implement the Common Core State Standards?

4. Has the district developed the necessary curriculum, instructional materials, guides, and interventions to support student mastery of the Common Core State Standards?

5. Does BCPS make certain that curricula are relevant to the diverse students in classrooms and that pedagogical approaches match the varied learning styles of students?

6. Does BCPS graduate students who are college- and career-ready with 21st century learning skills? Are there gaps between student subgroups?

7. Have BCPS teachers and principals received sufficient professional development in the implementation of the new Common Core State Standards, curriculum, and assessments? Does BCPS have a robust and coordinated professional development program?

Short-Term Recommendations – 2012–2013

- Adopt a systemwide framework for what constitutes effective teaching and learning. The framework should reflect a definition of rigor as innovative, ambitious, complex, and emotionally engaging. The framework should align to 21st Century Learning Skills and focus on graduating students who are college- and career-ready. The framework will require transparent and full coordination of systemwide resources to benefit schools, classrooms, teachers, and students.

- Identify all current achievement gaps and implement additional strategies to accelerate the elimination of all achievement gaps. The strategies should include differentiated instruction, professional development for educators, evidence gathering to determine use of professional development in classroom instruction. Particular attention should be paid to instructional programs and interventions for students within the disaggregated subgroups. Variability in representation of subgroups, for example, whether overrepresentation in low performance schools or underrepresentation in special programs for academically talented students, must be addressed. So, too, must variability in school performance in comparable schools in the district. Careful examination of variance in performance must be conducted and an action plan developed.
• Align professional development, curricular guides and materials, educator observations, and performance evaluations to the Framework for Teaching and Learning. The framework should continue to address the need for differentiation within schools. BCPS must consider the allocation of resources and support at the classroom and at the school level so that particular needs of each teacher and each student are met.

• Benchmark BCPS’ progress in meeting the recommendations of the previous Phi Delta Kappa Curriculum Management Audit. As areas of non-compliance are identified, BCPS should prioritize the work to be accomplished; prepare an implementation plan, including action steps, responsible departments, and timelines; monitor progress in implementing the recommendations; and align this work with the development of the framework and Blueprint 2.0.

• Consider adopting a structure where social studies and English language arts have a PreK–12 focus, similar to the current structure for science and mathematics. English language arts is a high priority area that needs to be revitalized and well structured so that there is continuity and consistency in leadership, protocols, and programming.

• Evaluate how systemwide professional development is delivered to teachers, school leaders, and support staff on strategic districtwide priorities. BCPS must allocate sufficient resources to provide systemic, job-embedded professional development on all strategic districtwide priorities. Access to professional development must be equitable and pervasive. Part of these opportunities should include time for individuals to collaborate with each other in their own schools and with other schools. Opportunities for sharing best practices should be articulated in a districtwide system that sets expectations for collaboration. The creative and effective use of technology should be explored and included as appropriate. Systemwide professional development must be tied to a clear vision, intended outcomes, and a comprehensive system of accountability. There should be a continuous cycle of implementation, feedback, and revision. Appropriate staff training must also be provided to support and implement the new Common Core State Standards and PARCC, related curriculum, and assessments.

• The role of paraeducator needs to be well defined and a plan for the professional development of paraeducators needs to be developed and implemented.

• Continue to provide cocurricular and extracurricular activities for all students.

**Long-Term Recommendations – 2013–2015**

• Reevaluate the BCPS staffing model. The process used to develop the new staffing model needs to be transparent and communicated to the entire school community to dispel the perception of inequity. BCPS should develop an appropriate student/teacher ratio while allowing flexibility in the staffing model to meet the unique needs of all students and schools. Priority staffing should be given to high needs areas. BCPS should pay particular attention to staffing needed to implement its inclusion model for students with disabilities. BCPS should consider special staffing for kindergarten assistants, guidance counselors, and media specialists in accordance with school enrollment. As part of the staffing model, BCPS should consider providing social workers for schools with identified needs.

• Expand and target relevant, differentiated, high-quality professional development opportunities for teachers, school leaders, and support staff. Focused intervention actions
should be implemented when schools and/or teachers are found to be low-performing and students underachieving. Student achievement data should be used to tailor professional development activities. The creative and effective use of technology should be explored and included as appropriate.

- Work with institutions of higher education to align teacher preparation programs to the Framework for Teaching and Learning so that graduates are prepared for what teachers should know and be able to do. Partnerships with the higher education community should be fostered and designed to augment the district’s efforts developing curricula, assessing programmatic and professional development interventions, and bringing special initiatives to BCPS. In this lean budget climate, colleges and universities could also assist by providing opportunities for submitting collaborative grants that would bring outside funding to support BCPS' efforts and goals.
ISSUE #4 – PROGRAM EVALUATION AND EFFECTIVENESS

What Our Focus Groups Told Us

BCPS should continuously evaluate educational programs to make certain that they are effective.

BCPS should discontinue ineffective programs and consolidate redundant programs so that funds are not spent unwisely. The opening of a new school should be used as an opportunity to consolidate programming throughout the district.

Dr. Dance’s Focus

Dr. Dance’s Entry Plan identified six initiatives related to program evaluation and effectiveness:

- Meet with principals and teachers to determine their perception of the quality and accessibility to student achievement data and level of support offered by central office staff.
- Inventory programs, material, and curriculum to begin processes of determining impact on academic results.
- Evaluate processes used to monitor effectiveness of programs.
- Employ a school improvement process, aligning written plans to what is actually occurring.
- Meet with Research and Accountability to analyze the current assessment, monitoring, and evaluation system.
- Review district’s current performance management system (balanced report card).

Other Considerations

*Phi Delta Kappa Curriculum Management Audit Recommendation 5* – Develop and implement a comprehensive assessment plan and system that fosters sound instructional decision making based upon adequate, comprehensive feedback and provides (1) information for administrators and teachers on individual student progress, (2) a plan for clear and needed improvements to benchmark and short-cycle assessments, and (3) information for use in design and delivery of curriculum, support services, and professional development.

*Phi Delta Kappa Curriculum Management Audit Recommendation 6* – Require the systemic evaluation of district programs and master plan actions by external or internal program review linked to student achievement data.

*Phi Delta Kappa Curriculum Management Audit Recommendation 7* – Design and implement a data management plan in order to maintain accurate, useful, and easily accessible data to guide staff in instructional decision making; include automatic error checking and data sampling; and maintain a single centralized database to ensure consistent and accessible reports.
Questions Asked
The Transition Team considered three questions related to the implementation and evaluation of BCPS academic programs.

1. Does the district have a process in place to evaluate academic programs to determine their effectiveness?

2. Are instructional decisions supported by valid and reliable data that improve instruction rather than merely achieve accountability targets?

3. Does BCPS have staff skilled in analyzing data to support decision making? Are the resources of the school system sufficient to assure that leadership is provided with forecasts and trending information to inform decisions?

Short-Term Recommendations – 2012–2013
- Conduct a comprehensive review of all academic and enrichment programs to determine whether these programs are effective, support student learning, and are being implemented in a consistent manner districtwide. Coordination of efforts is critical so that professionals responsible for implementing programs are not overwhelmed by too many and potentially competing efforts.

Long-Term Recommendations – 2013–2015
- Develop a process for continuous program evaluation. Research-based practices should be used in all classrooms, and student progress must be assessed openly and periodically so that teachers and the district may make data-driven decisions concerning the continuation, modification, or elimination of academic and enrichment programs in use.

- Review position descriptions and qualifications to assure that research and accountability staff have the skills necessary to analyze data to support decision making.

- Determine whether a follow-up management and curriculum audit (such as the PDK audit) should be conducted; and, if so, create a timeline for doing so.
ISSUE #5 – RECRUITING, RETAINING, GROWING, AND DEVELOPING EXCELLENT EMPLOYEES

What Our Focus Groups Told Us
Parents expect their children to be taught by highly qualified teachers. Making certain that young teachers have strong mentors is important.

BCPS should begin a process where positions are filled with individuals who best match the needs of a particular school, or who can best round out the talents/skill sets of the current staff at a particular school.

All staff should have an opportunity to grow and advance. BCPS needs to do a better job of addressing poor performance. Evaluations need to be fair. Struggling employees need to be given additional training and an opportunity to show improvement. Employees who consistently fail to perform need to be separated from the system in a timely manner.

BCPS needs to create a “pipeline” for aspiring leaders. BCPS, like many other organizations, will lose many principals, administrators, and educational leaders over the next decade. BCPS must have a plan for identifying and growing a new generation of leaders.

Dr. Dance’s Focus
Dr. Dance’s Entry Plan identified two initiatives related to employee growth and development:

- Meet with Professional Development to determine state of professional development for teachers and support staff.
- Determine district’s effort related to Leadership Development.
Other Considerations

*Phi Delta Kappa Curriculum Management Audit Recommendation 2* – Develop and implement comprehensive professional development policies, rules, and plans that provide (1) central control and coordination of all professional development, (2) identification of individualized staff professional development needs, (3) systemic and coordinated delivery of needed knowledge and skills focused on improvement of student achievement, and (4) evaluation of professional development effectiveness in terms of improvement of learner achievement.

Questions Asked

The Transition Team considered seven questions related to the delivery of human resource services, the professional growth and development of employees, and the adoption and implementation of fair employee evaluations.

1. Does the district have a program of continuous improvement that provides professional growth and development opportunities to all employees? Are professional growth and development opportunities aligned to what employees are expected to know and be able to do?

2. Does the district have a system for evaluating employee performance that is fairly implemented and measures what employees should know and be able to do?

3. Does the district have a process for the timely severance of non-performing employees?

4. Is the process for the creation of the principal and assistant principal pool of candidates unnecessarily confusing and restrictive?

5. Are there standards that address the time for responding to requests to fill vacancies and are these standards met?

6. Does BCPS communicate with job applicants appropriately, and what feedback is shared with unsuccessful candidates, especially internal candidates who are unsuccessful?

7. Is BCPS successful in its recruitment efforts for non-educator positions, especially construction trades and professions?

Short-Term Recommendations – 2012–2013

- Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the delivery of HR support throughout the organization. Determine whether the Department of Human Resources has the staff and processes in place to provide support to the entire organization. The evaluation should focus on HR’s recruitment strategies for non-educator positions, its ability to identify and fill critical vacancies, its processes and practices that are cumbersome and do not add value to the organization, and its communication with employees and potential employees.

- Conduct a review of all job descriptions within BCPS, looking at qualifications, compensation, and reporting authority to assure equity throughout the district. Similarly titled management positions should be reviewed to assure comparability of roles, responsibilities, and compensation. Particular attention should be paid to the classifications of executive director, supervisor, specialist, coordinator, and manager.
- Solicit input from parents and the community about the characteristics of excellent school leaders prior to selecting new leadership.

- Identify critical positions within the organization and create succession plans to assure BCPS can recruit and fill these positions in a timely manner in the event of a vacancy.

**Long-Term Recommendations – 2013–2015**

- Develop non-traditional recruitment and retention strategies such as internships, apprenticeships, and part-time and job-sharing opportunities for retired professionals within BCPS. These types of strategies could be particularly beneficial in recruiting for certain construction trades and professions.

- Develop succession plans for all BCPS classifications.

- Increase the number and variety of professional development and growth opportunities for all employees.

- Implement a fair employee evaluation system that measures what employees should know and be able to do.

- Evaluate the process for identifying and assigning excess teachers to schools. Assure principals have a greater voice in the equitable staffing of their schools. Limit the transfer of underperforming teachers to other schools.

- Evaluate BCPS’ hiring practices for business services managers with a goal to minimize the hiring of internal educators without business experiences, as well as to minimize the hiring of external business professionals without knowledge of schools.
What Our Focus Group Told Us

Educational programs should be available to all BCPS children regardless of what school they attend. School policies should be administered consistently by all principals. Technology and support services should be the same in all schools. Variance was a theme often heard from stakeholders. BCPS should undertake a candid and transparent analysis of equity across the district. As part of this analysis, BCPS should be sensitive to the race, language proficiency, and geographic factors affecting students’ abilities to learn, families’ abilities to participate in their children’s education, and teachers’ abilities to assure that each child achieves full potential. BCPS must continue to raise questions that point to the equitable distribution of all resources and lead Maryland in the quest for excellence in education for all students. All students should have access to gifted and talented programs, AP classes, and after-school activities. BCPS should be aware that providing equal resources to non-equal schools does not achieve equity.

BCPS should continue to analyze the performance of both high- and under-performing schools. Attention should be paid to identifying practices and patterns that are shared and that differentiate the two groups. Mobility of students, faculty, and staff; staff experience and training; equitable practices; and allocation of resources should be considered with optimization of student achievement always being the goal.

Magnet schools give parents “choice” and should be maintained. BCPS should provide more transparency in the allocation of funding.

Dr. Dance’s Focus

Dr. Dance addressed equity before an assembly of BCPS educators, stating that:

It is important that Team BCPS’ culture is built on equity, respect, teamwork, and a deeply held belief and passion that we must act with a sense of urgency to ensure all students are given the same opportunities that we would hope for our own children...

Our culture of equity and of standing with one voice is critical to achieving our goal of providing the best educational experience for each child – all does mean all.27

Other Considerations

*Phi Delta Kappa Curriculum Management Audit Recommendation 9* – Develop and implement system planning focused on goals to ensure equal access for students to all comparable programs, services, and opportunities for student success; take steps to eliminate the achievement gap among student groups; and act to allocate resources on the basis of need.

Questions Asked

The Transition Team considered two questions related to the allocation of equitable programs and supports among BCPS schools.

1. Is there a perception that not all BCPS schools receive equitable programs and supports?
2. Do all students have access to academic programs, enrichment programs, and cocurricular activities?

27 Dance Speech, A&S 2012
Short-Term Recommendations – 2012–2013

- Conduct focus groups to identify those areas where the community believes program inequities exist.

- Reevaluate the BCPS staffing model. The process used to develop the new staffing model needs to be transparent and communicated to the entire school community to dispel the perception that inequities exist.

- For certain non-formula, non-foundation funding, when possible, adopt the use of innovation grants that are transparent in criteria and application. Allowing all schools to compete for innovation grants will help dispel the perception that funding inequities exist. Awarding innovation grants will allow BCPS an opportunity to showcase and share “best practices” throughout the district.

Long-Term Recommendations – 2013–2015

- BCPS should determine whether inequities in funding, resources, and programming exist and resolve any inequities, or communicate the rationale for certain inequities that further legitimate needs within the school system.

- BCPS should evaluate whether student grouping practices ensure all students the opportunity to engage in high-quality, rigorous curricula in a positive learning environment.
ISSUE #7 – BUDGET DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCES

What Our Focus Groups Told Us
BCPS needs to have a strong working relationship with its elected officials at both the county and state levels. BCPS should partner with parent and community advocates to assure that government leaders are aware of the needs of the district. BCPS should hire a grant writer to identify and apply for innovation funds at the state and federal levels and from private foundations. BCPS should assure that there is equity of resources from school to school.

Dr. Dance’s Focus
Dr. Dance’s Entry Plan identified two initiatives related to budget development and finances:

- Review current budget process for alignment and transparency.
- Review current financial projections, resource allocation, and budgeting processes.

Other Considerations
*Phi Delta Kappa Curriculum Management Audit*
Recommendation 8 – Develop and implement a five-year plan that fully aligns district resources to curricular goals and strategic priorities and that includes systematic cost-benefit analyses to assure that expenditures are producing desired results systemwide.

Questions Asked
The Transition Team considered four questions related to budget development and financial reporting.

1. Is the budget process transparent and timely, and are the right employees/other constituencies adequately involved and informed?

2. In relation to budget development, are the roles and responsibilities of the county, the board, and the superintendent well defined and respected, and does the process work in practice?

3. In relation to maximizing resources, is the relationship with the county government well defined and appropriate?

4. Are there adequate safeguards within the budget process to assure that the elimination of, or reduction to, non-personnel expenditures are justified and that their impact is fully explained?
Short-Term Recommendations – 2012–2013

- Identify current position reductions or position eliminations to offset the addition of any new positions prior to adding those new positions to the budget. (Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency)

- Educate BCPS’ employees and stakeholders about funding sources and limitations, as well as the rationale for the selection of budget priorities.

Long-Term Recommendations – 2013–2015

- Undertake a joint study with Baltimore County representatives to identify areas where additional cooperative agreements could be executed that would generate cost savings and would be beneficial to the interests of both the school system and county government. To the greatest extent possible, BCPS should minimize any negative impact to its employees with the execution of new cooperative agreements.

- Require all central office departments to present a plan to promote efficiencies by reducing their budget by a percentage determined in collaboration with the Office of Budget and Accounting.

- Conduct a review of employee benefit programs for cost controls.

- Develop short-term and long-term operating and capital budget forecasts that consider opportunity for improving system effectiveness and efficiency, as well as the current funding outlook.
What Our Focus Groups Told Us
Technology needs to be continually upgraded to meet the needs of students and teachers. Data systems and operating systems need to be upgraded so that recordkeeping is accurate and business services are able to operate efficiently.

BCPS should consider new models for the delivery of instruction, especially on-line instruction, to achieve resource efficiencies and programmatic effectiveness.

Technology resources need to be uniform within the schools to eliminate inequities.

Dr. Dance’s Focus
Dr. Dance addressed the need for thorough data analysis before an assembly of BCPS educators, stating that:

A championship team…will analyze the data to see what enables the other team to win or causes them to lose and adjust their strategy and game plan accordingly. We must do the same…It is only through having the right data that we can make the right decisions in how we move forward.28

Other Considerations
An Organizational Study for Baltimore County Public Schools, MGT of America – Recommendation 11–2 – The school system should develop a comprehensive technology plan that will guide the school system’s technology efforts and expenditures over the next three to five years. MGT of America, Inc.

Questions Asked
The Operations and Finance Committee examined two major questions related to information technology.

1. Does the chief information officer have sufficient authority to prioritize the technology needs of the district and to use district resources efficiently for maximum benefit?

2. Should the district consider additional cooperative agreements with Baltimore County in the area of information technology?

28 Dance Speech, A&S 2012
Short-Term Recommendations – 2012–2013

- Undertake a management review to determine whether BCPS can become adequately staffed to discontinue the costly practice of contracting for information technology support.

- Determine whether the district should enter into additional cooperative agreements with the county for information technology support.

Long-Term Recommendations – 2013–2015

- Develop a comprehensive technology plan to guide the district in acquiring and using technology. The plan should set minimum technology standards for schools to assure that curriculum can be appropriately implemented.

- Explore and, if necessary, develop digital curricula aligned to the Common Core State Standards. BCPS should assure that all teachers are trained in the use of the digital curricula.
ISSUE #9 – STRATEGIC PLANNING

What Our Focus Groups Told Us

*The Blueprint for Progress* was a valuable strategic planning document and should be updated and continued. Strategic planning should incorporate the views of all groups.

Dr. Dance’s Focus

Dr. Dance’s Entry Plan identified two initiatives concerning strategic planning:

- Evaluate current state of strategic planning monitoring.
- Review process for establishing departmental goals aligned to board goals.

Other Considerations

*Phi Delta Kappa Curriculum Management Audit Recommendation 7* – Design and implement a data management plan in order to maintain accurate, useful, and easily accessible data to guide staff in instructional decision making; include automatic error checking and data sampling; and maintain a single centralized database to ensure consistent and accessible reports.

*Phi Delta Kappa Curriculum Management Audit Recommendation 8* – Develop and implement a five-year plan that fully aligns district resources to curricular goals and strategic priorities and that includes systematic cost-benefit analyses to assure that expenditures are producing desired results systemwide.

*An Organizational Study for Baltimore County Public Schools, MGT of America – Recommendation 4–10* – BCPS should develop a system of planning and accountability designed to reflect validated school improvement and school system needs.

Questions Asked

The Transition Team considered three questions related to strategic planning.

1. Does BCPS have a strategic planning process in place that engages all stakeholders and aligns all goals, objectives, and board-level initiatives through school improvement planning?

2. Are the strategic planning resources of the district sufficient to assure that leadership is provided with forecasts, trending information, and analyses to drive decisions?

3. Is BCPS organized to support its strategic planning functions?

Short-Term Recommendations – 2012–2013

- Consider whether all strategic planning functions should be consolidated under one department within the organization.
Long-Term Recommendations – 2013–2015

- Determine whether BCPS has the appropriate staff and organization to conduct long-range strategic planning, to align its strategic plan to district resources, to monitor compliance with strategic planning initiatives, and to communicate its strategic plan to the BCPS community.

- Determine whether BCPS has the appropriate strategic planning process in place to assure that all planning functions are aligned to Blueprint 2.0.
**ISSUE #10 – CREATING HEALTHY, SAFE, AND ORDERLY ENVIRONMENTS**

**What Our Focus Groups Told Us**

BCPS needs to provide air conditioning in every school. BCPS needs to be prepared to address overcrowding in schools due to population shifts within the county.

The age of the schools is a major concern. BCPS must continue to renovate and upgrade its facilities to meet the educational program needs of the students. School cleanliness was referenced as was BCPS’ ability to address the continual turnover and absenteeism of its custodial and maintenance staff.

BCPS must maintain a healthy, safe, and orderly learning environment. Disruptive classroom and school behavior is a concern, as is student-to-student bullying.

**Dr. Dance’s Focus**

Dr. Dance’s Entry Plan identified one initiative related to healthy, safe, and orderly school environments:

- Review facility reports related to overcrowding to discuss critical capital improvements.

**Other Considerations**

*Phi Delta Kappa Curriculum Management Audit Recommendation 10* – Immediately act to eliminate substandard education environments by eliminating safety hazards and instructional barriers by establishing a responsive and effective system of maintenance executed on the basis of need, and take steps to eliminate the detrimental backlog of uncompleted maintenance operations and needs.

**Questions Asked**

The Transition Team considered three questions related to healthy, safe, and orderly learning environments.

1. Is BCPS adequately staffed to assure that schools are adequately repaired and maintained?

2. Does BCPS have adequate funding to maintain, repair, and renovate its aging buildings?

3. Is the student discipline policy effective, and is it implemented in an equitable fashion?
Short-Term Recommendations – 2012–2013
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the current anti-bullying programs to determine whether they are effective or whether modifications need to be made.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the district’s policies and procedures related to student discipline and assure that the district’s policies and procedures are consistently applied among all subgroups.

Long-Term Recommendations – 2013–2015
- Continue to secure the amount of capital funding to allow it to keep its facilities “stable” rather than revert to a “crisis” mode.
- Develop a comprehensive plan to accelerate the funding and installation of air conditioning in every BCPS school.
- Continue to identify alternative funding mechanisms to accelerate the renovation and repair of its aging school facilities.
- Hire and train sufficient staff to repair and maintain BCPS’ facilities and to assure the cleanliness of its schools throughout the school year. Train principals for their role as facility manager of the school property.
MOVING FORWARD

As the Transition Report was being finalized, Dr. Dance held a series of six staff and community forums to obtain input on the goals of BCPS, his transition, and topics of which he needs to be aware. This input will provide information to help shape the school system’s new strategic plan, Blueprint 2.0.

Dr. Dance has appointed an internal team to begin development of the system’s Blueprint 2.0. The Transition Report will inform that work and will serve as a foundation for Blueprint 2.0 which will provide direction and focus for the school system over the next five years.

The focus areas for the strategic plan parallel many of the recommendations in the Transition Report and the goals that were identified by staff and community: Academics, Safety, Communication and Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness. As part of Blueprint 2.0, measures will be developed to assess how well the system is meeting the established goals and areas of improvement will be identified.

The Transition Report will continue to inform the superintendent as he moves BCPS forward to becoming a great school system.