



Looking For New Ways to Make Progress

School Restructuring in Maryland, 2008-09 Follow-Up Report

Center on Education Policy

April 2009

Looking For New Ways to Make Progress: School Restructuring in Maryland, 2008-09 Follow-Up Report

Introduction and Overview

Maryland, like most states, has struggled with helping schools raise student achievement in schools identified for improvement under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Many schools in Maryland, especially those in the early stages of improvement, have made progress in consistently meeting the NCLB adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets. Following the 2008 administration of the Maryland School Assessment, 45 schools raised achievement enough to exit NCLB improvement. Ninety-one percent (41) of these schools were in the first three years of improvement. In contrast, as a group, Maryland schools identified for restructuring—the last phase of NCLB improvement—have not been especially successful in boosting test scores enough to meet rising annual achievement targets. Far more schools have entered restructuring than have exited.

To reduce this trend, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has transformed its restructuring strategies and supports over the past five years. Most recently, in 2008-09, Maryland began implementing a differentiated accountability pilot (DAP). This pilot program changes the classifications for schools in improvement, refines state interventions and support for these schools, requires earlier supports and intervention for struggling schools, and provides additional monitoring and technical assistance to schools. This transformation of Maryland's NCLB accountability framework is the latest in a series of state efforts to help raise achievement in restructuring schools. Building on the experiences of the first wave of schools to enter restructuring, Maryland has become more actively involved over time in managing restructuring by regulating restructuring options, providing tools to help districts and schools select restructuring mechanisms, and centralizing support.

This report, the fourth annual CEP report on restructuring in Maryland, describes Maryland's latest approaches to dealing with restructuring schools and other schools in NCLB improvement.

This report is part of CEP's broader study of schools in restructuring in six states and updates the 2008 CEP report on Maryland, *Restructuring Under the No Child Left Behind Act in Maryland: 2007-08 Follow-Up Report*.

To gather information for this report, Brenda Neuman-Sheldon, a CEP consultant, interviewed officials in the Maryland State Department of Education and talked with administrators in three Maryland districts: Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS), Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS), and Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS).¹ Neuman-Sheldon also reviewed state, regional, district, and school data and documents, such as state restructuring and school improvement policies, state records tracking restructuring implementation, state report cards, and state test score data. Data collection took place from September 2008 through January 2009.

Key Findings

- ***Differentiated accountability.*** In 2008-09, Maryland began implementing a differentiated accountability pilot, which revised the labels for various categories of school improvement and changed the supports and interventions provided by the state. Under this pilot program, Maryland is more clearly identifying schools with *comprehensive* needs that require greater state intervention and support, and is intervening in these schools in the earlier stages of improvement before restructuring is required.
- ***Revised approach and cuts for school improvement funding.*** Maryland has retooled financial support for schools in improvement to take into account how many years a school has been in improvement, how many subgroups have contributed to the school's inability to make adequate yearly progress, and which grade levels the school serves. State funding for schools in improvement decreased in 2008-09 as a part of larger state budget cuts.

¹The Baltimore County Schools, which had participated in previous CEP studies of restructuring, declined to participate in 2008-09.

- ***No major changes at district level.*** Although Maryland has begun making substantive changes to the NCLB accountability framework through the DAP, districts have not yet made major changes to their own support of schools in improvement.
- ***Net gain in schools in restructuring.*** The number of schools entering the implementation phase of NCLB restructuring has far outpaced the number exiting restructuring. This is one of the greatest challenges facing Maryland as it attempts to improve schools under NCLB.
- ***Staff replacement.*** Replacing school staff has become the most common restructuring option for schools implementing restructuring plans. In 2008-09, 43% (38 schools) of the schools implementing restructuring plans have replaced school staff as part of these plans. The extensive use of staff replacement as a restructuring option in Maryland makes the state an interesting testing ground for this improvement strategy.

Maryland's Differentiated Accountability Pilot

In March 2008, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) launched a competitive proposal process for states to participate in a differentiated accountability pilot. The DAP is aimed at helping states develop a more nuanced system of accountability that distinguishes between underperforming schools in need of dramatic interventions and those that are closer to meeting the goals of No Child Left Behind. In July 2008, ED approved six states to participate in the DAP program—Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, and Ohio. In January 2009, ED approved three more states for the pilot—Arkansas, Louisiana, and New York.

Maryland began implementing its DAP during the 2008-09 school year. The Maryland DAP has transformed the labeling of schools in improvement (those that have not made AYP for two years or more) from a continuum that began with year 1 of improvement and moved through the phases of year 2, corrective action, restructuring planning, and restructuring implementation, to a four-category model with two “stages” and two “pathways,” as explained below. In addition to changing the labeling, Maryland's DAP restructures the interventions and support for schools in improvement. These changes include more focused state and local interventions for schools in

years 1 and 2 of improvement or corrective action (year 3), in an effort to prevent them from ever entering the planning (year 4) and implementation (year 5) phases of restructuring. Ron Peiffer, MSDE deputy superintendent for academic policy, explained the reasons why Maryland applied to participate in the differentiated accountability pilot:

With more than 50% of our schools missing only one or two targets, [the differentiated accountability pilot] really frees us [and local systems] up to look at the resources. I don't think in the past we've had to bring out the big guns with all of these schools, and I think we have the opportunity now to allow the heavier resources to go into the comprehensive needs schools and then be more surgical about the others.

CHANGES IN LABELS

Schools are labeled under the Maryland DAP based on two factors: 1) the number of years they have failed to make AYP (stages), and 2) the number of subgroups that contributed to their failure to make AYP (pathways).

Stages

Based upon the number of years that they have not made AYP, schools are categorized as either Developing or Priority. Developing schools correspond to the previous improvement categories of year 1, year 2, and corrective action. Priority schools are those that were previously identified for the planning or implementation phases of NCLB restructuring. Thus, schools that have not made AYP for two consecutive years enter improvement as a Developing school. If a school does not make AYP for three additional years, it becomes a Priority school. In the 2008-09 school year, 105 operating schools were identified as Developing schools, and 101 operating schools were identified as Priority schools, as shown in **table 1**.

Pathways

Based on the number of subgroups that contributed to the school's failure to make AYP, schools are categorized as Focused Needs or Comprehensive Needs. Focused Needs schools have met the annual measurable objectives (AYP targets) for the "all students" group in both reading and

mathematics but have either a) failed to meet the annual measurable objectives in reading and/or mathematics for no more than two subgroups, or b) failed to meet annual measurable objectives for the “other” academic indicator. Focused Needs schools also include those that serve a 100% special services population, such as a school for special education students. Comprehensive Needs schools have either a) failed to meet the annual measurable objectives for the “all students” group in reading or math, or b) failed to meet the annual measurable objectives for three or more subgroups for reading or math. A school’s pathway is reevaluated each year based on the performance of its subgroups. For the 2008-09 school year, 107 operating schools were identified as Focused Needs schools, and 99 operating schools were identified as Comprehensive Needs schools, as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Number of Schools in Each Improvement Category Based on New Labels, 2008-09

Stage	Pathway		Total in Stage
	Focused Needs	Comprehensive Needs	
Developing	71	34	105
Priority	36	65	101
<i>Total in Pathway</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>206</i>

Table reads: In the 2008-09 school year, 105 Maryland schools were in the first three years of NCLB improvement, called the Developing category under the state’s differentiated accountability system. Seventy-one of these schools were considered Focused Needs schools, and 34 were considered Comprehensive Needs schools.

Source: MSDE documentation provided by Sandra Toomey, February 2009; and 2008 Maryland Report Card, <http://mdreportcard.org/>.

CHANGES IN STATE INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT

The DAP outlines specific interventions, shown in **box 1**, that the state will take for schools that fall into each of the four new categories of improvement.

Box 1. Interventions for Maryland Schools in Improvement

Developing Focused Needs Schools

- Complete a needs assessment
- District monitors School Improvement Plan (SIP)

Developing Comprehensive Needs Schools

- Complete a needs assessment
- District monitors SIP
- Administer a nationally recognized school climate survey, develop 3-5 priorities based on the results to be included in the SIP
- Consult with the state Breakthrough Center about analyzing data, determining the need for further assessments, prioritizing and funding action steps, developing recommendations for capacity building, and providing professional development in areas of struggle
- Take one of five corrective action steps (adopt new curriculum, extend school day or year, replace school staff, decrease school-level management authority, appoint an outside expert to advise the school, restructure the school's internal organization)

Priority Focused Needs Schools

- Needs assessment
- District monitoring of SIP
- Climate survey
- Consultation with the Breakthrough Center
- State Board approval of alternative governance plan
- Restructuring (select one of the three approved alternative governance options)

Priority Comprehensive Needs Schools

- Needs assessment
- District monitoring of SIP
- Climate survey
- Consultation with the Breakthrough Center
- State Board approval of alternative governance plan
- Restructuring (select one of the three approved alternative governance options)

Source: MSDE documentation from November 2008.

In addition to assigning specific interventions to schools based on their category of improvement, the state now intervenes at a much earlier stage for Comprehensive schools. Many of the interventions and supports that were previously reserved for schools that reached the planning phase of restructuring are now required of Comprehensive schools from the time they enter year 1 of improvement through year 2 and corrective action.

For example, the Teacher Capacity Needs Assessment (TCNA), a tool that the state required all schools in restructuring planning to complete during the process of selecting their restructuring option, is now required for schools in year 3 of improvement. Additionally, the state will now identify schools the first year they do not make AYP and ask districts to do an Alert Schools Inventory, a diagnostic tool for assessing the causes of not making AYP.

Deputy Superintendent Ron Peiffer explained that earlier intervention and supports allow the state to be more involved in districts' and schools' decisions about school improvement and give the state the opportunity to reflect about its approaches.

FUNDING FOR RESTRUCTURING SCHOOLS

State School Improvement Grants (SSIGs), funded through the Maryland General Assembly, are available to both Title I² and non-Title I schools in all stages of improvement and for the first year after a school has exited improvement. This continued support is an explicit effort by the state to assist schools in maintaining their achievement gains. SSIG applications are considered separately from school restructuring plans, and SSIG funds are awarded to entire districts rather than to individual schools.

In 2008-09, the state awarded SSIG funds to schools by taking into account their category of improvement (using the DAP labels) and the grades they served. According to Maria Lamb, MSDE director of the program improvement and family support branch, the new SSIG allocation formula explicitly recognized that Comprehensive and Priority schools have “more intense issues that they need to address with our state funding and our Title I funding.” Funds were allocated using the following criteria:

- A base amount of \$10,000 was allocated to elementary and middle schools in the Developing Focused category; to high schools categorized in 2007-08 in year 1, year 2, or corrective action; and to schools that exited improvement based on the 2008 Maryland State Assessment.
- A base amount of \$20,000 was allocated to elementary and middle schools in the Comprehensive Developing or Priority categories and to high schools categorized in 2007-08 in the planning or implementation phases of restructuring.

²Title I schools are schools in low-income areas that receive federal funding to educate disadvantaged children through Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by NCLB.

- Based on the number of students enrolled in September 2007, schools in improvement were allocated \$25.44 per pupil.
- Based on the number of students enrolled in grades 9-12, schools in improvement received a supplemental high school allocation of \$10 per pupil.

As with last school year (2007-08), the state provided high schools with additional school improvement funds. Ann Chafin, assistant state superintendent for student, family and school support, noted that since most high schools do not receive Title I funds, the supplemental SSIG allocation is intended to give “that extra bump to high schools [as] a way to acknowledge that there [are] other sources for these elementary and middle schools that they don’t have.”

According to MSDE officials, Maryland distributed \$8,301,101 in SSIG funds in 2008-09 to the 17 school districts with schools identified for improvement. This is a 27% decrease from the \$11,379,601 allocated in 2007-08. Teresa Knott, MSDE supervising coordinator for school performance, explained that this decrease resulted from a state budget cut. These SSIG budget cuts have had a direct impact on districts’ abilities to provide services to their schools in improvement. Debra Mahone, Prince George’s County Public Schools director of school improvement and accountability, described how her district had to make some tough choices about supporting and intervening with schools in improvement:

Our grant size is half of what it’s been in the past, so we’re having to make some real pointed decisions on how to mete out the funds . . . So, those funds are limited and, this year unfortunately, will require us to limit the level or the extent of the support that we’ve been able to provide to those schools, short of the extended learning programs and the professional development that we’re continuing to provide to our priority schools . . . There are only about three activities that we’ll be able to sustain, rather, with that funding source.

In addition to the SSIG funds, the state was required under NCLB to reserve 4% of its total Title I allocation of \$192,239,408, minus the set-aside for state administration, to assist the only three Maryland districts with Title I schools in improvement in 2008-09; this amounted to a reservation of \$7,305,098.

SUPPORT FOR CAPACITY BUILDING WITH A BREAKTHROUGH CENTER

Although not explicitly a part of the DAP, the Maryland State Department of Education is developing a Breakthrough Center to serve as a statewide system of support for districts and schools in improvement. By design, this Center will be the state's primary conduit to support schools as they look for interventions to address their priority needs. The Center is intended to be a coordinated approach to delivering and brokering services as well as a repository for best practices and materials. "I think [the Breakthrough Center] is a great thing because it accomplishes several purposes," said Nancy Grasmick, Maryland state superintendent of schools. "When you have a large organization, there's always a tendency for silos, and this really integrates services."

According to Bob Glasscock, executive director of the Breakthrough Center, the Center is intended to help build capacity for continued improvement within schools and districts. The Center will not simply provide resources or a menu of services from which a school or district will choose; rather, it will engage with districts to collaboratively assess needs and develop improvement strategies.

RESTRUCTURING MONITORING PROCESS

As part of the DAP and in an effort to more closely monitor schools' restructuring implementation, the state has introduced two new monitoring mechanisms: school staffing reports and action step reports.

- School staffing reports are designed to monitor the restructuring option of replacing school staff. These reports provide numerical and demographic information on staffing in restructuring schools.
- The 38 Comprehensive Priority schools that were already implementing restructuring plans in 2007-08 must submit an alternative governance action step report to the state three times a year. This reporting requires schools to select the three action steps in their restructuring plan that they anticipate will have the greatest impact on student achievement. Then, through site visits to schools and districts, the state monitors the implementation and outcomes of these steps and the lessons learned and next steps.

RESTRUCTURING IMPLEMENTATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In 2008, Maryland received \$6,615,396.00 in federal funds for school improvement from the national appropriation of \$125 million for section 1003(g) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Section 1003(g) is a separate authorization of funding for school improvement, in addition to the 4% state set-aside for school improvement mandated by section 1003(a) of Title I. Maryland applied for section 1003(g) funds in 2007 and received them in 2008.

Maryland used the 1003(g) grants to implement the Restructuring Implementation Technical Assistance (RITA) process in 17 restructuring Title I schools in Baltimore City that have struggled the longest with school improvement. After participating in the RITA visits and setting priorities based on the RITA feedback, the schools received 1003(g) money to implement their plans. In late 2008, the state issued a request for proposals to all of the remaining school districts with schools in improvement. Although these schools did not undergo the RITA process, they performed a comprehensive needs assessment to determine which improvements they will make using 1003(g) funds. Schools with funded proposals will be eligible to receive between \$50,000 and \$250,000.

SUPPORT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special education, and improving the academic performance of the subgroup of students with disabilities, is an area of focus for the state. The Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services provides discretionary grants under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to school districts to help districts and schools improve achievement outcomes for students with disabilities. In 2008-09, the Division awarded local districts nearly \$5 million in discretionary grants under a variety of programs authorized by IDEA.

In addition to the discretionary grants available to all schools, the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services provided \$792,974 during school year 2008-09 in adequate yearly progress grants, which are available to elementary and middle schools that made AYP for all subgroups except students with disabilities.

The Division also works collaboratively with each restructuring school that has not made AYP due to the performance of students with disabilities to develop their school improvement plans and ensure that these plans include specific academic interventions, delivered through the AYP grants, that address the needs of students with disabilities. The Division provides the following services:

- Technical assistance and support to schools to analyze data and facilitate collaboration about data analysis between special education service providers and content area specialists.
- Grants provided through SSIG funding to focus on meeting the highly qualified teacher requirements of NCLB.
- Support for school administrators through online seminars aimed at improving instructional outcomes for the subgroup of students with disabilities.

District Responses to the DAP

At the time of CEP's interviews, both Baltimore City and Anne Arundel County Public Schools reported that although they were following the new requirements that came with the DAP, the pilot had not substantively changed their supports to schools in improvement or strategies for restructuring schools.

For example, George Arlotto, AACPS chief school performance officer, observed that in his district, "the difference is on paper from the state. We've not pored over that new [differentiated] accountability system that the state has produced . . . and said, 'Okay, now we can do things differently.'"

In Baltimore City, district officials were more explicit about the DAP not influencing their work to support schools in improvement. Andres Alonso, CEO of the Baltimore City Schools, repeatedly mentioned that his district is currently implementing systemwide reforms aimed at raising achievement in all schools, rather than targeting a subset of schools identified for improvement under the DAP. He explained that while the DAP is consistent with the district's work to improve schools, it is not directing its efforts: "While it is true that the shift in state direction has not determined our direction, it has not been ignored."

In contrast, Prince George's County Public Schools officials noted that they have begun using the DAP categories to differentiate support to schools. Debra Mahone said:

What you're going to find [are] differences in the distribution of support, the intensity of support, and the concentration of support based on the label under differentiated accountability. Case in point, many of our priority schools are Comprehensive schools. So, our Comprehensive Priority schools will continue to benefit from the support of the data coach, the [alternative governance] supervisor, and the instructional coaches. Whereas . . . a Focused Priority school, for example, may not have an instructional coach.

Mahone also explained, however, that there is no cut-and-dried menu or formula of services and supports for schools that are in the Comprehensive versus Focused, or the Developing versus Priority, categories. The supports are based on the individual needs of the school.

Although the DAP is not explicitly influencing supports and interventions from districts to schools in improvements, Maryland's districts are engaging in numerous activities to improve student achievement. In parallel, complementary ways, Maryland districts are learning from their earlier efforts and adjusting supports to schools in an effort to move schools out of NCLB improvement.

Maryland's Restructuring Schools

Although Maryland's DAP assigns new labels to schools in improvement, school restructuring is still a sanction applied to schools that have not made AYP for five years. While the new labels group schools in years 4 and 5 of improvement into one category—Priority—the distinction of whether or not a school is *implementing* a restructuring plan is still useful in order to examine over time the number of schools that have reached this late stage of improvement and to track the number that have exited improvement after engaging in the restructuring process.

NUMBER OF RESTRUCTURING SCHOOLS IN 2008-09³

Maryland currently enrolls approximately 850,000 K-12 students in 1,459 schools. In 2008-09, 206 of these schools, or about 14%, were in NCLB improvement. Maryland applies the NCLB sanctions to all schools, not just the 359 schools that receive federal Title I funds for low-achieving children in low-income areas. Of the Maryland schools in improvement this year, 16 (3 Title I and 13 non-Title I) are currently *planning* for restructuring and 85 (42 Title I and 43

³All figures pertaining to numbers of schools in improvement refer to 2008-09 "operating schools in improvement." These schools were officially designated as schools in improvement and remain in operation for the 2008-09 school year. These numbers differ slightly from the "officially designated schools in improvement," which are schools that participated in either the Maryland State Assessment or High School Assessment in spring 2008 and have received AYP results. This latter number includes 14 schools that closed, consolidated, or changed names last year.

non-Title I) are currently *implementing* restructuring plans, for a total of 101 schools in restructuring, or about 7% of Maryland's schools.

These restructuring schools included 75 elementary and middle schools, 1 middle/high school, and 25 high schools. All but four restructuring schools were located within or on the fringes of two large urban areas, Baltimore and Washington, D.C. The Baltimore City School district accounted for 55% (56 schools) of all restructuring schools and 82% (37 schools) of Maryland's Title I schools in restructuring.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS ENTERING AND EXITING RESTRUCTURING IMPLEMENTATION

In 2008-09, more schools entered the implementation phase of restructuring than exited based on 2008 state testing. As displayed in **table 2**, the 85 Maryland schools implementing restructuring plans in 2008-09 represents a 33% increase over the 64 schools in this phase during the previous year.

Table 2. Maryland Schools Entering and Exiting Restructuring Implementation

Year	Number of Schools in Restructuring Implementation	Schools That Entered Restructuring Implementation	Schools That Exited Restructuring Implementation
2004-05	46	0	2 (4%)*
2005-06	63	22	5 (8%)
2006-07	69	11	5 (7%)†
2007-08	64	2	1 (2%)‡
2008-09	85	29	NA

Table reads: In 2005-06, 63 Maryland schools were in the implementation phase of restructuring. This total included 22 schools that entered restructuring implementation in 2005-06. Five schools made sufficient gains in student achievement to exit restructuring at the end of the 2005-06 school year.

*Three additional schools in restructuring implementation closed at the end of school year 2004-05.

†Two additional schools in restructuring implementation closed at the end of school year 2006-07.

‡Seven additional schools in restructuring implementation closed at the end of school year 2007-08.

Source: MSDE documentation provided by Sandra Toomey, November 2008; and 2008 Maryland Report Card, <http://mdreportcard.org/>.

In 2008-09, one school (2%) that had implemented a restructuring plan improved student performance on 2008 state tests enough to exit restructuring. This year, 21 more schools are implementing restructuring plans than in the prior school year.

This increase continues a trend of rising numbers of schools in restructuring implementation over the past five years. While there was a slight decrease in the number of schools in restructuring implementation during the 2007-08 school year, this number has grown over the past five years by 85%, from 46 to 85 schools.

At the same time, between 2004 and 2008, 13 schools, or 17% of those in restructuring implementation, have exited (not counting schools that have closed). Eleven of these schools were using a turnaround specialist, and two contracted with a private management company.

As many state and district officials discussed in CEP's 2008 report on Maryland schools in restructuring, the increase in schools in restructuring implementation should not be viewed as the result of a systematic decline in performance among Maryland schools as a group. Rather, MSDE officials noted that when the state first began applying NCLB sanctions, those schools with the longest histories of academic struggles were immediately placed in restructuring planning based on their status under the accountability system that preceded NCLB. Another set of schools were first identified for NCLB improvement in 2004, after not making AYP for the first two years of NCLB implementation. Schools in this latter group have now been in improvement for five years and have entered restructuring implementation. The large increase in 2008-09 is a result of what state official Ann Chafin described as a "bubble moving along."

The number of schools exiting school improvement has remained largely unchanged since the advent of NCLB. No more than 8% of the schools in restructuring implementation have exited school improvement in any year. As depicted in **figure 1**, the number of school entering restructuring implementation has far outpaced the number of schools exiting improvement from that phase. This is one of the greatest challenges facing Maryland in attempting to improve schools under NCLB.

Figure 1. Number of Schools in Restructuring Implementation and Number That Exited Restructuring, 2004 through 2008

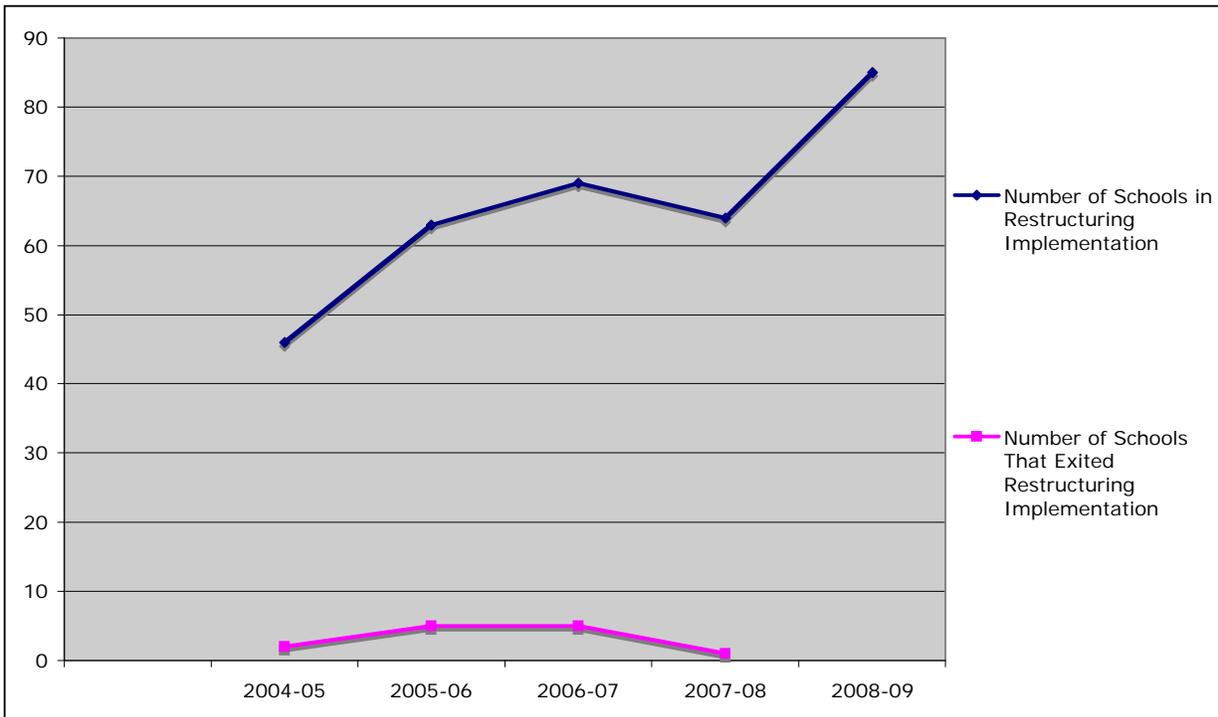


Figure reads: Between 2004-05 and 2005-06, the number of Maryland schools in the implementation phase of restructuring increased by 17. In comparison, the number of Maryland schools that exited restructuring implementation during that period increased by 3.

Source: MSDE documentation provided by Sandra Toomey, November 2008; and 2008 Maryland Report Card, <http://mdreportcard.org/>.

SCHOOLS IN RESTRUCTURING IMPLEMENTATION MAKING AYP

While the percentage of restructuring schools that increased student achievement enough to exit improvement decreased between 2007-08 and 2008-09, the number making AYP increased over the same time period. In 2007, six schools, or 9% of those in restructuring implementation, made AYP. In 2008, this number nearly doubled, increasing to 11 schools, or 16% of those in restructuring implementation. If these 11 schools make AYP based on 2009 state testing, they will exit school improvement.

Furthermore, based on 2008 testing, eight schools in restructuring planning made AYP, allowing them to “hold” in restructuring planning for the 2008-09 school year. If these eight schools make

AYP based on 2009 state testing, they will exit school improvement before having to undergo restructuring implementation.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS USING VARIOUS RESTRUCTURING OPTIONS

Maryland schools identified for restructuring may choose three of the five specific restructuring options laid out in NCLB: 1) replacing all or most of the school staff; 2) becoming a charter school; or 3) turning over school management to a private contractor. The fourth federal option—turning over management of the school to the state—is not permitted in Maryland. Currently the state has permitted a small number of schools in Baltimore City to become University Partnership schools in conjunction with Towson State.

Previously, under the fifth federal option—undertaking any other major restructuring of school governance—restructuring schools in Maryland could use a turnaround specialist, and high schools in Baltimore City were given permission to implement the Blueprint for High School Reform Model as their alternative governance. In recent years, the state has eliminated the turnaround specialist and Blueprint options for schools newly entering restructuring, although schools that had previously selected these options can continue to use them.

In 2008-09, the 85 schools that are implementing restructuring plans have chosen the following restructuring options: 38 replaced school staff, 31 are using a turnaround specialist, 8 Baltimore City high schools are using the Blueprint for High School Reform, 3 Baltimore City schools are participating in the University Partnership Schools project, 2 schools have contracted with a private management company, 1 reopened as a charter school, 1 has replicated the governance of a charter school, and 1 appointed a distinguished principal.

The 38 schools that have replaced staff as a restructuring strategy represent 43% of all the schools implementing restructuring plans in 2008-09. This marks an increase over the 14% that replaced staff as a restructuring strategy in 2007-08. At the same time, the number of schools using a turnaround specialist as a restructuring strategy decreased from 57% to 35% of schools

implementing restructuring plans. The **appendix** at the end of this report shows more data about changes since 2005-06 in the number of schools using various restructuring options.

Figure 2 depicts the trends in schools' selections of restructuring options. The decline in the use of turnaround specialists not only reflects the state's recent elimination of this option, but also reflects the fact that eight schools have officially changed their restructuring option since 2005 from a turnaround specialist to another option. In all likelihood, the number of schools using turnaround specialists will continue to decrease. District officials in both Baltimore City and Prince George's County reported that they are looking toward further reducing the number of schools using turnaround specialists as a restructuring mechanism. MSDE coordinator Teresa Knott anticipates that in 2009-10, more schools will change their restructuring option from turnaround specialists to another restructuring option as a result of the Restructuring Implementation Technical Assistance process.

Figure 2. Trends in Schools' Choices of Restructuring Option, 2005 to 2008

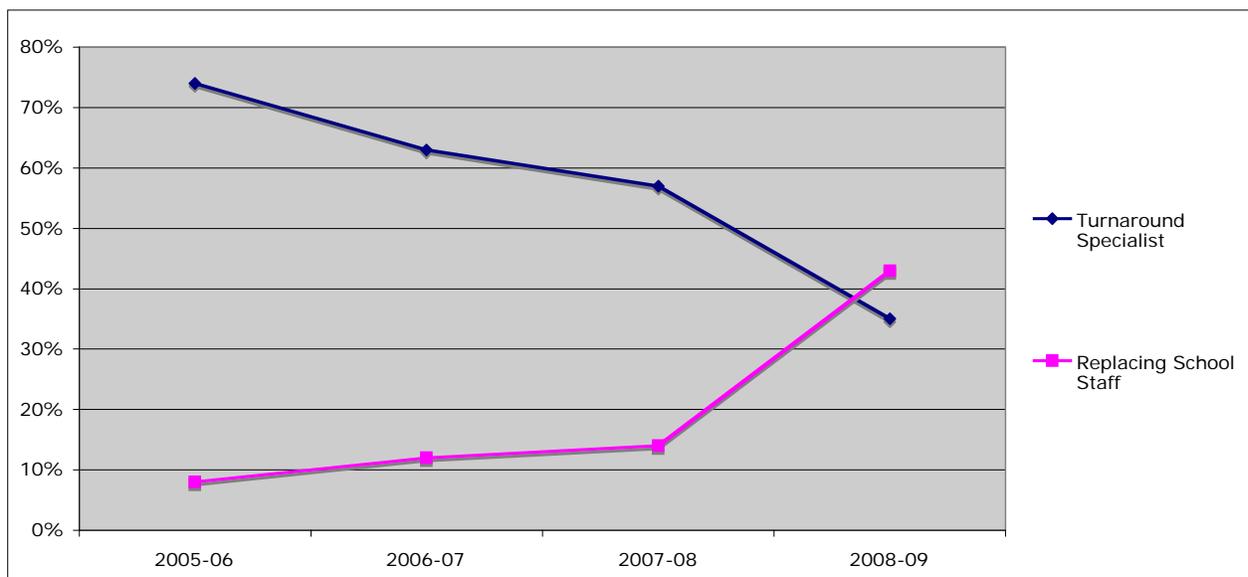


Figure reads: Between 2005-06 and 2006-07, the percentage of Maryland's restructuring schools using a turnaround specialist as a restructuring strategy decreased from 74% to 63%. In comparison, the percentage of restructuring schools replacing school staff as a restructuring strategy increased during that period from 8% to 12%.

Source: Documentation provided by Teresa Knott, January 14, 2009.

Baltimore City is taking an entirely different approach to transforming restructuring in the city's most struggling schools—closures. “If you are a middle school that has not been making progress, and you fail to continue to make progress, you're going to go away,” said CEO Andres Alonso, noting that he intended to “aggressively pursue” the school closure option.

Alonso reported that he plans to create more new schools in the city, thereby allowing him to close schools that have not been successful at raising student achievement. Baltimore City plans to open more charter and transformation schools—schools for grades 6-12 run by outside organizations. “And if we're doing that aggressively around school creation, eventually we will have an ecology within the system where some schools step in to take in the demand that other schools have failed to produce,” Alonso said.

While the decrease in numbers of schools using turnaround specialists can be explained by attrition, the popularity of replacing school staff is its own phenomenon. All schools implementing new restructuring plans in 2008-09 have chosen to replace school staff as their official restructuring option. Furthermore, in 2008-09, all five schools that officially changed their restructuring option chose to replace staff. As discussed in CEP's previous reports, many schools and districts believed that the other three restructuring options were not feasible.

While the state does not explicitly support or encourage any particular restructuring option, state officials are well aware of how logistics have played a role in encouraging districts and schools to select only the staff replacement option. Although the state does not see anything inherently problematic with this uniformity across the state, state officials are working to make other options more feasible, such as converting to a charter school.

One reason why Maryland's restructuring schools have not converted to charter schools is that the charter school planning process takes 18 months. By the time a school reaches the restructuring planning year, the timeline for implementing the plan is unworkable. Ann Chafin explained that the state is working on a plan to involve schools in year 3 of improvement in the charter school planning process so the groundwork for that option will have been laid if they must restructure.

Regardless of the reasons, the sheer numbers of schools replacing school staff as a restructuring strategy in Maryland makes the state a fertile testing ground for this approach to school improvement. As of yet, it is too soon to make any real conclusions about the success of replacing staff as restructuring strategy.

District Restructuring Strategies

As in prior years, all of the districts in this study supported similar activities in restructuring schools to improve student test scores, regardless of the restructuring option in place. These activities included the following:

- Tutoring outside the regular school day, separate from Title I supplemental educational services
- Increased instructional time in reading and math
- Use of assessment data to diagnose students' need
- Professional development
- Scheduling changes

BALTIMORE CITY

Baltimore City is engaging in a number of systemwide reforms, including revamping school funding to give principals more control of their individual budgets and allowing more successful schools greater flexibility in professional development options. Broadly speaking, this approach has amounted to an exchange of autonomy for accountability. Schools throughout the system have been given greater freedom to make decisions about how to raise and sustain student achievement. If schools are successful, then the system allows them to maintain autonomy. If they are not successful, the district more closely monitors them and imposes greater control over improvement strategies.

Baltimore CEO Andres Alonso described his approach to school improvement as targeting all schools rather than a subset of schools that are labeled as failing by the state accountability

system. While the Baltimore City Schools' overarching approach to school improvement is a "lift all boats" strategy, schools identified for improvement receive additional resources and support, including engaging in self-analysis and receiving supports from the central office as needed. These strategies do not take away from the district's aggressive efforts to raise achievement in all schools. As a result, there are few interventions in the district that specifically target schools in improvement or restructuring schools. "I find [the assumption] problematic . . . that there are only a certain number of schools that we should be focusing on when, in fact, what needs to happen is that every single school needs to basically lift its level," said Alonso.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

The Prince George's County Public Schools have created additional staffing at the district and school level in an effort to support restructuring schools. Three new positions have been created: 1) a coordinating supervisor of restructuring programs who works with restructuring schools to coordinate district support; 2) a district-level data coach who works with the alternative governance coordinating supervisor to examine data and trends in restructuring schools; and 3) instructional coaches who are assigned to schools based on their individual needs and requests.

In addition to the human resources the district is supplying to restructuring schools, the district has created districtwide targets for growth in achievement that are separate from the NCLB annual measurable objectives (AMOs), or AYP targets. Debra Mahone described these targets as "realistic goals that identify incremental improvement [and] that may not necessarily be the AMO or the AYP target, but is nevertheless a target that demonstrates that the school is making some improvement and is having some success."

PGCPS has also reorganized oversight of all schools to create nine administrative zones. One of these is an "autonomy zone," which contains schools considered to be on a trajectory that either keeps them out of improvement or makes them likely to exit improvement after 2009 testing. A second zone contains all specialty program schools (Montessori, immersion schools, and so forth) and a third contains all of the high schools. The remaining six zones were designed to have a smaller number of elementary and middle schools, which would allow the zone support staff to

focus more attention on overall middle school improvement and to differentiate support to a smaller subset of elementary schools based on the individual school's needs.

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

The Anne Arundel County Public Schools have far fewer schools in improvement than either BCPSS or PGCPS. Thus, their overall approaches to working with schools in improvement and restructuring schools are less systemwide and more targeted toward individual schools.

The district has an Office of Continuous School Improvement, which houses one staff person specifically in charge of high schools, one for middle schools, and one for elementary schools. These individuals support principals of schools in improvement. While technically these district staff are supporting all schools in improvement, the lion's share of their time is spent with schools in the later stages of improvement.

The primary strategy for restructuring schools is to institute an Academic Steering Committee for each school. These committees include members of the district executive team, department coordinators, and senior staff. The committees are charged with monitoring school progress and supporting the needs of the schools by giving administrators direct access to district officials.

In addition, the district has allocated additional onsite staff to help with restructuring planning in the one school that just entered this phase in 2008-09.

Conclusions

In spite of continuous and proactive efforts from both the state and local districts, most efforts to improve student achievement in restructuring schools have not led to substantially more schools raising achievement enough to exit improvement. The increasing number of schools entering restructuring compared with the relatively stable number leaving restructuring highlights the challenges facing the state and local districts.

To make AYP and eventually exit improvement, restructuring schools in Maryland must meet state annual measurable objectives that have gone up since the schools first entered improvement and will continue to rise annually. Thus, the task of making AYP is cumbersome, even for schools that had met the threshold in the previous year. While there are a number of positive indicators in the state—including many schools exiting improvement from the early stages of improvement and more schools in restructuring implementation making AYP—most restructuring implementation schools have quite a long way to go.

While Maryland's differentiated accountability pilot will allow for substantial changes to state and district approaches to improving student achievement in restructuring schools, the true impact has yet to be seen. Overall, the districts participating in this report have not dramatically changed their improvement strategies in reaction to the DAP and are continuing their own individual approaches to supporting schools. Because 2008-09 is the first year and a transition year for the DAP, it remains to be seen whether and how the DAP changes supports to schools within districts.

Appendix

Number of Maryland Schools Using Various Restructuring Options

Federal Restructuring Options	Maryland Restructuring Options	Number of Schools Using Option, 2005-06	Number of Schools Using Option, 2006-07	Number of Schools Using Option, 2007-08	Number of Schools Using Option, 2007-08
Enter into a contract to have an outside organization with a record of effectiveness operate the school	Enter into a contract with an entity such as a private management company to operate the school	1	1	1	2
Reopen the school as a charter school	Reopen the school as a public charter school	1	1	1	1
Replace all or most of the school staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP	Replace all or most of the school staff	5	8	9	38
Undertake any other major restructuring of the school's governance that produces fundamental reform	Have the district central office take over the principalship of the school	0	2	2	0
	Appoint a school "turnaround specialist"	47	44	37	31
	Close the school and reopen as a complete school of choice	0	0	0	0
	Use an external reform model	0	0	0	0
	Replicate the governance of a charter school	0	1	1	1
	Appoint a distinguished principal	NA	2	1	1
	Use the Blueprint for High School Reform and Derivative High Schools models in Baltimore City	10	10	9	8
	Implement the University Partnership Schools project in Baltimore City	NA	NA	3	3

Table reads: In school year 2005-06, five Maryland schools chose to replace all or most of the school staff as their alternative governance option for restructuring. In 2006-07, eight schools were using this option.

Source: Center on Education Policy, Maryland State Department of Education Alternative Governance Rubric, December 2006, and documentation provided by Teresa Knott, January 14, 2009.

Credits and Acknowledgments

This report was written by Brenda Neuman-Sheldon, CEP consultant. Nancy Kober, CEP consultant, edited the report. Jack Jennings, CEP's president and CEO, and Diane Stark Rentner, CEP's director of national programs, provided advice and assistance.

We are grateful to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which supports this project, and to the George Gund Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Phi Delta Kappa International Foundation, which provide general support to the Center. The statements made and the views expressed in this report are solely the responsibility of the Center on Education Policy.

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Center on Education Policy

1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 522

Washington, D.C. 20036

tel: 202.822.8065

fax: 202.822.6008

e: cep-dc@cep-dc.org

w: www.cep-dc.org