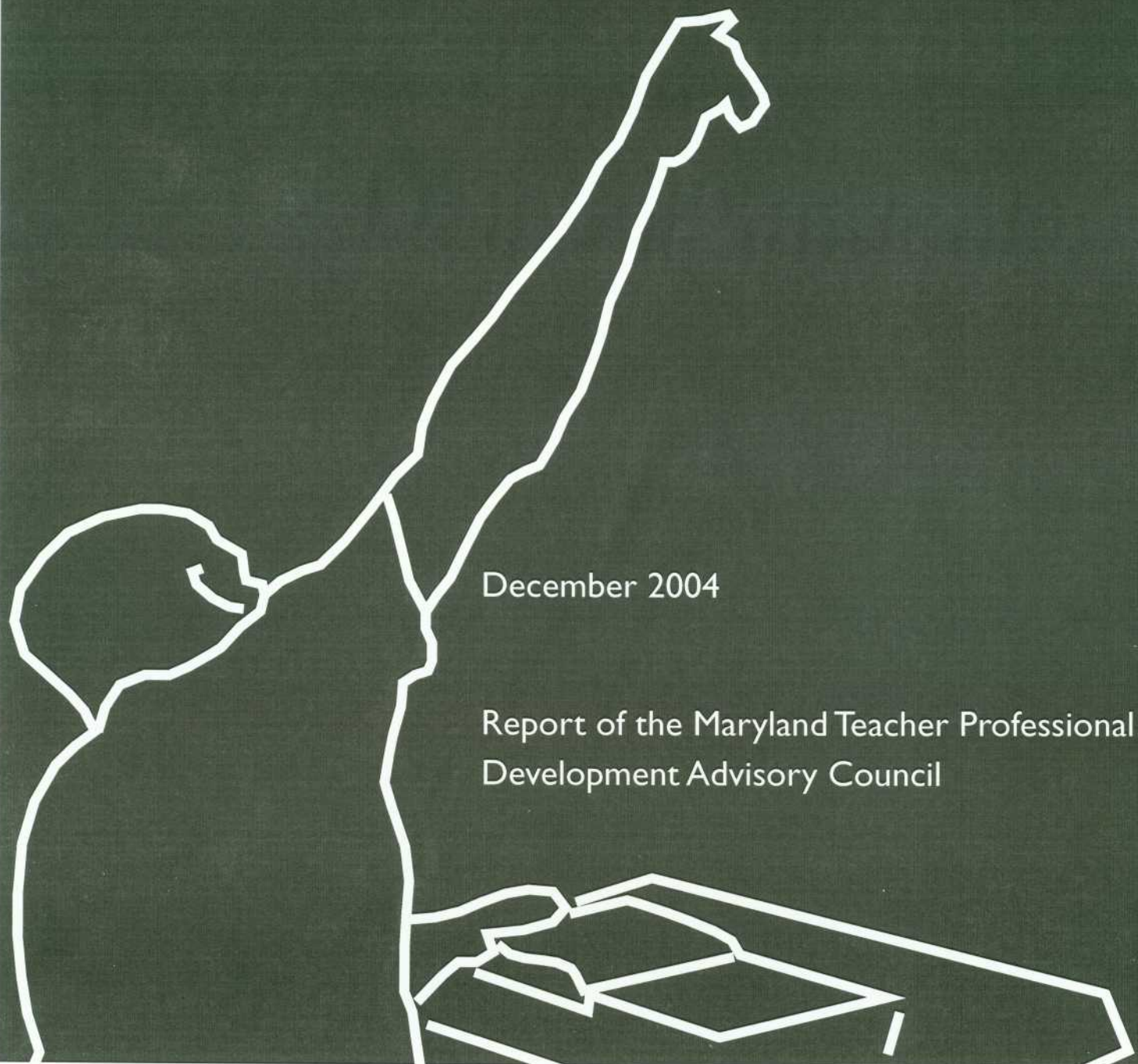


Helping Teachers Help All Students:

The Imperative for High-Quality Professional Development



December 2004

Report of the Maryland Teacher Professional
Development Advisory Council

**Helping Teachers Help All Students:
The Imperative for High-Quality Professional Development**

**Report of the Maryland Teacher Professional Development
Advisory Council**

**Submitted to the Maryland State Superintendent of Schools
December 2004**



Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

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November 17, 2004

Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools
Maryland State Department of Education
200 W. Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland

Dear Dr. Grasmick:

On behalf of Dr. Rochelle Ingram, co-chairperson of the Maryland Professional Development Advisory Council, and the members of the Council, I am pleased to submit the Council's report, *Helping Teachers Help Students: The Imperative for High-Quality Professional Development*.

As the title of the report suggests, the Council has concluded that there is a critical need for the Maryland State Department of Education to continue working with local school systems and institutions of higher education to ensure that all of Maryland's teachers have access to high-quality professional development. In responding to your charge to report on current policies and practices in teacher professional development, the Council found many examples of good practice at both the state and local levels. At the same time, Council identified a number of areas in which improvements are warranted if we are to make good on our commitment to educate all students to their fullest potential.

After a careful review of research and lessons from successful practice and with input from hundreds of educators across the state, the Council has articulated a set of standards for teacher professional development and recommends full implementation and use of these standards to guide future professional development. The standards offer a bold vision of professional development and recognize that responsibility and accountability for ensuring that professional development is of the highest quality rests with all stakeholders. The Council's central recommendation calls for creating a statewide system of high-quality professional development and relying on the standards to guide the process. The remainder of the Council's recommendations explains the Council's vision of this system in more detail and outline specific steps that can be taken by all of the stakeholders who share in the responsibility for high-quality professional development. The Council recognizes that implementing its recommendations will take time and other resources but considers these investments to be essential to assuring the quality of education in Maryland.

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Dr. Grasmick
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The Council's report is a consensus document and the Council is unanimous in commending you for your leadership and guidance in its work and in demanding that we do all that is possible to support teachers as they help their students. All of the members of the Council stand ready to assist you in the important work that lies ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Colleen P. Seremet".

Colleen P. Seremet
Co-Chairperson of the Maryland Professional Development Advisory Council
Assistant State Superintendent of Instruction

Acknowledgments

Many people and organizations contributed to the work of the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Advisory Council over the past 20 months. Educators across the state gave generously of their time as they reflected on their experiences as participants in professional development activities and as organizers, providers, and facilitators. More than 100 teachers contributed to the initial development of the teacher professional development survey and more than 30,000 teachers took time from very busy schedules to respond to the survey's questions. Over 900 educators took part in 72 focus groups to provide feedback on the new Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards. Several hundred staff from school districts, the Maryland State Department of Education, and institutions of higher education shared their perspectives on current policies and practices and ways of improving them. These individuals were enthusiastic about their successes and candid about their challenges and frustrations.

The Maryland State Teachers Association, the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals, the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals, the Maryland Council of Staff Developers, and the Maryland Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development endorsed the survey and encouraged their members to work closely with the survey team. In addition, these organizations contributed to many conversations about the work of the Council, and especially the standards development process. We look forward to their continued engagement in efforts to improve professional development.

Nancy Carey and Gail Tucker from the Division of Instruction in the Maryland State Department of Education supported the Council's work by facilitating communications and ensuring that necessary facilities and resources were available. LDRA Performance Consultants collected information on how districts organize professional development and prepared the report on focus group feedback on the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards. Staff from Policy Studies Associates, Inc., prepared background materials for the Council and provided much logistical support. Special thanks to Üllik Rouk for her advice and assistance in writing this report. Finally, the Council wishes to thank Bruce Haslam, Managing Director at Policy Studies Associates, Inc., for facilitating Council meetings, preparing multiple drafts of documents, and patiently leading the feedback and consensus-building process around the new professional development standards and this report. His extensive knowledge of teacher professional development, his writing skills, and his leadership were critical to the success of the Council's work.

We are pleased to acknowledge all of these individuals and organizations. We are grateful for their important contributions to our work and to this report.

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Executive Summary

In January 2003, State Superintendent of Schools, Nancy S. Grasmick, convened the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Advisory Council. The Council's formation was the first step in the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Initiative, an effort designed to confront the challenges of providing high-quality professional development for all of Maryland's teachers and ensuring that professional development is fully aligned with local and state priorities for improving student learning. Specifically, the Council was charged with (1) examining state and local teacher professional development policies and programs; (2) recommending ways to improve the quality of professional development in the state; and (3) articulating standards for high-quality professional development to guide the improvement efforts.

This document reports on the Council's observations and recommendations. It is a consensus document that offers a bold new vision of professional development and a comprehensive, long-term strategy for bringing that vision to reality.

Advancing the Discourse and Improving Practice: Teacher Professional Development in Maryland 1995-2004

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), schools districts, and institutions of higher education have initiated a number of efforts to improve teacher quality and professional development. The first section of the Council's report highlights the recommendations of leading commissions and reports released in the past ten years pertaining to teachers' professional development. For example, it discusses *Recommendation for Strategic Direction in Maryland's Public Schools*, which called for the adoption of the standards for professional development issued by the National Staff Development Council. Later, *Achievement Matters Most*, the report of Maryland's Visionary Panel, emphasized the alignment of all elements of the education system to support teachers and students. In addition, the *Bridge to Excellence Act* required the alignment of all resources to ensure the maximum return on investments in education as reflected in improved student learning.

These and other reports and policy statements recognized that highly skilled teachers are critical to improving educational opportunities and outcomes for students and that much more can and should be done to improve teacher quality. With several exceptions, these reports did, however, focus more on issues related to preservice teacher preparation than on issues related to supporting teachers who were already in the classroom. Overall, their attention to teacher quality and preservice training as the first step in ensuring that teachers

have the knowledge and skills necessary for success in the classroom set the stage for the work of the Council and this report.

Teachers Speak Out About Their Professional Development: Results from the 2003-2004 Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development

The second section of the report presents the results of MSDE's *Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development* in 2003-2004. This survey serves two functions. First, it enabled MSDE to comply with *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), which requires states to report annually on teacher participation in high-quality professional development. In 2002-2003, only 19 states responded to this requirement, and only Maryland based its report on data collected from teachers themselves. In that baseline reporting year, about a third of the state's teachers had participated in high-quality professional development. In addition to fulfilling NCLB requirements, however, MSDE anticipates the survey results being instrumental in helping the agency and local districts review current professional development activities and identify ways to improve them.

All public school teachers in Maryland were invited to complete the 2003-2004 online survey and just over 30,000 teachers, or about 55 percent, responded. The survey focused on five categories of professional development: (1) graduate courses, (2) workshops, institutes, and academies, (3) job-embedded learning, (4) assistance from a coach or mentor, and (5) attendance at a professional conference. Specifically, the survey asks teachers to report on the presence or absence of 17 quality indicators in each type of professional development in which they participated.

Several key findings emerge from the survey. First, relatively large numbers of teachers reported participating in professional development that reflects at least some of the quality indicators. For example, an estimated 87 percent reported participating in one or more categories of activities that reflected ten or more of the indicators. Second, many fewer, an estimated 44 percent statewide, reported participating in professional development that reflected the configuration of indicators called for in Maryland's definition of high-quality professional development. And third, although the survey results suggest some differences in teachers' professional development experiences across the districts, the variations do not appear large. Instead, these experiences appear to be quite similar from one district to the next.

Mapping the State and Local Infrastructures for Professional Development

The third section of the report examines how MSDE and districts organize professional development and the challenges they confront. The main challenge to MSDE, the Council asserts, is defining and maintaining a viable and productive role in a process in which most of the action occurs at the local level. The Council suggests that a critical role for MSDE may be to assist in building the capacity of school-based professional development staff through leadership and internal quality assurance mechanisms. Equally important, MSDE could establish and maintain a system of accountability to inform all phases of the management of professional development, including the use of resources and the evaluation of the quality of teacher professional development activities.

In school districts, the Council sees a fundamental shift toward increased job-embedded professional development, although more traditional workshops and university coursework remain important. In addition, all of Maryland's school districts report providing some type of induction support for new teachers.

However, districts also reported that, in the urgency to address priorities, there was not always enough time to do the job well. A common casualty of the lack of time was serious and sustained follow-up to ensure that teachers have the support and resources they need to use their new knowledge and skills.

Introducing the New Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards

The fourth section of this report introduces the new Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards. The result of an extensive review of research on professional development and numerous examples of standards developed elsewhere, six of these standards define the *content* of professional development while three others address critical elements of the *process*.

Each of the standards is accompanied by a set of indicators that describes and explains specific features of professional development activities that meet the standards.

The Council transmitted a draft of the standards to the State Superintendent of Schools in December 2003, along with a recommendation that she support a stakeholder engagement campaign to solicit feedback and build consensus around them. More than 900 teachers, school and district administrators, local professional developers, and faculty from institutions of higher education commented on the standards and discussed what it would take to fully implement them. The final version of the standards, which are listed below,

reflects much of the stakeholder feedback. (The full text of the standards document is included at the end of Section 4 of the report.)

Standards of High-Quality Professional Development

Content Standards	
Standard 1: Content knowledge and quality teaching	Effective professional development deepens all teachers' content knowledge and the knowledge and skills necessary to provide effective instruction and assess student progress
Standard 2: Research-based	Effective professional development ensures that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to apply research to decision making
Standard 3: Collaboration	Effective professional development ensures that teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to collaborate with others to improve instruction
Standard 4: Diverse learning needs	Effective professional development ensures that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to meet the diverse learning needs of all of their students
Standard 5: Student learning environments	Effective professional development ensures that all teachers are able to create safe, secure, and supportive learning environments for all students
Standard 6: Family involvement	Effective professional development ensures that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to involve families and other community members as active partners in their children's education
Process Standards	
Standard 7: Data-driven	Effective teacher professional development relies on rigorous analysis of data
Standard 8: Evaluation	Rigorous evaluations assess the impact of professional development on teaching and student learning
Standard 9: Design and teacher learning	Effective professional development content and process reflect best practices in workplace learning and in-depth understanding of how and why adults learn

Looking Ahead: Recommendations and Opportunities for Creating a System of High-Quality Professional Development for All Teachers

The final part of the Council's report looks to the future. It recommends the creation of a statewide system of high-quality professional development to help ensure that every child in the state learns from competent, caring teachers. The Council also recommends that the Maryland State Board of Education and each of Maryland's 24 school districts adopt the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards as the foundation for the system.

To support implementation and use of the standards to guide all professional development policies and practices, the Council also recommends that MSDE and the districts work together to continue the stakeholder engagement campaign begun in spring 2004.

In addition to these overarching recommendations, the Council offers four others that amplify the Council's recommendation to establish a standards-based system of professional development that supports state and local priorities for improving education for all students. Taken together, these recommendations provide a road map for a statewide system of teacher professional development.

Recommendation 1: MSDE should contribute to the development of a statewide system of teacher professional development by ensuring that all of its policies, programs, and initiatives that address teacher professional development explicitly reflect and model the new standards and demand accountability for meeting them.

1.1: Incorporate accountability for meeting the teacher professional development standards in the Bridge to Excellence master planning processes. The Council encourages MSDE to identify ways to use the new professional development standards to define expectations for how districts present their plans for teacher professional development and to inform review and feedback on the plans.

1.2: Modify the continuing professional development (CPD) credit approval process to ensure that all professional learning activities that generate CPD credits meet the new teacher professional development standards. The Council recommends that the new approval process be applied to proposals for activities scheduled for the 2005-06 school year. New activities proposed under an existing course title need to address the standards. However, activities previously approved need not address them retroactively.

1.3: Incorporate the new teacher professional development standards into all solicitations for proposals that include teacher professional development, and incorporate the standards into procedures for reviewing proposals, making funding decisions, and monitoring implementation of funded activities. Offerors who seek funds for professional development programs should indicate how their plans address the professional development standards. MSDE should use the standards and indicators to review and rate proposals, make funding decisions, and monitor implementation.

1.4: Significantly increase investments in formal evaluations of MSDE teacher professional development programs and initiatives and create formal mechanisms for ongoing review of evaluation results across programs and divisions. The Council recommends that the FY 2006 evaluation spending target be a minimum of 15 percent of the total expenditures for professional development, with the stipulation that 80 percent of the evaluation resources support careful measures of the impact of professional development on teacher performance and student learning.

1.5: Create an internal review mechanism to ensure that all proposals and planning documents that seek external (to MSDE) support for professional development are explicitly aligned with the professional development standards. Applications to external sources for funding should clearly reflect the standards in all phases of proposed plans. One of the final steps prior to submitting proposals should be a review of the plans for their alignment with the professional development standards.

1.6: Incorporate the Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development into the annual calendar of data collection and reporting activities and coordinate the survey and reporting activities with other scheduled data collection and reporting. The data can inform discussions about professional development quality, identify gaps and weaknesses in activities, and inform plans for future activities. However, the data must be timely to be useful. If districts are expected to report on their master plans in August or September, survey data should be available in late June or early July. This means that survey administration, analysis, and reporting must be completed in late spring. Alternatively, MSDE could consider the option of biennial survey administration.

1.7: Develop an internal system for tracking and reporting spending on professional development that meets the professional development standards. The Council encourages the development of a short template for MSDE staff to use in reporting spending on teacher professional development. The template could ask for a description of the activity or program, with a concise statement of the content and process standards that it meets, the number of participants and who they are, and the costs of the activity or program.

1.8: Model the professional development standards in all planning and design activities, especially those that entail collaboration with school districts and other partners. Several MSDE working groups and initiatives offer excellent opportunities for the agency to demonstrate to districts how the standards can and should be used to plan, coordinate, and provide high-quality professional development. They also afford excellent opportunities for MSDE to articulate how responsibility for high-quality professional development can and should be shared among key stakeholders.

1.9: Use the teacher professional development standards as a foundation for defining strategies, establishing performance measures, and setting targets for accomplishing Goal 2 (“Instruction, curriculum, and assessment will be aligned and accessible.”) and Goal 3 (“All teachers will have the skills to improve student achievement.”) of the agency’s strategic plan for the Governor’s Management for Results state government accountability initiative. Adhering to the professional development standards and indicators in this way will signal the agency’s commitment to them and will help focus agency-sponsored professional development activities on the dimensions of quality.

Recommendation 2: District efforts to improve the quality of teacher professional development should begin with adoption of the new standards and continue with integration of the standards into all efforts to improve instruction and student learning.

2.1: Incorporate the new teacher professional development standards into requirements and strategies for school improvement planning, implementation, and assessing progress. The standards are a framework for planning professional development that supports school improvement. They can guide the development of rubrics to help district staff review professional development plans, judge budget requests, and provide feedback to principals and school improvement teams.

2.2: Review negotiated agreements, negotiating strategies, school and district schedules, and teacher performance appraisal systems to identify ways to (a) allocate time for professional development during the work day; (b) define engagement in high-quality professional learning as a core component of teachers’ professional responsibilities; and (c) support teacher participation in high-quality professional development. The Council encourages districts to leverage these and other factors in ways that encourage and support teacher participation in high-quality professional development. An essential part of this effort is enlisting the support and influence of teachers’ unions, school boards, and county commissioners in establishing appropriate policies and practices.

2.3: Provide extensive induction support for all first- and second-year teachers. Effective induction programs focus on helping new teachers develop instructional skills, recruiting and training full-time mentors, and identifying new teachers’ strengths as well as areas in which improvement is necessary.

Recommendation 3: Key stakeholders should work together on five tasks necessary for establishing and maintaining a statewide system of high-quality professional development for all teachers.

3.1: Ensure that all leadership training programs, job descriptions, performance review processes, and reward systems treat teacher professional development as a critical component of instructional leadership. School districts, institutions of higher education, and MSDE should join forces to ensure that school leaders understand that facilitating and supporting teacher professional development are critical parts of their instructional leadership roles.

3.2: Review the effectiveness and costs associated with the current array of school-based professional development positions. Such a review would examine similarities and differences in how positions are defined, their impact on classroom instruction and student learning, training and support that contribute to their effectiveness, strategies for effective collaboration and coordination with school leaders, and costs. These insights can then be used to generate models to improve practice.

3.3: Develop local capacity to monitor and oversee evaluations of the effectiveness of teacher professional development in improving teacher performance and student learning. As MSDE develops its own evaluation capacity, it could provide technical assistance to districts developing generic data collection tools such as surveys, observation protocols, and frameworks for examining student outcomes.

3.4: Continue to examine the role of professional development schools (PDS) as providers of school-centered professional development and institutional components of local professional development systems. The results of this review would yield insights on the coordination between these professional development providers and classroom instruction, as well as the extent to which PDS capacity could expand to meet more professional development needs. Any review of PDS quality and impact should be informed by the standards for professional development as well as the expectations set for PDS.

3.5: Develop and pilot test approaches to gauging the quality of graduate courses as teacher professional development. The Council recommends using the teacher professional development standards to review selected graduate courses, identifying their weaknesses and strengths, and paying particular attention to how IHEs and districts can share responsibility for closing gaps.

Recommendation 4: The State Superintendent of Schools should institutionalize the Professional Development Advisory Council as a standing advisory group.

The Council could be charged with the responsibility of reporting to the State Superintendent of Schools on the progress and challenges of implementing the new professional development standards and, more generally, on the statewide state of the art in teacher professional development. The Council could also offer

recommendations for state and local teacher professional development policy and program initiatives. Finally, the Council could work with MSDE, districts, and IHEs to develop and monitor a five-year plan for implementing the new professional development standards. The current Council *does not* recommend that such a plan would be binding, but rather that it provide a framework for collaboration on the statewide professional development system.

The Council also suggests that about half of the current members be retained for one year, with new members appointed for two-year terms. This would ensure regular inclusion of new members and new perspectives. Leadership responsibilities should be shared by MSDE, the K-12 system, and higher education, possibly on an annual rotation.

Introduction

Good teaching is essential for all students. It follows, then, that helping teachers do a better job in classrooms should be the cornerstone of efforts to improve student learning. Good teaching begins with effective teacher preparation programs and continues with career-long, high-quality professional development. As Maryland's Visionary Panel recommended in its report, *Achievement Matters Most*, all aspects of education, including teacher preparation and professional development, should be aligned to support teachers and students.

Practitioners, policymakers, and researchers agree that high-quality professional development is important and that it should focus on deepening teachers' content knowledge and sharpening their skills in helping all students master challenging content. High-quality professional development extends over time and affords opportunities to develop and apply real-world solutions to practical problems. It includes individual and collaborative study, practice, and reflection, along with constructive feedback on the mastery of new knowledge and skills and their application in schools and classrooms.

Three critical and related observations follow from this definition of high-quality professional development. First, professional development consists of a broad range of learning activities, including (1) participating in study groups, school improvement teams, and committees to review student work and develop new curricula and assessments; (2) getting involved in workshops, seminars, and institutes; (3) taking graduate courses; and (4) attending professional meetings and conferences. Second, professional development policies should encompass the full range of professional learning activities. Third, because of the range of activities that count as teacher professional development, many stakeholders share responsibility and accountability for its quality and effectiveness.

Unfortunately, not every teacher has access to high-quality professional development opportunities. The lack of time, support, and incentives can impede participation. Or, there may be inadequate resources and capacity to provide high-quality professional development.

To address these concerns in Maryland, Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools, announced the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Initiative in January 2003. The purpose of this initiative is to address the challenges of providing high-quality professional development for all of Maryland's teachers and to ensure that professional development in Maryland is fully aligned with local and state priorities for improving student learning. As a first step, Dr. Grasmick convened the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Advisory Council (the Council), charging the 26-member Council with three critical tasks:

- Examining current teacher professional development policies and programs at the state and local levels
- Setting standards as a means of articulating a policy-relevant definition of high-quality professional development
- Offering recommendations for improving the quality of professional development to meet the new definition

Why limit the focus to *teacher* professional development, particularly when many of the issues in this area are the same or similar to issues in the professional development of other educators? Various stakeholders and even members of the Council asked this question in the belief that every educator's professional development is important and that new standards should apply to the professional development of all.

There are several reasons for this focus on teacher professional development. First, as Maryland rolls out new curricula and implements a new assessment system, teachers have a pressing need for support in helping students master more rigorous content and demonstrate mastery on the new assessments. This is not to suggest that principals, other school leaders, and staffs don't need help in these areas, only that the needs of teachers are most pressing.

Second, broadening the focus of professional development to include other educators would have required much larger and more complicated processes for reviewing current practice, setting standards, and building consensus around them. As its work drew to a close, the Council concluded that the processes it followed and the new teacher professional development standards it developed can best serve as models for other educators and organizations that design and conduct professional development. The Council strongly encourages these individuals and groups to review the standards and recommendations, understand their roles and responsibilities in the professional development of teachers, and think about ways to apply the standards to their own professional development.

During the course of its work, the Council met 18 times. The Council reviewed a variety of research and other information on professional development in Maryland and elsewhere. It also examined numerous professional development standards from other states, school districts, and education reform entities and other organizations.

To support the Council's work, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) commissioned a review of state and local professional development policies and programs by Policy Studies Associates, Inc., a research and evaluation firm that specializes in studies of school reform and professional development. In addition, and to meet a reporting requirement of the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*, MSDE commissioned a survey of teacher participation

in high-quality professional development. Finally, after the draft standards were articulated in December 2003, and with support from MSDE, the Council conducted a statewide stakeholder engagement campaign to solicit feedback and build consensus around them.

The stakeholder engagement campaign was, in many ways, the hallmark of the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Initiative and the work of the Council. The campaign, conducted at state and local levels, collected input from more than 900 professional development stakeholders. These individuals came from the ranks of teachers, school and district administrators, local professional developers, and faculty from institutions of higher education (IHE). They commented on the standards themselves as well as what it would take to fully implement them to provide consistently high-quality professional development.

Throughout their work, Council members reported their activities to their constituents and regularly brought constituents' perspectives back to the table for discussion. This made the Council's work highly visible, enabling the Council to draw extensively on the insights and experiences of educators and other interested parties across Maryland.

This report presents the Council's observations about teacher professional development in Maryland and its recommendations for steps that MSDE, districts, and key partners and stakeholders can take to ensure that all of Maryland's teachers have access to high-quality professional development. The report begins with a review of past reports and initiatives on teacher quality, training, and professional development in Maryland. Next, there is a discussion of key findings from the *2004 Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development*. The third section reviews the organization of teacher professional development at the state and local levels and amplifies the discussion of the survey results. Section 4 introduces the new Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards and summarizes the feedback that the Council received during the stakeholder engagement campaign. The last section looks to the future and presents the Council's recommendations for fully implementing and using the standards to maintain a system of high-quality professional development for all Maryland teachers.

This report is a consensus document. The members of the Council are in agreement about its findings and observations. More important, they are in agreement about the purpose and language of the new teacher professional development standards and the recommendations for implementing them. The Council offers a bold new vision of professional development for all Maryland teachers and believes that it is imperative for MSDE, districts, IHEs, and other stakeholders to set their sights on bringing the vision to reality.

I. Advancing the Discourse and Improving Practice: Teacher Professional Development in Maryland 1995–2004

Since 1995, a number of commissions and reports have examined issues related to teacher quality, undergraduate and graduate teacher preparation programs, and the professional development of classroom teachers. One of these reports, *Recommendation of Strategic Directions for Professional Development in Maryland's Public Schools 1996-2000*, by the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education, focuses entirely on professional development.¹ The others focus on preservice teacher training and professional development. All of these reports recognize that highly skilled teachers are critical to improving educational opportunities and outcomes for students. In addition, while acknowledging Maryland's considerable progress in improving teacher quality, they recommend with one voice that much more can and should be done.

All of the reports that came after *Strategic Directions* recognize the need to improve undergraduate teacher training as well as to support teachers who are already in the classroom. Typically, however, the reports devote considerably more attention to preservice teacher training and certification issues than they do to teacher professional development (although a few do make the case that professional learning and growth continue long after initial training and certification). The emphasis on preservice training no doubt reflects the charges given to the various panels and study groups, as well as the interests of the membership, particularly representatives from institutions of higher education. It also bespeaks a concern that, despite improvements in teacher preparation, too many new teachers enter their classrooms unprepared to effectively meet the myriad challenges they face.

Locating preservice teacher training and professional development as points on a continuum or parts of a process introduces the idea of a system of professional development. In this system perspective, various training and development activities achieve coherence because they are organized around commonly understood standards for teachers and shared goals and expectations for student outcomes. Recommendations, such as those in *Achievement Matters Most*, which call for aligning preservice training and professional development with state, district, and school reform priorities, content standards, student assessment, resource allocation, professional performance reviews, and incentives or sanctions, all amplify the system perspective. In addition, recommendations that school districts and institutions of higher education work together in professional development schools and regional professional development centers

¹ See: Maryland Business Roundtable for Education, Committee on Professional Development. (1995). *Recommendation of Strategic Directions for Professional Development in Maryland's Public Schools: 1996-2000*. Baltimore, MD: Maryland Business Roundtable.

underscore the idea that teacher professional development is and should continue to be a shared responsibility.

Emphasizing professional development as a shared responsibility and creating a system of professional development helps to set the stage for more explicit attention to key challenges in policy and practice. These challenges include building state and local capacity, reallocating existing resources, and, as necessary, garnering additional resources, including people, time, and money.

Finally, these reports set the stage for examining definitions of high-quality professional development and specific quality indicators that can inform planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of professional development and its impact on teacher performance and student learning. In short, these reports provide a solid foundation and starting point for the work of the Council.

Reports and Recommendations on Teacher Professional Development

The reports and recommendations summarized here represent almost a decade of work by hundreds of Maryland educators, business leaders, parents, and community members. Some of the reports, such as the 1995 *Teacher Education Task Force Report* and the Visionary Panel's more recent report (2002), have had significant impact on policy and practice, although not necessarily in regards to professional development.² Other reports have had less obvious impact. All of them have, however, influenced the discourse about professional development and its potential to improve the quality of education in Maryland.

Strategic Directions for Professional Development in Maryland's Public Schools: 1996-2000, the 1995 report prepared by the Maryland Business Roundtable, emphasizes the importance of professional development as a school-based activity that is closely aligned with school improvement priorities and activities. The report also recommends adoption of the Standards for Staff Development established by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) and a stakeholder engagement campaign to build commitment and support for professional development.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission's *Teacher Education Task Force Report* (1995) calls for the redesign of teacher education and recommends:

² See: Maryland Higher Education Commission. (1995). *Teacher Education Task Force Report*. Baltimore, MD: Author; Maryland State Department of Education. (2002). *Achievement Matters Most: The Final Report of the Visionary Panel for Better Schools*. Baltimore, MD: Author.

- More rigorous undergraduate education programs aligned with Maryland’s Dimensions of Teaching and the standards of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium
- Extensive internships as part of preservice training
- Professional development schools (PDS) as focal points of new training programs and ongoing professional development
- Career-long professional development

This report also examines resource and capacity issues associated with the preservice training components of PDS operations.

Every Child Achieving (1999), Maryland’s strategy for academic intervention, recommends using Regional Professional Development Networks to carry out recommendations, which include³:

- Extensive reliance on analysis of student data to plan professional development
- Explicit links between professional development and school improvement priorities and plans
- Creation of professional learning communities
- Ensuring that professional development includes (1) teacher involvement in planning and collaborative learning and (2) follow-up and support for further learning

In addition, this report recommends full implementation of “all of the recommendations of the *Teacher Education Task Force Report*.”

Maryland Task Force on the Principalship: Clearing the Plate Workgroup (2001) focuses on the role of the principal as instructional leader and calls for “clearing the plate” of non-essential tasks that impede carrying out the role.⁴ The report includes teacher professional development as a key component of the instructional leadership role, but does not elaborate further.

Minority Achievement in Maryland at the Millennium (2001), the report of the Achievement Initiative for Maryland’s Minority Students (AIMMS) Steering

³ See: Maryland State Board of Education. (1999). *Every Child Achieving: A Plan for Meeting the Needs of the Individual Learner*. Baltimore, MD: Author.

⁴ See: Maryland State Department of Education. (2001). *Maryland Task Force on the Principalship: Clearing the Plate Workgroup*. Baltimore, MD: Author.

Committee, recommends full implementation of recommendations of the Teacher Education Task Force.⁵ In addition, the report notes the value of the Regional Professional Development Networks and the (then) new statewide Principals Academy and recommends that these organizations provide professional development on (1) interventions for underachieving students, (2) teaching strategies for cross-cultural instruction, and (3) deployment of effective literacy programs for diverse students and students with diverse learning needs.

This report also calls for teachers having access to “a well-organized professional development system” and for changes in the “conditions supporting professional development.”

MSDE’s *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) Consolidated Application* (2002) calls for extensively reviewing current professional development and setting new professional development standards as a foundation for a statewide professional development system.

Achievement Matters Most calls for aligning of every aspect of education, including teacher professional preparation and development, to support students and teachers. Recommendations include:

- Making high-quality professional development a key component of incentive and support systems to recruit and retain teachers
- Creating a performance-based preparation and certification system aligned with PreK-12 standards
- Developing Teacher Development Academies (regional partnerships of school districts and institutions of higher education) as providers of professional development

Aiming Higher: The Next Decade of Education Reform in Maryland (2002), a report prepared by Achieve, Inc., as part of its Benchmarking Initiative, highlights MSDE’s principals’ institutes and the Regional Professional Development Networks as promising initiatives, but notes that there was little information to suggest that the latter were contributing to capacity.⁶ Specific recommendations include:

- Reorganizing time to increase opportunities for professional development and planning

⁵ See: Achievement Initiative for Maryland Minority Students (AIMMS) Steering Committee. (2001). *Minority Achievement in Maryland at the Millennium*. Baltimore, MD: Maryland State Department of Education.

⁶ See: Achieve, Inc. (2002). *Aiming Higher: The Next Decade of Education Reform in Maryland*. Washington, DC: Author.

- Creating positions of instructional leadership for teachers
- Providing high-quality materials and examples of good practice as part of MSDE’s support of local professional development on standards and content
- Investing in a coordinated strategy to help all educators develop appropriate knowledge and skills, with *Every Child Achieving* as the framework
- Examining current spending and investing wisely
- Involving higher education

The *Quality Teacher Workgroup Final Report* (2003) recommends⁷:

- Full funding and implementation of the recommendations of the *Teacher Education Task Force Report*, with special attention to the development of professional development schools
- MSDE providing incentives for teachers to complete additional courses to become highly qualified under the provisions of *No Child Left Behind*
- Creating instructional leadership positions for skilled teachers
- MDSE developing and funding consortia of districts and institutions of higher education to provide “educator career preparation” and professional development that are highly relevant to local school system needs
- Reviewing current teacher workloads with attention to options for “clearing the plate” of non-essential duties

State and Local Responses to Key Themes in the Recommendations about Teacher Professional Development

MSDE, schools districts, and institutions of higher education have almost certainly encouraged and influenced many efforts to improve teacher professional development, although it is not always possible to trace specific programs and initiatives to particular recommendations. Examples of improvement efforts that

⁷ See: Maryland State Department of Education. (2003). *Quality Teacher Workgroup: Final Report*. Baltimore, MD: Author.

reflect attention to central themes in the reports discussed above include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- ***In 1995, the Maryland State Board of Education “adopted” the NSDC standards, and MSDE began requiring that proposals that request support for professional development activities address these standards.*** At about the same time, a number of districts began adopting the standards and using the NSDC framework, which focuses on the context, process, and content of teacher professional development as a template for the design of local professional development programs and activities.
- ***In response to recommendations and requirements for rigorous school-based clinical experiences in preservice teacher training, institutions of higher education, school districts, and MSDE worked together to establish PDS across the state.*** Currently, there are 367 active PDS in the state.⁸ Located in 19 districts, PDS involve 23 institutions of higher education in these partnerships. The Maryland PDS Network, which grew out of the initial development efforts, has established a set of standards for PDS and convenes annual meetings to highlight progress and plan for future development. Participants in the network and supporters of PDS argue that PDS complement preservice training activities with high-quality professional development for classroom teachers, although there has been limited documentation of this function and its potential to admit more teachers from other schools.
- ***MSDE leadership training and regional and local leadership development initiatives have focused, at least in part, on the principal’s role in teacher professional development and the creation and support of professional learning communities in schools.*** Recently, staff in MSDE’s Division for Leadership Development began preparing new training activities that will focus on helping principals develop professional learning communities in their schools.
- ***Districts across Maryland are increasingly turning to experienced teachers to provide and facilitate professional development at the school level.*** These new assignments, along with more attention to the principal’s role in professional

⁸ A report on the current status of PDS is currently in preparation by MSDE’s Division of Certification and Accreditation and will be presented to the State Superintendent of Schools and the Maryland K-16 Council in December 2004. This report will highlight the PDS role in preservice teacher training and in teacher professional development. It is anticipated that this report will also provide at least preliminary data on the contributions of PDS to student learning outcomes.

development and closer alignment of professional development with school improvement planning and implementation, signal a shift toward more job-embedded professional development. The new assignments also expand career opportunities for teachers—opportunities that keep them close to the classroom and recognize their talents as teachers of youngsters and adults.

- ***The master planning process required under the Bridge to Excellence Act calls on districts to engage in a comprehensive review of how resources, including resources for professional development, should be allocated or reallocated to ensure a maximum return on investments as reflected in improved student learning.*** Annual progress reports on implementation of master plans extend opportunities for reviewing resource allocations and success in providing high-quality professional development.
- ***District staff and descriptions of district professional development activities indicate that districts have devoted at least a portion of their professional development resources to helping teachers become proficient at working with diverse groups of students and students with diverse learning needs and learning styles.***

Many of the activities listed above should be viewed as works in progress. For example, implementation of the NSDC professional development standards has been uneven as MSDE and district staff work hard to find the time and other resources to provide and facilitate the kinds of professional learning opportunities that the standards envision.⁹ Similarly, increased deployment of school-based professional development staff and more focus on job-embedded learning opportunities have led district staff to re-think how professional development can and should be organized and their roles in planning, organizing, and assessing it. The PDS play an important role in preservice teacher training, although there are variations in their capacity and the strength of their working relationships with schools, districts, and institutions of higher education.

⁹ The NSDC standards were revised in 2001.

2. Teachers Speak Out About Their Professional Development: Results from the 2004 Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development

NCLB requires states to report annually on teacher participation in high-quality professional development (Sec.1119a(2)(B)). The law stipulates that 2002-2003 be the baseline reporting year and that states set and report their targets for increased participation in each of the next four years. Elsewhere, the statute lists 10 characteristics of high-quality professional development, but provides no other directions for reporting. Subsequent guidance from the U.S. Department of Education directs states to provide two numbers: the number of teachers who participated in high-quality professional development and the targets for annual increases in participation.

During the early implementation of NCLB, state and district efforts to comply with the myriad other requirements of the law eclipsed attention to professional development. Indeed, only 19 states, including Maryland, submitted reports on teacher participation in high-quality professional development. Within this group, only Maryland based its report on data collected from teachers themselves.

Why survey teachers, particularly when NCLB does not require it? As MSDE began planning its response to the reporting requirement, it convened a group of administrators who were responsible for professional development in their districts to review the state's data collection options. One option put on the table was for MSDE to prepare a report format for districts to use as they provided the necessary information. This approach, however, was quickly rejected when it became apparent that districts simply did not have the information available. Administrators said that they could report on the kinds of activities their district had provided, but not on which teachers had participated or on the quality of the activities. They had information about teacher enrollments in college and university courses if the district had paid either all or part of the tuition, but they had no information about courses teachers had taken on their own. Likewise, they could report on teacher participation in conferences and professional meetings only if they had reimbursed teachers for all or part of their expenses. They had little data on teacher participation in school-based professional development activities. Finally, they reported that the data that did exist were maintained in various program files and offices and organizing them for a single report would be monumental task.

In light of what is known about school district data collection demands and capacities, these deterrents to the initial data collection proposal were, in large part, unsurprising. Still, they represent two critical shortcomings in professional

development. One is the lack of a comprehensive professional development plan; the other is the limited information that districts have about the quality of the activities in which teachers participate and for which districts annually allocate hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Given the difficulty and burden of collecting and organizing district data on professional development, MSDE opted to establish a reporting system organized around an annual survey of teachers. Following discussions with the U.S. Department of Education, the first annual cycle of the survey process, deemed the pilot phase, included approximately 6,000 teachers in nine districts. Based on the initial survey data, MSDE reported that about a third of Maryland's teachers had participated in high-quality professional development in 2002-2003, the baseline reporting year. (MSDE's definition of high-quality professional development is discussed in more detail below.)

Survey Design¹⁰

The *Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development* asks teachers to report on their participation in the five categories of professional development listed in Exhibit 2.1, which appears on the next page.

Many surveys ask teachers whether or not they liked their professional development activities and to rate the quality of the activities or their individual components. The Maryland survey does not address these issues. Instead, it asks teachers to report on the frequency of their participation in various kinds of activities that reflect four clusters of indicators related to decision making, professional learning, follow up, and the extent to which their participation had benefited them in specific ways. Exhibit 2.2, also on the next page, displays the 17 indicators of quality that are addressed in the survey. The survey asks teachers to report on the presence or absence of each of the indicators in each of the five categories of professional development in which they reported participating.

¹⁰ The complete report on the survey will appear as a separate volume, which will be available in late December 2004. The survey was developed and administered by Policy Studies Associates, Inc., under a contract with MSDE. In addition, the Laboratory for Student Success, one of the regional educational laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education, assisted with survey administration and data analysis in the first cycle of data collection.

Exhibit 2.1 Categories of Professional Development

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Graduate Courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Courses at the masters, doctoral, or advanced studies level available in any public or private institution of higher education in Maryland or any other state
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Workshops, Institutes, and Academies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An activity that includes multiple sessions that add up to at least a day. These activities include events that are planned and scheduled in advance and may take place during the regular school schedule or after school, on the weekend, or during the summer. They may also be residential programs that last for several days or a few weeks. These events may take place in schools, the district office, some other central facility, or on a college or university campus.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Coaching or Mentoring Programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The experience of working with a coach or mentor assigned to work with you as part of a new teacher induction program or a formal coaching or mentoring program sponsored by the district or some other entity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Job-Embedded Professional Development Activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ These activities often take place during the regular school day or before or after school. Typically they involve working with colleagues, including school-based professional development staff.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conferences or Professional Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ These events include annual meetings of professional associations or other organizations, as well as special purpose events that may occur only once. In many cases, these events will take place out of the district or perhaps even outside of Maryland.

Exhibit 2.2 Indicators of Quality

Planning and Governance	Learning Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Determine content ■ Determine learning activities ■ Set expectations for outcomes ■ Participate in evaluation of course as professional learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Explanations of key concepts and theories ■ Demonstrations of skills and strategies ■ Opportunities to practice skills and strategies ■ Feedback and assessment of understanding of key concepts and theories ■ Feedback and assessment of mastery of skills and strategies
Follow Up	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ongoing opportunities for conversations ■ Explanations/presentations ■ Demonstrations of skills and strategies ■ Feedback and Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased knowledge of subject(s) ■ Increased academic rigor ■ More differentiated instruction ■ Ability to contribute to planned improvement efforts

The survey asks teachers about the content of their professional development activities and about financial and other kinds of support that they received for participating. Several items ask teachers to look across all of the professional development that they participated in and to rate the extent to which the activities provided clear and consistent messages about their roles and whether they had the support they needed to implement new ideas and practices in their classrooms. The survey also requests information about teachers' professional experience and current assignments.

In addition to items about the quality indicators listed above, the 2004 survey includes new items on the extent to which technology was used in activities (as opposed to technology and the use of technology as the content or focus of the activities.)

Overall, the survey addresses many of the new *Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards* introduced later in this report.

In spring 2004, the State Superintendent of Schools invited all public school teachers in the state to complete an online version of the survey. Just over 30,000 teachers, or about 55 percent of all teachers in the state, responded. Response rates varied across the districts, and the relatively low overall response rate made it necessary to use additional data on teacher characteristics to generate estimates of response patterns for all teachers in the state.

Each district will receive a report on how its teachers responded to the survey. In addition, MSDE staff and members of the survey team will be available to assist in interpreting the survey results and to conduct additional analyses of district data. MSDE expects districts to use these reports as springboards for internal conversations about professional development and ways to improve it. Furthermore, one of the Council's recommendations, presented in more detail in the last section of this report, is that survey data guide the implementation review of those portions of district master plans that include teacher professional development.

2003-2004 Survey Results

The NCLB reporting requirement calls for a single number: the number of teachers who participate in high-quality professional development each year. Therefore, it was necessary for MSDE to estimate this number by drawing on the survey data. To this end, MSDE used responses to items about the 17 quality indicators to determine how many teachers participated in high-quality professional development. Specifically, MSDE assumed that teachers had participated in high-quality professional development in one or more of the five categories of professional development if they reported the presence of 15 of the

17 indicators in one or more categories of professional development.¹¹ This is a very rigorous definition of quality, but it is consistent with the new *Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards*.

Several key findings emerge from the survey. First, relatively large numbers of teachers reported participating in professional development that reflects at least some of the quality indicators. For example, an estimated 87 percent reported participating in one or more categories of activities that reflected ten or more of the indicators.

The second key finding is that fewer teachers, an estimated 44 percent statewide, reported participating in professional development that reflected the configuration of indicators called for in Maryland's definition of high-quality professional development. The professional development experiences of these teachers reflected the presence of at least 15 of the seventeen indicators of quality.

The third key finding is that although the survey results suggest that there are some differences in teachers' professional development experiences across the districts, the variations do not appear large. Instead, experiences appear to be quite similar from one district to the next.

Exhibit 2.3 displays the overall statewide patterns of participation in the five categories of professional development included in the survey. As these data indicate, an estimated 34 percent of all teachers enrolled in one or more graduate courses in 2003-2004. Seventy-five percent participated in workshops, institutes, and academies that lasted a day or longer. (Note that the survey did not ask for information about workshops, institutes, and academies that lasted less than a day.) Thirteen percent of teachers reported receiving assistance from a coach or mentor. This relatively small percentage of participants in this category probably reflects the fact that this type of professional development is typically directed at new and inexperienced teachers. Sixty-one percent of teachers reported taking part in job-embedded activities that occurred more frequently than once a month. (The survey asked about overall participation in this category and then asked about the frequency of participation. Eighty percent of teachers reported participating in job-embedded professional development, but only about 75 percent of these teachers reported that the activities occurred more frequently than once a month.) Just over a third of teachers reported attending a professional conference or meeting that lasted a day or longer. (As with job-embedded professional development, the survey asks about participation in all conferences and meetings. A follow-up item asks about participation in conferences and meetings that last a day or longer.) On the exhibit, the second bar in each pair

¹¹ Specifically, teachers had to report that any two of the four quality indicators related to involvement in planning and designing professional development were present and that all of the indicators of participation in learning activities intended to improve knowledge and skills, follow up, and benefits were also present.

shows the percentage of teachers who reported participating in each category of activities and also reported that the activities met Maryland’s criteria for high quality.

**Exhibit 2.3
Participation in Professional Development,
by Category, All Teachers**

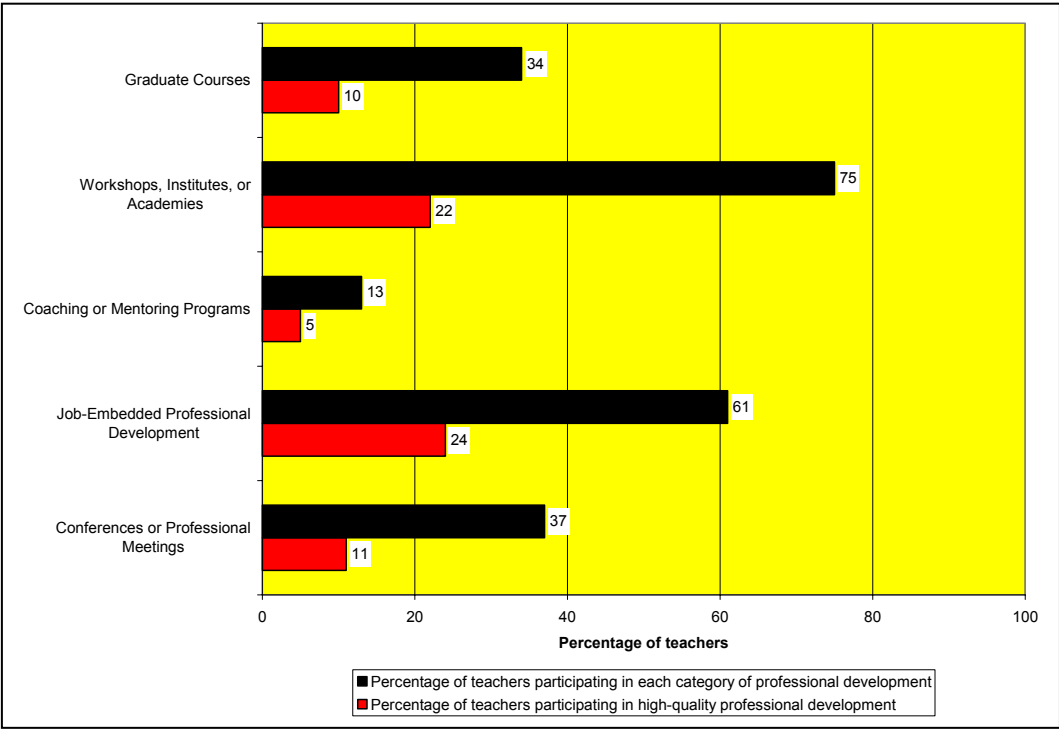


Exhibit reads: An estimated 34 percent of teachers in Maryland reported enrolling in one or more graduate course(s) in 2003-2004, and an estimated 10 percent reported that the graduate courses were of high quality.

Additional findings from the survey include the following:

- Elementary school teachers are somewhat more likely than middle school teachers and high school teachers to report participating in high-quality professional development (48 percent versus 42 percent and 38 percent).
- Teachers with less experience are somewhat more likely to report participating in high-quality professional development than their more experienced colleagues (49 percent of teachers with less than four years of experience versus 43 percent for teachers with more four or more years of experience).

- When asked about the availability of various kinds of support for implementing new knowledge and skills that were the focus of professional development, 29 percent of teachers said that they “always” have the curriculum materials that they need and 57 percent said that they sometimes have these materials. Twenty-three percent said that they always have the instructional materials and supplies that they need and 59 percent said that they sometimes have these materials. Finally, 43 percent said that there is always someone in their school who can give them sound advice and 42 percent said that they sometimes have someone who can give them sound advice.
- The survey asked teachers about various uses of technology in professional development activities (i.e., to present content, to facilitate communication and collaboration among participants, to provide feedback from the presenter/facilitator to participants). When teachers reported that all of these uses occurred “frequently” or “sometimes,” the activity was rated as high use. Graduate courses led the way in the high use of technology with 62 percent of the teachers who enrolled in graduate courses reporting this level of use. This rate compares to 46 percent in workshops, job-embedded activities, and coaching and mentoring programs. Across all five categories of professional development, teachers who reported the activities to be of high quality were much more likely to report high use of technology.
- Exhibit 2.4 provides information about the percentage of teachers who received some sort of financial support for participating in professional development. For example, the first pair of bars indicates that 85 percent of teachers who reported enrolling in one or more graduate courses also reported receiving financial support for doing so. (Note that the percentage of teachers who reported receiving financial assistance for enrollment in one or more graduate courses is 85 percent of the 34 percent who reported enrolling in these courses.) The second bar in this pair indicates that 24 percent of the teachers who enrolled in graduate courses reported receiving financial assistance *and* that the course or courses that they took met the Maryland criteria for high-quality professional development. Overall, the survey data summarized in Exhibit 2.4 suggest that districts may be well-advised to review policies and practices related to spending to support teacher participation in professional development.

Exhibit 2.4 Financial Support for Participation in Professional Development by Category

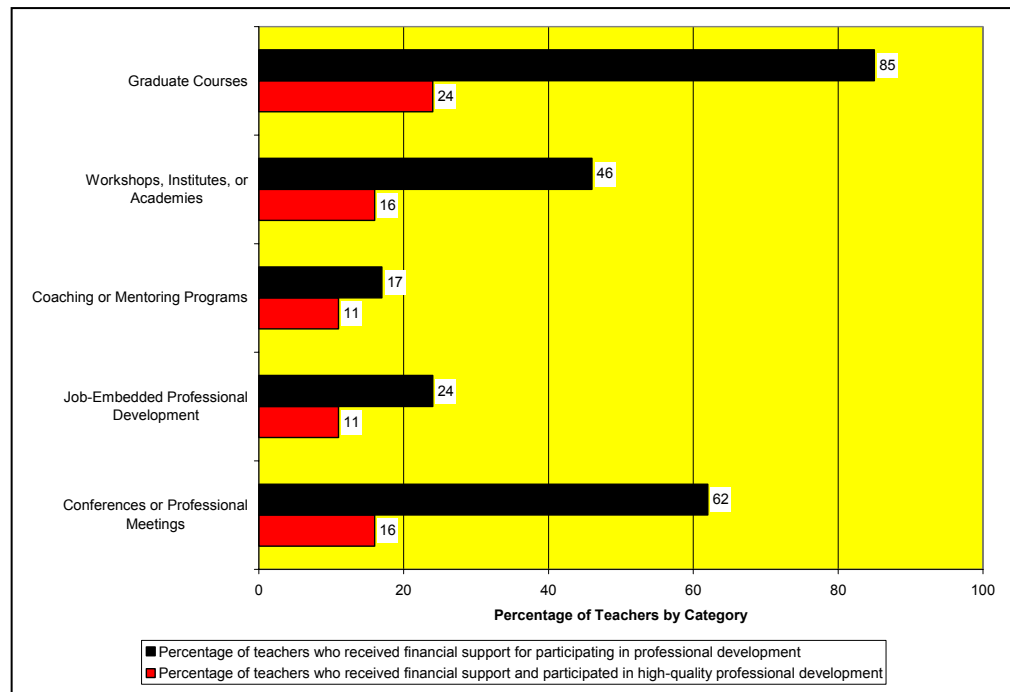


Exhibit reads: Eighty-five percent of teachers who reported enrolling in one or more graduate course reported receiving financial assistance and 24 percent reported receiving financial assistance and that the courses met the Maryland criteria for high quality.

In the end, the survey results discussed here and in forthcoming reports to the districts and MSDE should be considered suggestive but not definitive. Districts, MSDE, and IHEs are well-advised to include a variety of other data in any review of current policies and practices. Despite this caveat, several conclusions can be drawn from the results of the 2003-2004 survey. First, given the very rigorous criteria for determining whether teachers participated in high-quality professional development, the finding that an estimated 44 percent did so suggests that districts, institutions of higher education (IHE), and MSDE are making strides toward ensuring that teachers have access to professional learning opportunities that can pay off in terms of improved instruction and student learning. Similarly, the finding that many teachers report participating in activities that reflect at least some of the quality indicators also suggests progress in providing high-quality professional development. Finally, the survey findings confirm one of the Council's earlier observations: The progress that has been made notwithstanding, many teachers do not participate in high-quality professional development. A careful review of the survey results can help districts, IHEs, MSDE, and other stakeholders work together to identify ways to turn this situation around.

3. Mapping the State and Local Infrastructures for Teacher Professional Development

Teacher professional development is primarily a local process. Teachers participate in a variety of learning activities in their schools and in their districts. To be sure, they also travel to colleges and universities for coursework and for summer institutes and conferences, and they may participate in professional conferences and meetings that take place outside of their districts. But the final stage of professional learning takes place in schools and classrooms when teachers apply new knowledge and skills to help students learn.

Even though teacher professional development is a local process, both MSDE and districts have important roles to play. In many cases, these roles are complemented by partnerships with colleges and universities, as well as other stakeholder groups. This section of the report examines MSDE's role in teacher professional development and summarizes observations about how districts organize teacher professional development. The descriptions and observations are based on data collected from interviews with MSDE and district staff and from a review of documents from MSDE and the districts.¹² Most of the data were collected in spring and summer 2003, although additional interviews and state-level document review were conducted in fall 2003.

Five overarching themes emerged from the mapping activities:

- State and local policies, programs, and perspectives on teacher professional development, certification, and school improvement have converged around understanding the importance of professional development as a critical component of efforts to improve schools and increase student achievement.
- Teacher professional development in Maryland is undergoing fundamental changes as reflected in:
 - Changes in the role of MSDE
 - Changes in local leadership and priorities
 - Changes in resource allocation
 - Significant increases in school-based, job-embedded professional learning opportunities

¹² Data were collected by Policy Studies Associates, Inc., under contract with MSDE. The study team worked closely with the Council to plan the data-collection activities and made a series of presentations to the Council on the findings and observations from these activities.

- Many people at the state and local levels see time as one of the most scarce resources for high-quality professional development
- Attention to participant satisfaction is not complemented with rigorous assessment of the effectiveness and impact of professional development, with the result that there is very limited information about the return on investment in teacher professional development
- Systematic information on the allocation of resources (e.g., money, people, time) for professional development is not readily available

The section begins with an examination of MSDE’s role in teacher professional development and then discusses the organization of professional development at the local level. The section ends with some overall observations.

Three caveats are in order before discussing findings and observations. First, the findings and observations do not represent an in-depth study of state and local infrastructures or particular state and local initiatives. Instead, they represent snapshots taken at several points in time. Second, these findings and observations do not constitute an evaluation of MSDE or district professional development policies, programs, and initiatives. Third, the plan for the MSDE teacher professional development did not call for a review of the role of IHEs in teacher professional development. Therefore, the important role and contributions of IHEs is discussed in the context of their partnerships and collaborations with MSDE and districts. The survey findings discussed in the previous section of this report, as well as the forthcoming complete survey report, provide important information on teacher professional development experiences and perspectives with regards to college and university coursework.

MSDE’s Multifaceted Role in Teacher Professional Development

At first glance, MSDE may not appear to play a significant role in teacher professional development. Indeed, when asked about their role in teacher professional development, many MSDE staff say that they “really don’t do much professional development.” By this they mean that their roles as providers of professional development, either directly or in collaboration with others, are not extensive. In fact, providing teacher professional development is not a major component of the agency’s work. MSDE can, however, exert considerable influence on both the quantity and quality of teacher professional development.

MSDE staff provide professional development to teachers.

Although it is not a large part of the agency's role, some MSDE staff are involved in providing professional development or are responsible for planning professional development activities. For example, staff in the Division of Adult and Career Education are responsible for planning ongoing activities in the Maryland High Schools That Work network. This initiative brings together teams of high school faculty and staff from across the state who are engaged in implementing the High Schools That Work model. In addition, to their hands-on role in planning these activities, MSDE staff serve as presenters and take an active part in following up with school teams. In a second example, MSDE staff in the Division of Instruction manage the Governor's Academy in Mathematics and Science. They plan each annual cycle of academy activities, are responsible for selecting participants and presenters, and arrange all of the logistics for these summer institutes. They also plan and carry out follow-up activities during the school year and review and provide feedback on participants' action research projects.

These activities, and others like them, stand out because they are ongoing and include at least some follow-up sessions, as well as review and feedback of participants' efforts to use the knowledge and skills they develop in the various professional learning activities. MSDE staff are also invited to make numerous presentations before a wide range of audiences. Often these presentations introduce new initiatives and priorities or help audiences understand ongoing initiatives and programs. Typically, they are limited to several hours in length, but are not accompanied by any follow up, particularly in schools or classrooms. MSDE staff usually characterize these events as good opportunities to communicate with the field, but very time-consuming and not often having much pay off in changes in practice.

Following statutory requirements and guidance established for federal and state programs, MSDE manages the "pass through" of funds for teacher professional development to districts and projects.

In this role, MSDE issues Requests for Proposals or other solicitations to districts to invite applications for support for professional development and other activities. MSDE is also responsible for monitoring use of the funds and determining whether funds were used according to plans. Programs may specify purposes for which the funds can be used, and typically specify uses that are not acceptable. Some funding streams define the content focus of professional development that funds can support (e.g., special education, bilingual education, education for gifted and talented students, technology education, arts education). Most programs include some latitude for how the funds are spent.

One of the ways that MSDE can influence the quality of professional development that it supports with these resources is to call on districts and other potential recipients to explain in their proposals or plans how the activities for which they seek support meet standards for high-quality professional development. Beginning in 1995, a number of MSDE solicitations for proposals for professional development activities require offerors to explain how their plans addressed the NSDC standards. Guidelines for proposal reviewers and scoring rubrics for rating proposals also focus in part on how well the proposals address the standards.

A number of district staff interviewed during the mapping activity indicated that meeting this proposal requirement led them to think more carefully about how to meet the NSDC standards in local professional development initiatives. In practice, many of the proposals that were submitted addressed the NSDC standards by asserting the importance of understanding the influence of context, content, and process on the effectiveness of professional development. These assertions were not always accompanied by discussions of how the planned activities would address specific standards. For their part, some MSDE staff acknowledged that the proposal review process did not provide an in-depth review of how the plans met the standards.

One important example of how the NSDC standards did clearly influence program activities was in MSDE's oversight of state funds earmarked for teacher induction programs. MSDE staff responsible for these funds included requirements for addressing the standards in solicitations and other program announcements. In addition, staff turned meetings with leaders of local induction programs into opportunities to reinforce messages about the NSDC standards and how to reflect them in local programs.

Beginning in 2002, MSDE's role in overseeing local use of federal and state funds took on a significant new dimension. Under the terms of the *Bridge to Excellence Act*, districts were required to develop five-year master plans that indicated how they would use the resources available to them to ensure that all students meet high standards. Under the new legislation, MSDE was expected to review the plans and their implementation and provide feedback to the districts. To meet its obligations, MSDE issued extensive guidance for the planning process, and implemented a system for reviewing the plans, providing feedback, and, ultimately, approving them. Despite the emphasis on teacher quality and professional development, the initial planning guidance, feedback, and subsequent guidance on preparing progress reports included no substantive guidance on planning for or discussing high-quality professional development as a component of local improvement strategies. Not surprisingly, many master plans devoted considerable space to listing a variety of teacher professional development programs and initiatives to be undertaken as improvement strategies. Few plans provided a detailed rationale for the activities or a careful explanation of how they would meet standards for quality.

Overall, it appears that MSDE mechanisms for monitoring the use of federal funds for professional development do not include much attention to the quality of these activities.

MSDE influences the quality and availability of teacher professional development by approving courses and other professional learning activities for continuing professional development credit (CPD).

Courses and other activities for which teachers receive CPD credits (or “MSDE courses” as they are often referred to) represent a large component of district professional development activities. Activities for which teachers may receive CPD credits include courses, workshops, institutes, seminar series, and conferences, action research, publications of professional articles, curriculum development, mentoring and peer coaching, and participation in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification process. Districts use these activities to help teachers develop the knowledge and skills they need to implement new instructional strategies, and, because the courses have been approved by MSDE, teachers can receive certification credit for completing them.

The Division of Certification and Accreditation has primary responsibility for managing the review of course proposals, but staff in other divisions often play a significant role in reviewing specific proposals from districts. MSDE has developed the *Continuing Professional Development Manual* to guide the submission of proposals for CPD activities, and district liaisons are responsible for managing submissions of course proposals and the courses themselves. Proposals are expected to include a description of the activity, performance outcomes for participants, evaluation procedures, and instructional resources necessary for the activity. Proposals are also expected to indicate who will serve as the instructor or facilitator. The manual contains three principles to guide planning and lists five guidelines for “the design of continuing professional development experiences.” There is no explanation of how either the principles or the guidelines are used to judge the quality of the proposals or to determine whether the activities will be approved for CPD credits.

According to MSDE staff, the large number of submissions precludes the careful review of all of them. Instead, local liaisons assume much of the responsibility for quality assurance. Currently, the MSDE CPD course catalogue contains several hundred listings.

MSDE influences teacher professional development through leadership training and other support for principals and other leaders.

Activities sponsored by the Division for Leadership Development influence teacher professional development in several ways. First, according to staff in the division, various leadership training programs, including the annual principals institute, have focused on, among other things, the role of principals in teacher professional development, although this has not been a primary focus of any of the activities during the past several years.

MSDE stimulates and shapes discourse and policy on teacher professional development by convening, leading, and participating in influential stakeholder groups.

In this role, MSDE leaders and staff engage in conversations with a wide range of stakeholders at the state and local levels. For example, in convening the Council, the State Superintendent of Schools invited staff from MSDE, school districts, IHEs, and community leaders and representatives of the business community to come together to examine teacher professional development and offer recommendations for improving it. MSDE plays an active role on the Maryland K-16 Council, which has and continues to address a variety of issues related to preservice teacher training, teacher quality, and professional development.

MSDE staff are also actively engaged with professional organizations and other groups concerned about teacher quality and professional development.

Together, these forums serve several important functions. First, they provide an opportunity to communicate about MSDE policies and initiatives. Second, they provide opportunities for stakeholder feedback. Third, and perhaps most important, they can set the stage for joint planning and collaboration on new initiatives, programs, and policies.

Challenges in MSDE's Role in Teacher Professional Development

Perhaps the greatest challenge to MSDE, and certainly to other state departments of education, is defining and maintaining a viable and productive role in a process in which most of the action occurs at the local level. It is important to recognize from the outset that MSDE's role as a provider of teacher professional development is very limited. Put simply, the agency does not have the staff or resources to play this role on a significant scale. In addition, the increase in the amount of school-based professional development and in the assignment of district staff to support it will increase the difficulty and viability of

serving as a statewide provider of teacher professional development. At the same time, this change may suggest a critical role for MSDE: assisting in building the capacity of school-based professional development staff.

As the foregoing discussion of the dimensions of MSDE's role suggests, the agency can influence the quality of teacher professional development. It can do so through leadership and through internal quality assurance mechanisms. More important, it can do so by establishing and maintaining a system of accountability to inform all phases of the management of professional development resources. Calling on districts and other offerors to address the NSDC standards in proposals and applications for professional development support was an important step. Internal planning activities suggest attention to key dimensions of quality. Furthermore, staff reported that they rely on participant feedback and anecdotal reports to assess the quality of professional development activities and to guide planning.

Currently, there is very limited evidence to suggest that funding decisions consistently rely on clear evidence that proposals and plans address standards for quality. Further, there are almost no examples of rigorous evaluations of changes in teacher performance or improvements in student outcomes that can be attributed to professional development. This observation applies to activities for which MSDE has direct responsibility, as well as those that state and federal resources fund and MSDE oversees. The observation is not intended to suggest that the professional development activities for which MSDE has at least some responsibility are not of high quality or that they do not contribute to better teaching and increased student achievement. It does, however, suggest that there is simply very little evidence one way or the other and that it would be very difficult for MSDE to report on the quality of the teacher professional development for which it has responsibility or the extent to which there is a significant return on the investment.

The absence of clear accountability for quality and effectiveness points to other challenges. Although it is relatively easy to use an input model to rate the quality of professional development against a set of standards, it is much more difficult, time-consuming, and expensive to gauge the impact of professional development on teacher performance or student outcomes. To be sure, using indicators of quality as a checklist to assess the proposed design of teacher professional development would be a significant improvement over current practice. Supporting more rigorous evaluation is much more difficult and, in fact, there are few good models for such evaluations. Similarly, a more comprehensive monitoring of the quality of teacher professional development activities supported with federal and state funds would greatly stretch MSDE staff capacity and almost certainly require careful assessments of opportunity costs and difficult choices among priority tasks.

How Districts Organize Teacher Professional Development

Perhaps the most important observation from efforts to map how districts organize and support teacher professional development is that their work is undergoing substantial changes. As this section of the report explains, these changes were caused in part by the master planning process required under the *Bridge to Excellence Act* and by changes in district leadership. In terms of ongoing teacher professional development and how districts organize and support it, it appears that there is a fundamental shift toward increased job-embedded professional development. At the same time, more traditional professional learning activities, including workshops and university coursework, remain important parts of district professional development portfolios.

Teacher Professional Development in District Master Plans

In spring 2003, districts were preparing the five-year master plans required of them under the *Bridge to Excellence Act*. District staff who participated in the planning efforts said that having to prepare comprehensive, long-term plans made them think more systematically and strategically about teacher professional development and its role and potential contributions to improved student learning. The master plan process also led district planners to re-examine strategies for allocating resources for teacher professional development.

It was not within the scope of the charge to the Council or the design of the mapping activity to conduct and report on a comprehensive analysis of district master plans. However, reading the plans does permit several observations on how they address teacher professional development. First, professional development, especially professional development for teachers, is a central theme in all of the plans. District master plans address both general issues of improving teacher quality and specific issues of improving instructional content. In both cases, teacher professional development is a core component of the proposed strategies. Second, although the master plans include lengthy lists of professional development activities, the strategic or conceptual glue that holds these activities together or that defines their coherence is not always made explicit. There are some notable exceptions to this pattern. In these cases, the plans explain the overall strategies for teacher professional development and indicate how they are aligned with other strategies.

Third, many of the master plans assert that the proposed teacher professional development activities will be of high quality, but the master plans do not provide much information to back up their assertions. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the reasonableness of the proposed activities or, consequently, the planned expenditures.

Two additional observations about the master planning process are in order. First, as noted above, guidance for the master planning process and the master plans provided little direction on teacher professional development, particularly the ways and the extent to which master plans should address issues of quality. Second, although both districts and MSDE have considerable experience in various kinds of planning activities, the scope of the master planning process, along with the pressures imposed by *NCLB*, posed new challenges to everyone involved. The good news is that upcoming cycles of reporting, review, and feedback provide ample opportunity to refine the master planning process and the implementation of the master plans to reflect increased attention to ensuring that teacher professional development is of high quality.

Changing Leadership and Professional Development

Leadership changes have become a fact of life in school districts across the country, and Maryland's districts are no exception. In some cases, the changes are abrupt and jarring. In other cases, they are relatively smooth. Changes in leadership are often accompanied by changes in priorities or strategies for meeting priorities, especially priorities for student learning in basic skills. If the changes involve instructional programs or curricula that require teachers to develop new knowledge and skills, districts may introduce new training and professional development activities. Teachers, however, do not always understand or embrace these shifts. Indeed, as this report discusses below, when focus group participants were asked what districts and MSDE need to *stop* doing to facilitate full implementation and use of the standards, one of the most frequent suggestions was to stop the constant shifts in priorities and programs.

Increased Reliance on Job-Embedded Professional Development

During the past five or six years, researchers and practitioners have focused on creating and studying professional development experiences that are part of the routine work of teachers, take place in schools, and address problems and issues that teachers themselves identify. Such job-embedded professional learning activities take many forms, including study groups, collaboration on action research, and engagement in tasks related to school improvement and instructional planning. Some of these activities are informal and loosely structured. Others are more formal and have more structure. As reported above, the survey data indicate that an estimated 80 percent of Maryland teachers participated in some form of job-embedded professional development during the 2003-2004 school year. A substantial percentage of them reported experiences that suggest these activities were of high quality.

In many schools across Maryland, school-based professional development staff and district staff assigned to work at the school level play significant roles in

organizing, leading, and facilitating various job-embedded professional development activities. As one indicator of the prevalence of this type of professional development, about 2,700 of the individuals who responded to the survey reported that they spend more than half of their time working with other teachers.

The actual responsibilities associated with this role vary considerably. For example, in Montgomery County, staff development teachers are assigned to every school in the district. They are responsible for working with teachers to ensure that individual professional development plans are implemented. In Washington County, academic coaches play an important role in helping teachers examine and understand student data to guide instructional planning. In other districts, resource teachers help teachers individually and in groups to address instructional issues in reading, mathematics, or other subject areas. Peer coaches and mentors work with teachers who may be having problems in their classrooms, or work with new teachers. (More about support for new teachers below.)

In addition to supporting and facilitating workplace learning, school-based professional development staff often bring their experiences and insights from many years of successful practice to their work. These individuals can complement the instructional leadership capacity of principals and other school leaders and broker important resources for teachers and for professional development. Finally, echoing a theme from earlier reports, these professional development staff positions represent career options that retain successful teachers in the profession.

Several important lessons and issues have emerged from early experiences with these assignments. First, despite the importance of successful teaching experience as a qualification, success in working with students does not necessarily translate into success with adult learners. Therefore, in addition to selecting these individuals carefully, it is important to provide them with solid training before they assume their responsibilities and after they are on the job. Second, it is crucial to clearly articulate their responsibilities in carrying out specific tasks and working with others in the school, particularly principals, other school leaders, and other professional development and supervisory staff. Despite the potential payoffs of these positions, lack of clarity about their tasks and working relationships can result in schools being overrun with helpers, confusion among teachers, and frustration and anger among school leaders and other school staff.

Support for New Teachers

Recently, some researchers, notably Richard Ingersoll at the Center for Policy Research in Education at the University of Pennsylvania¹³, have suggested that the teacher shortage is not the result of an inadequate supply of new teachers. They argue, instead, that high attrition rates among new and inexperienced teachers are creating the shortage. Large numbers of new teachers enter the profession inadequately prepared to meet the challenges of their job and receive insufficient help in solving their workplace problems. Institutions of higher education and school districts in Maryland began addressing this situation with the establishment of PDS to provide more rigorous school-based training and internships as part of preservice teacher education programs. In addition, the Maryland state legislature provided funds and required districts to establish new teacher mentoring programs to support teachers in the early years of their careers. Although the *Bridge to Excellence Act* ended the earmarking of state funds (more than \$16 million in 2002-2003), all of Maryland's school districts reported that they continue to provide some type of induction support for first-year teachers. In addition, some districts continue this support into the second or third year of teaching.¹⁴

Typically, induction programs begin before the school year starts with a series of orientation activities for new teachers. These activities generally provide basic information about the district and its instructional programs. There may also be an orientation to the area served by the district. Part of the initial sessions is also devoted to helping new teachers get their classrooms set up and ensuring that they are ready for the first few weeks of school.

All induction programs rely on mentors to work with new teachers throughout the school year. Mentors help new teachers address instructional issues, find resources, and generally learn the ropes. Finally, mentors not only provide emotional support during difficult times, but also help to celebrate successes. In addition to mentoring, support for new teachers can include specially designed workshops and other training activities to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills that they need in their classrooms. New teachers are usually expected to participate in these initial orientation activities, although many other components of the induction programs are voluntary. The Prince George's County Professional Educator Induction Program, which is profiled in Exhibit 3.1, is an example of a comprehensive long-term teacher induction program.

¹³ See: Ingersoll, R.M. (2001). *Teacher Turnover, Teacher Shortages, and the Organization of Schools*. Center for the Study of Teaching Policy.

¹⁴ Typically, a third year of support is provided for those teachers who are on conditional status or who have been identified as needing special help.

Exhibit 3.1

Prince George's County Public Schools Professional Educator Induction Program

In 2001, Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) instituted a three-year induction program for new teachers. This program, called the Professional Educator Induction Program, is aligned with major local, state, and federal initiatives, including the school system's Strategic Plan, the new Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards, and the federal *No Child Left Behind* law.

The Professional Educator Induction Program aims to:

- Increase teacher retention within the school system
- Prepare novice teachers with the competencies and skills they need to experience success in the classroom
- Increase novice teachers' use of effective, research-based instructional practices to further student learning
- Help novice teachers develop a professional plan of action that will guide them along a path of lifelong learning and reflective practice

Throughout the program, new teachers in selected schools work side-by-side with mentors and other professional development specialists in an array of assistance activities, including:

- A week-long orientation to curriculum frameworks, with follow-up on strategies for teaching specific content
- Beginning in 2004-05, a job-like mentor working with each novice teacher at the school level around a coaching/reflective model
- A three-day Induction Institute to help administrators and teacher leaders understand the needs of new teachers and develop a school-based action plan
- Building-level professional development in which full-time mentors assist and coach new teachers, establish demonstration classrooms, and model best practices
- Monthly New Teacher Academies to explore systemic issues and topics such as conducting parent conferences and using electronic grading programs
- Partnerships with colleges and universities to assist conditionally certified teachers in meeting state requirements
- Online coursework and support groups
- Four formal observations per year for the purpose of professional growth and achieving standards set forth in *Standards for Excellence: A Framework for Teaching*.

Source: Prince George's County Public Schools, Office of Staff Development.

Traditional Professional Learning Activities as Staples of District Teacher Professional Development Portfolios

As the survey data suggest, substantial numbers of teachers participated in workshops, institutes, and seminars; enrolled in graduate courses; and attended professional conferences and meeting in 2003-2004. The district role in organizing, conducting, assessing, and paying for these activities varies considerably, making it difficult to characterize succinctly.

In interviews conducted in spring 2003, many district staff said that much of their district's professional development was intended to address district priorities for improving student learning—especially among underperforming groups of students. However, many districts also provide extensive lists of courses and other professional development opportunities that are available to teachers, and it can be difficult to see the overall coherence of these professional development agendas.

One example of a district that is making progress in bringing coherence to its overall portfolio of teacher professional development is Montgomery County. Exhibit 3.2 profiles the district's Professional Growth System (PGS).

Exhibit 3.2 The Montgomery County Professional Growth System

In 2000, the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) embarked on an ambitious education improvement strategy. The plan, called the Professional Growth System, is composed of six principle elements:

1. A common language and common framework for teaching gained primarily through the courses, "Studying Skillful Teaching" and "Observing and Analyzing Teaching";
2. Job-embedded professional development under the guidance of school-based Staff Development Teachers;
3. Time to participate in ongoing professional development for all teachers through the Staff Development Substitute Teacher Project;
4. Teacher-directed professional growth through Individual Professional Development Plans
5. A Peer Assistance and Review Program for teachers new to teaching and for underperforming experienced teachers; and
6. A teacher evaluation system based on standards of effective practice from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

The goal of the PGS is to infuse throughout Montgomery County Schools an ethic of continuous improvement through learning communities of shared beliefs and accountability in which standards-based teaching results in consistently improving student learning.

As the profile suggests, MCPS has taken a system perspective. It rests on a common language and framework for defining quality instruction. Professional learning activities reflect and articulate key themes in the framework, and teachers are accountable for meeting standards for effective practice.

A recent external evaluation of the PGS concluded that implementation is moving in the right direction. Not surprisingly, the evaluation also concluded that after three years of implementation, a considerable amount of work remains to be done to ensure that all parts of the PGS are in place and working effectively.

The Role of IHEs in Local Professional Development

Colleges and universities play several important roles in local professional development activities. As the survey data suggest, about a third of teachers reported enrolling in college and university courses in 2003-2004. Courses may be part of degree programs or be required for certification. They may focus on improving teaching skills, understanding content, or preparing teachers for other careers in education (e.g., administration, school leadership, guidance and counseling).

In general, district staff interviewed in spring 2003 do not view college and university courses as part of local professional development activities, and they do not see themselves as exerting much influence over the content of the courses. At the same time, there are numerous examples of working relationships between districts and IHEs in which IHE faculty tailor coursework and other activities to explicitly address district needs and priorities. The PDS represent one example of these partnerships. Other examples include partnerships that have a specific content focus or that focus on the introduction and use of technology. District staff often view these relationships positively as contributing to their overall improvement efforts.

Challenges to Districts in Organizing Professional Development

In addition to the positive findings about the implementation of PGS in the MCPS, the evaluation report offered the following observation:

MCPS may have reached a kind of saturation point in terms of implementing new initiatives that require significant change on the part of MCPS professional staff. MCPS teachers and administrators have embraced a large number of changes in a very short period of time. Many of these changes require professional staff to learn new skills and develop new means by which they do their work. The district might now do well to allow those changes that form the sum and substance of the PGS to

become institutionalized before launching yet more new initiatives that require intensive change on the part of MCPS staff.

This observation characterizes one of the most important challenges faced by school districts across the country and certainly by those in Maryland. In the urgency to address priorities, there may not always be enough time to do the job well and the priorities may change before the job is completed. In many instances, one casualty of the lack of time is serious and sustained follow up to ensure that teachers have the support and resources they need to use the new knowledge and skills they gain in various professional learning activities.

In addition to the shortage of time and the possibility of shifting priorities—or perhaps because of them—districts face the challenge of ensuring that professional development is of consistently high quality and that it results in improvements in teaching and learning. Quality assurance is, for the most part, a front-loaded process, which focuses on the planning and design of professional development. There is very limited attention to assessing outcomes for teachers and students. Indeed, the external evaluation report on the MCPS PGS is one of the very few to be completed. Absent more formal evaluations, districts rely on what are essentially customer satisfaction surveys of uneven sophistication. These surveys are typically administered at the end of events and there is no subsequent data collection. Across the board, the results of these surveys suggest that large numbers of participants are satisfied with almost all of the activities. These surveys do not examine follow-up activities; nor do they track professional learning outcomes back to classrooms.

District staff also rely heavily on anecdotal evidence to assess the quality of professional development. In the course of their daily work, professional development staff can solicit and receive a substantial amount of feedback from teachers about recent professional development activities. This feedback is frequently cited as justification for continuing some activities and modifying or discontinuing others. Anecdotal evidence also takes another form. As one assistant superintendent explained in an interview:

We don't do much formal evaluation of professional development, but I spend a lot of time in classrooms and that tells me a lot. When I see teachers doing the things that were stressed in our professional development workshops, I know that the workshops were beneficial.

District staff offer several reasons why there are not more formal evaluations of professional development. One is the lack of time. The second is inadequate resources. The third is lack of capacity. District staff say that they lack the training and expertise to conduct more formal evaluations, particularly evaluations that focus on outcomes for teachers and students.

In both the districts and at MSDE, the capacity issue has two dimensions. First, among staff there is limited knowledge and experience in evaluation and in working with evaluators to plan evaluations. Second—and this is to speculate—staff may be unfamiliar or inexperienced at specifying the theories of action that underpin the professional development that they plan and design. They are, in effect, unaccustomed to careful specification of the “fit” between various learning activities and the outcomes that they want or expect to see. Without this specification, it is difficult to plan a solid evaluation.

In the end, as with the professional development sponsored by MSDE, this discussion is not intended to suggest that local professional development is not of high quality. As the survey results show, significant numbers of teachers do participate in at least some professional development that is of high quality. At the same time, the lack of rigorous evaluations of the impact of professional development on teaching and learning makes it difficult to determine when the activities are paying returns on their investment.

District Spending on Teacher Professional Development

Overall, it is estimated that most school districts spend relatively small portions of their overall budgets on teacher professional development—often as little as 1 or 2 percent and seldom more than 7 or 8 percent. Nevertheless, as the experience of the Washington D.C.-based Finance Project¹⁵ and other organizations has shown, it is very difficult to obtain reliable information on district spending on professional development. One reason for this is that accounting systems do not usually track professional development spending as a single category. In fact, spending in this area is usually tracked and reported in many different categories. Second, although it is possible to readily obtain information about some categories, such as tuition reimbursement or stipends for participating in workshops and conferences, it may be very difficult to obtain information about spending on informal, job-embedded professional development.

In Maryland, the master planning requirements established under the *Bridge to Excellence Act* may make tracking spending on professional development easier in the future. Nonetheless, the real issue in understanding spending on professional development is to understand whether resources are being allocated for high-quality activities and whether those activities are producing the results envisioned when the resources were allocated.

¹⁵ See: *The Delivery, Financing, and Assessment of Professional Development in Education: Pre-Service Preparation and In-Service Training*. (2003). The Finance Project.

4. Introducing the New Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards

The articulation of new teacher professional development standards began at the first meeting of the Council in January 2003 and continued through June 2004. During the process, the Council reviewed research on professional development and examined numerous examples of standards that had been developed elsewhere. These included standards developed by state departments of education, school districts, reform initiatives, professional associations, and researchers.

Based on this work and its own discussions, the Council came to the following conclusions about professional development:

- There is clear and strong consensus that teacher professional development is a vital component of any effort to improve education and to eliminate gaps in student achievement.
- Professional development is most effective when it explicitly focuses on helping teachers develop the knowledge and skills they need to improve student learning.
- Professional development is not the responsibility of a single group or organization; instead responsibility and accountability for high-quality professional development is a shared endeavor.
- Effective professional development requires strong leadership in schools, districts, and at the state level.
- Effective professional development requires adequate resources, including people, money, and time, and all three of these resources are equally important.
- Effective professional development is embedded in teachers' work, often occurring as part of regular school activities and always focused on helping teachers address state, district, and school improvement priorities and solving problems associated with addressing those priorities.
- A corollary to the observation that effective professional development is embedded in teachers' work is that effective professional development takes place in the context of professional learning communities.

- Expectations that professional development is embedded in teachers' work, takes place in professional learning communities, and is a shared responsibility suggest that professional development includes a broad range of professional learning opportunities.
- Professional development standards are most useful in creating a vision of professional development and guiding planning, implementation, evaluation, and resource allocation when they are accompanied by indicators that are observable and measurable.

Although these observations and conclusions are certainly not unique to the Council, they do reflect several important and related themes that reverberate through this report and call for significant changes in current policy and practice. For example, as the Council's vision of professional development became more ambitious and complex, its members recognized that no single entity could or should assume responsibility for implementing it. Instead, they endorsed the idea that teachers, principals, district staff and leaders, MSDE, and IHEs all have responsibility for ensuring that professional development is of the highest quality.

Similarly, the Council agreed that the discourse on professional development policy and policy pertaining to resource allocation should focus on a broad range of professional learning activities, from learning informally at school to taking graduate courses and attending professional meetings.

Finally, the Council concluded that ensuring consistently high-quality professional development requires standards that go beyond mere rhetoric to include observable and measurable indicators. These indicators should be the benchmarks against which to judge and, if necessary, improve professional development.

In framing the new professional development standards, the Council devoted special attention to the standards developed by the NSDC. As noted above, beginning in 1995, the Maryland State Board of Education and a number of school districts adopted the NSDC standards. The Council reviewed both the original NSDC standards and the standards as they were revised in 2001. The new Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards reflect the key themes and some of the language of the NSDC standards. At the same time, and at the behest of the State Superintendent of Schools, the Council sought to articulate standards that explicitly reflect Maryland's goals and priorities. The Council also framed indicators to further define the standards and to provide useful benchmarks for gauging the quality of professional development.

The Council articulated nine professional development standards. Six standards define the content of professional development and three standards address critical elements of the process of teacher professional development. The

introduction to the standards document explains the critical assumptions about teacher professional development upon which the standards rest. (The full text of the standards document appears at the end of this section of the report.)

The Council transmitted a draft of the professional development standards to the State Superintendent of Schools in December 2003, along with the recommendation that she support a stakeholder engagement campaign to introduce the standards and begin soliciting feedback and building consensus around them. The recommendation was accepted, and in January 2004, the stakeholder engagement campaign got under way.

Inviting Feedback and Garnering Support for the Standards

The State Superintendent of Schools invited all of Maryland's school districts and key professional associations to convene focus groups to discuss the standards and provide feedback on them. A total of 72 focus groups met to discuss the standards and to address these five questions. The focus groups included teachers, principals and other school leaders, district staff and leaders, and faculty and staff from institutions of higher education. Most of the focus groups were organized at the district level, although a number of professional organizations and interest groups also convened focus groups.

Focus group participants were invited to respond to five questions about the draft standards and their implementation. Participants' responses to these questions are summarized here and a more extensive report on the stakeholder engagement process and the feedback from the focus groups is included as Appendix A.

Question 1

Do the standards and indicators adequately address the needs and interests of key stakeholder groups? If not, what needs and interests should be addressed more explicitly or extensively?

Most focus group participants responded positively to this question. "The value of standards is that they promote high-quality staff development for all and promote consistency across the system," one participant observed. Yet, there was clear concern that the standards and indicators did not adequately address all stakeholders equally. Respondents from across stakeholder groups indicated that the standards' concentration on teachers gave teachers too great a burden of responsibility for professional development. These respondents recommended more precisely addressing the roles of other stakeholder groups in teachers' professional development as well, especially the role of IHEs in preparing teachers and administrators to incorporate professional development into their daily activities.

Accountability and leadership were two needs that respondents indicated should be addressed more explicitly. Teachers, in particular, were concerned about accountability, asking who will be held accountable and how will they be evaluated. Principals and professional development staff agreed with teachers when they addressed the need for standards for principals, particularly as they pertain to leadership.

Question 2

Are the standards and indicators clear? If not, what needs to be clarified?

Respondents gave a mixed response to these queries. Some indicated that the standards were clear, some said the standards were clear for educators but less so for people outside education, and others cited a lack of clarity in specific areas.

Respondents reserved most of their comments, however, for the lack of models for best practices and the implementation of professional development. They clearly wanted examples of what the standards and indicators would look like when successfully implemented. “The standards are clear but exemplars would provide support during the implementation process,” said one. “The ‘how’ is here, the ‘whens’ should be delineated. Show us a guideline on how to do this,” echoed another. The lack of specific examples and guidelines on what high-quality professional development looks like in practice was a concern to all stakeholder groups.

Early in the Council’s work, members of the Achievement Initiative for Maryland’s Minority Students (AIMMS) urged the Council to add content standards and indicators pertaining to student diversity and establishing safe and secure learning environments. The Council complied, but combined these two elements into one content standard. In subsequent feedback, AIMMS members responded that combining them might potentially communicate the wrong message about the relationship between student diversity and safe schools and, as a result, the elements were divided into separate standards. The AIMMS group also recommended that the indicators for these standards reflect the AIMMS’ cultural competencies.

Focus group participants who were familiar with the NSDC standards argued for the inclusion of three standards to define the context necessary for effective professional development. Specifically, they recommended adding standards about professional learning communities, leadership, and resources. They also argued that discussing these three contextual factors in the introduction to the standards would most likely mean that they would not be addressed when planning and designing professional development. As one participant put it, “If it’s not on the test, people won’t pay any attention to it.”

Question 3

Is there adequate state and local capacity to ensure that professional development meets the new standards? What kinds of training assistance and other support are needed to develop the necessary capacity?

The overwhelming response to the first of these questions about capacity indicated that respondents clearly thought that the funds and the capability to mount the high-quality professional development that the standards entailed were lacking. While they often mentioned the need for more time and money for professional development, they identified other capacity issues as well.

Teachers, principals, and school professional development staff themselves brought the capacity of building staff to deliver professional development into the discussion. There is a huge range of capacity in that regard, they said. One teacher expressed doubt about the capacity of the people who are responsible for professional development in schools to differentiate teachers' individual professional development needs. Others around the table and across focus groups agreed that most professional development consists of broad topics that are not made relevant to the different teachers in the school. Several mentions were made of the need to identify those staff who are the most talented and capable of delivering high-quality professional development, and for MSDE to give them whatever support they need through site visits and distance-learning technology.

Respondents also said they needed training in the interpretation and use of student data, evaluation of professional development, instructional leadership, and the content areas.

Some respondents tilted the conversation toward ways to acquire the necessary resources. Several groups suggested that perhaps professional development resources were not being used efficiently, and grants and other funding might be reallocated for activities that help teachers meet the standards. Some participants suggested renegotiating teachers' union contracts to make more time for professional development and increasing inter-district cooperation so that districts can share resources.

Question 4

What do we need to stop doing to pave the way for full implementation and use of the standards?

Respondents had a long list of practices they said ought to be stopped because they would interfere with the implementation of the professional development standards. Their list included professional development programs

that focused on inconsistent priorities and were not aligned, mid-stream changes in priorities, not sticking with initiatives long enough to complete them and assess their benefits, piling initiatives atop one another, and not evaluating them adequately.

Other practices they said ought to be stopped were one-shot professional development activities that have no follow-up support, and mandating schools and teachers to implement programs simply because the funds are available to support them.

Question 5

What will MSDE, school districts, professional associations, IHEs, and other key providers do to make good on the fundamental principle that professional development is a shared responsibility?

Each of these groups, said respondents, needs to make a commitment to engage in meaningful professional development. It is important that stakeholders see the need for professional development and the value of professional development time. Such a commitment would have a common focus that would be clearly communicated to districts, along with delineated roles and responsibilities.

One respondent suggested creating blueprints or guidelines for making sure all stakeholders are involved in the decision making process.

Teachers in the focus groups made it clear that they want a say in their own professional development, and principals supported them on this issue. Teachers also want more choice of professional development activities.

Areas in which discussions of shared responsibility for professional development surfaced concerns were accountability, leadership, collaboration, and communication.

In revising the draft standards that were disseminated for review and feedback, the Council sought to strengthen the messages about (1) the importance of four contextual factors in determining the overall quality of professional development and (2) focusing the content of professional development on teacher knowledge, skills, and perspectives on student diversity and creating safe, orderly, and productive learning environments. The message about the contextual factors appears in the introduction to the standards, and the message about diversity and learning environments appears in Standard 4 (Diverse Learning Needs), Standard 5 (Supportive Environments), and Standard 6 (Family and Community Involvement). The Council also sought to address suggestions for clarifying wording and defining key terms.

The following pages contain the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards

In proposing the new standards, the Council intends them to serve as a framework to guide districts, institutions of higher education, MSDE, and other stakeholders in their efforts to improve professional development for all teachers. The Council also anticipates that as understanding and consensus about the standards increase, the framework will help all stakeholders understand and accept their responsibility for ensuring that teacher professional development is of the highest quality. Finally, as stakeholders come to understand and accept their responsibilities, the standards framework will help them find productive ways of holding themselves and each other accountable supporting, providing, and participating in high-quality professional development. The recommendations that follow in the last section of this report present the Council's vision for how these changes should occur.

Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards

Research, insights from practice, and common sense converge around the understanding that skilled teachers have a significant impact on student learning. Helping teachers develop the knowledge and skills they need begins with rigorous teacher training programs. Subsequently, effective professional development helps teachers continue enhancing their knowledge and skills throughout their careers.

Maryland's Teacher Professional Development Standards are intended to guide efforts to improve professional development for all teachers. These standards call on teachers, principals and other school leaders, district leaders and staff, the Maryland State Department of Education, institutions of higher education, and cultural institutions and organizations¹⁶ across the state to work together to ensure that professional development is of the highest quality and readily accessible to all teachers. These standards also acknowledge that teacher professional development encompasses a wide variety of learning activities. The list includes, but is certainly not limited to, teacher study groups, coaching and mentoring relationships, teacher networks, participation on school improvement teams and committees that develop curricula and assessments, workshops, and college and university courses.

When fully implemented, these standards and the related indicators can help improve the quality of professional development by:

- Providing a clear vision of high-quality professional development that recognizes local needs, priorities, and resources;
- Guiding planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating high-quality professional development, including both professional development programs and an entire professional development agenda;
- Supporting alignment of professional development with goals for improving student learning and state, district, and school policies and priorities;
- Informing allocation of resources for professional development; and
- Defining accountability for ensuring that professional development is of the highest quality and readily accessible to all teachers.

Context for High-Quality Teacher Professional Development in Maryland

The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards are derived from the National Staff Development Council's (NSDC) Standards for Staff Development.¹⁷ Like the NSDC standards, the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards

¹⁶ Cultural institutions include libraries, museums, and similar kinds of organizations.

¹⁷ The NSDC standards were developed in 1995 and revised in 2001. The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards are derived from the 2001 version of the NSDC standards.

rest on several fundamental assumptions about contextual factors that are critical to ensuring that professional development is effective.

- **Professional development is most effective when it takes place in vibrant professional learning communities.** These learning communities take various forms, but they all value ongoing learning by teachers and students. They encourage individual and collaborative experimentation, practice, and reflection. They foster collegiality and problem solving, and they emphasize continuous improvement in classrooms and schools.
- **Professional development is most effective when there are strong leaders.** These leaders recognize the value of high-quality professional development, encourage and facilitate teacher participation, and communicate about the benefits of professional development to key stakeholders (e.g., parents, school boards, county commissioners). Ideally, leadership for professional development is distributed among teachers, principals and other administrators, district staff, MSDE, and institutions of higher education, and various cultural organizations. At the same time, no single formula defines the appropriate distribution of leadership.
- **Professional development is most effective when there are adequate resources.** Resources include money, people, and time. Just as leadership should be distributed, resources (people and money) can come from a variety of sources, with no single organization or stakeholder group expected to shoulder the whole burden. Careful analysis of how time is used in school schedules, district calendars, negotiated agreements and other policy documents can lead to more time for teacher learning. All of these resources will be used most effectively when allocations are coordinated and when there is careful assessment of the returns on investments in professional development. As with leadership, no single formula defines the adequacy of resources. Instead, resources are adequate when they ensure that all teachers can study, practice, and implement the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective with their students.

The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards rest on a fourth assumption which is consistent with the NSDC definition of effective professional development.

- **Professional development is most effective when there is consensus around clear expectations for what teachers should know and be able to do to help all students learn.** These expectations are shared among all stakeholders and district and school leaders work to build understanding and consensus around them. The expectations are reflected in negotiated agreements, job descriptions and assignments, performance appraisal systems, systems of rewards and incentives for teachers, and in the design and content of teacher professional development.

In the end, the formula for effectiveness is simple: When these four elements are in place, professional development can be highly effective. When they are missing or underdeveloped, professional development will not be effective and will have limited impact on teaching and learning.

Standards and Indicators Define High-Quality Professional Development

Content Standards

Standard 1: Content Knowledge and Quality Teaching

Effective professional development deepens all teachers' content knowledge and the knowledge and skills necessary to provide effective instruction and assess student progress.

Indicators:

- 1a. Professional development includes learning experiences and resources to ensure that teachers understand how the subject(s) they teach addresses the Maryland content standards and the relationships between the subjects they teach and other subjects in the curriculum.
- 1b. Professional development provides opportunities for teachers to examine, observe, practice, and receive feedback on their use of research-based instructional strategies to help all of their students master Maryland content standards.
- 1c. Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to examine a variety of classroom assessments, practice using them in their classrooms, and analyze the results to (1) understand and report on student mastery of Maryland content standards, (2) identify gaps in student learning, and (3) adjust instruction.

Standard 2: Research-based

Effective professional development ensures that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to apply research to decision making.

Indicators:

- 2a. Professional development includes ongoing opportunities for teachers to read and reflect on current research on topics of interest to them and consistent with state and local school improvement priorities.
- 2b. Professional development may involve two-way interactions with researchers to discuss research design, data collection, analysis, and reporting to assist teachers in understanding what works, particularly in areas where there may be competing perspectives and conclusions.
- 2c. Professional development involves individual teachers or teams of teachers, often in collaboration with researchers, in action research to test their own hypotheses and to report the results about professional development program impact or the effectiveness of particular instructional strategies and programs for teachers and students.

Standard 3: Collaboration

Effective professional development ensures that teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to collaborate with others to improve instruction.

Indicators:

- 3a. Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to practice working with colleagues, including other teachers, principals, counselors, social workers, and others, and emphasizes that collaboration is a means and not an end in addressing issues related to school improvement and improved student learning.
- 3b. Professional development emphasizes constructive management of conflict and fosters understanding that disagreement and conflict are potentially beneficial elements of professional discourse.
- 3c. Professional development relies on communication technologies to broaden the scope of collaboration.

Standard 4: Diverse Learning Needs

Effective professional development ensures that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to meet the diverse learning needs of all of their students.

Indicators:

- 4a. Professional development focuses on developing teachers' understanding of and disposition to acknowledge the diversity of student learning styles and needs.
- 4b. Professional development provides opportunities for teachers to develop and demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to design and implement instructional and assessment strategies that meet diverse student learning needs and help all students master Maryland content standards.
- 4c. Professional development fosters teachers' respect for all students and guides teachers in setting and maintaining high expectations for all students to demonstrate proficiency on Maryland content standards.

Standard 5: Student Learning Environments

Effective professional development ensures that all teachers are able to create safe, secure, and supportive learning environments for all students.

Indicators:

- 5a. Professional development fosters a safe, inclusive, equitable learning community where teachers, administrators and students participate in maintaining a climate of caring and respect.
- 5b. Professional development provides opportunities for teachers to develop and practice student ownership of management routines and practice creative solutions to conflicts.
- 5c. Professional development provides opportunities for teachers to use data on student behavior such as discipline referrals, suspension information and school climate surveys to analyze and refine practices that promote optimal learning environments.

Standard 6: Family Involvement

Effective professional development ensures that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to involve families and other community members as active partners in their children's education.

Indicators:

- 6a. Professional development provides opportunities for teachers to develop and demonstrate oral and written communication skills to build partnerships with parents and community members and to communicate expectations for student mastery of Maryland content standards and success on approved national, state, and local assessments.
- 6b. Professional development fosters teachers' understanding and respect for varying cultural backgrounds of students, families, and the community and how the diversity and richness of these cultural backgrounds can serve as foundations for student learning.
- 6c. Professional development includes opportunities for teachers to master the use of technology to strengthen partnerships with families and the community.

Process Standards

Standard 7: Data-driven

Effective teacher professional development relies on rigorous analysis of data.

Indicators:

- 7a. Individuals who plan professional development have ready access to high-quality student data from various sources that are organized in user-friendly formats.
- 7b. Individuals who plan professional development have the knowledge and skills necessary to use disaggregated student data (by race, gender, English language learners, special education, and eligibility for free or reduced price meals) for planning, implementation, and evaluation of professional development and instructional programs.
- 7c. School and district schedules set aside time for teachers and others to examine student data as the starting point for planning professional development.
- 7d. Individuals who plan professional development carefully analyze a variety of disaggregated student data to identify gaps between student learning and standards for proficiency to inform the choice of the content of professional development.
- 7e. As appropriate to school and district needs, data analysis focuses on results from approved national, state, and local assessments, as well as student work samples and portfolios, and behavioral indicators such as attendance and disciplinary referrals.

Standard 8: Evaluation

Rigorous evaluations assess the impact of professional development on teaching and student learning.

Indicators:

- 8a. Individuals who plan professional development ensure that plans include adequate resources for an objective evaluation and for reporting and disseminating the results.
- 8b. Individuals who plan professional development (1) identify the kinds of evidence about teaching and student learning that will be collected and used as indicators of the success of professional development, and (2) consistent with progress benchmarks and goals, determine how and when the data will be collected and reported.
- 8c. Evaluation should also assess the impact of professional development on school culture and organization to support school improvement efforts.
- 8d. Sponsors of professional development communicate the results of evaluations to key stakeholder groups, including teachers, school and district leaders, central office staff, providers, policymakers, and parents, in a timely fashion.

Standard 9: Design and Teacher Learning

Effective professional development content and process reflect best practices in workplace learning and in-depth understanding of how and why adults learn.

Indicators:

- 9a. Professional development matches learning experiences, including the intensity and duration, with individual teacher needs, current knowledge and skills, and learning goals.
- 9b. Professional development combines a variety of learning experiences, including, but not limited to, individual study, demonstrations, observation, practice, feedback, and reflection as well as opportunities for collaboration and problem solving among colleagues.
- 9c. Professional development provides extensive follow-up, including, but not limited to, classroom demonstrations, feedback on mastery of new knowledge, feedback on demonstration of new skills, peer coaching and mentoring, and opportunities for additional study.
- 9d. Professional development relies on information technologies to provide more extensive and diverse content, and it also relies on communication technologies to expand access and participation and to create virtual professional learning communities.
- 9e. Professional development recognizes and draws on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of successful teachers by including them as leaders, facilitators, and resources in professional learning opportunities.

5. Looking Ahead: Recommendations and Opportunities for Creating a System of High-Quality Professional Development for All Teachers

The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Advisory Council recommends the creation of a statewide system of high-quality professional development to help ensure that every child in the state learns from competent, caring teachers. The Council also recommends that the Maryland State Board of Education and each of Maryland's 24 school districts adopt the *Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards* as the foundation for the system.

To support implementation and use of the standards to guide all professional development policies and practices, the Council recommends that MSDE and the districts work together to continue the stakeholder engagement campaign begun in spring 2004. Focus group feedback and other discussions about the standards make it clear that this process is critical to implementing the standards successfully. An intensive effort is needed to increase understanding of the standards and what teacher professional development will look like when they are fully implemented. To this end, the Council recommends that the stakeholder engagement campaign concentrate on:

- *The broad range of professional learning activities that count as professional development* and the importance of including all of them in discussions of professional development policy, planning, and resource allocation;
- *The particulars of the standards and indicators*, in part by providing practical illustrations and examples of what they look like in practice;
- *The importance of shared responsibility and accountability* for ensuring that professional development is of the highest quality and accessible to all teachers; and
- *The functions that the standards can and should serve* in improving teacher professional development.

Should the standards apply to all professional development all of the time? The Council believes that the standards and indicators provide a strong framework for and should be reflected in planning, implementing, and evaluating the statewide professional development system and local professional development portfolios. The Council also recognizes that individual professional development initiatives, programs, and activities will not necessarily meet all of the standards. Finally, the Council believes that individual activities should

benefit from the presence of the four contextual factors, supportive professional learning communities, strong leadership, adequate resources, and clear expectations for teachers, and that they should meet the three process standards and one or more of the content standards.

The Council's recommendations echo the Maryland Visionary Panel's recommendations in *Every Child Achieving* as well as the key provisions in the *Bridge to Excellence Act* and *NCLB*. The Council envisions a system of professional development that both supports and reflects the alignment of goals and priorities in district master plans and in MSDE's strategic plan. In this system, school improvement plans and individual teacher professional development plans reflect the priorities set in district master plans and have a laser-like focus on professional development that helps teachers address the goals and priorities for student learning outcomes. State and local policies are also aligned behind these priorities and effectively support teacher engagement in high-quality professional development.

The remainder of this section covers four broad recommendations the Council offers. The recommendations amplify the Council's recommendation to establish a standards-based system of professional development that supports state and local priorities for improving education for all students. The first three recommendations are accompanied by more specific recommendations that, taken together, provide a road map for a statewide system of teacher professional development. The Council encourages MSDE, the districts, IHEs, professional associations, and other stakeholders to give careful consideration to all of the recommendations and to work together in implementing them.

Together, the recommendations set an ambitious agenda for improving teacher professional development in Maryland. The recommendations do not call for new initiatives or for large new organizational structures because the Council has concluded that the elements of a system of high-quality professional development are already in place. The challenge is to strengthen some of the existing system elements and to bring all of them into alignment with educational improvement priorities. These recommendations also reflect the Council's fundamental belief that responsibility and accountability for high-quality professional development must be shared by Maryland's entire K-16 learning community. Finally, the recommendations are intended to focus the discourse on teacher professional development as a critical component of efforts to improve education and to encourage improvements in professional development. The recommendations call for clarity and consistency, and not for complicated or burdensome regulatory structures. Similarly, the recommendations reinforce the fundamental principle that teacher professional development is a local process that is most effective when it addresses local priorities.

Carrying out this agenda requires long-term commitments from all key stakeholders. Moreover, it requires the political and professional will to engage in

candid, tough-minded reviews of current policies and programs to identify their strengths as well as the areas that require improvement.

The Council recognizes and acknowledges that this agenda bears a substantial price tag and that it will be necessary to identify resources to support the work. At least a portion of these resources can be re-allocated from existing resources, particularly as MSDE and districts identify portions of current investments that are not paying off. At the same time, implementing these recommendations will almost certainly require new resources for professional development. The Council strongly encourages MSDE and the districts to work together to find additional resources for teacher professional development. In the short term, it will also be necessary to carefully consider the amount of staff time necessary to implement the new standards and the recommendations that follow. At first glance, it may appear easy to add this work to existing responsibilities. The Council cautions that doing so will almost certainly relegate the new standards to an insignificant afterthought in ongoing improvement initiatives.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

MSDE should contribute to the development of a statewide system of teacher professional development by ensuring that all of its policies, programs, and initiatives that address teacher professional development explicitly reflect and model the new standards and demand accountability for meeting them.

The Council encourages MSDE to consider the following recommendations for creating a statewide system of teacher professional development:

1.1: *Incorporate accountability for meeting the teacher professional development standards in the Bridge to Excellence master planning processes.*

Teacher professional development is a key cross-cutting theme in district master plans. Therefore, it will be a central focus of districts' reports on their progress in implementing those plans and in MSDE's feedback on the reports. Given the importance of the master planning process and of the master plans themselves in determining district strategies for teacher professional development, the Council encourages MSDE to work with the districts to identify ways to use the new professional development standards to define expectations for how districts present their plans for teacher professional development. The Council

also encourages MSDE to identify ways of using the standards to inform review and feedback on the plans.

The Council suggests several possibilities for following this recommendation. MSDE could review its current set of “look fors” to be sure that they explicitly address the standards and revise them accordingly if they do not. Second, MSDE could encourage districts to use the *Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development* every year to assess and review the overall quality of professional development and to identify areas for improvement in subsequent cycles of implementing the master plans. This process would parallel the review of student data to identify specific improvement targets and to set the overall direction and content of professional development.

In making this recommendation, the Council urges MSDE to work closely with the districts in setting and communicating about any changes in expectations or requirements related to the professional development components of master plans. In addition, the Council encourages MSDE to avoid unnecessary prescriptions in this area. Indeed, the criteria for any changes in expectations and requirements should only increase clarity and, to the extent possible, reduce burden on both the districts and MSDE.

1.2: *Modify the continuing professional development (CPD) credit approval process to ensure that all professional learning activities that generate CPD credits meet the new teacher professional development standards.*

This recommendation is especially important because of its potential to substantially improve the quality of local professional development activities and to increase local capacity to provide consistently high-quality professional development. The Council does *not* call on MSDE to apply the new standards retroactively to professional development activities that were previously approved. The Council does, however, encourage MSDE to establish a date on which the new process will be in place and that this be in time to be applied to proposals for activities scheduled for the 2005-2006 school year. The Council also suggests that new activities proposed under an existing course title be required to address the standards.

In making this recommendation, the Council recognizes that the current CPD approval process reflects at least some of the new professional development standards. Consequently, dismantling and replacing the current process is unnecessary. The Council does suggest substantially revising the *Continuing Professional Development Manual*, and all of the forms and procedures used in the approval process, to reflect the new professional development standards. In particular, the Council suggests eliminating the “Guiding Principles for Professional Development Experiences” and the “Suggested Guidelines for the

Design of Continuing Professional Development Experiences,” and replacing them with the new teacher professional development standards. The Council also suggests that all proposals for new activities be required to address all of the process standards and one or more of the content standards.

1.3: *Incorporate the new teacher professional development standards into all solicitations for proposals that include teacher professional development, and incorporate the standards into procedures for reviewing proposals, making funding decisions, and monitoring implementation of funded activities.*

MSDE could require applicants who seek funds for professional development programs and initiatives to indicate how their plans explicitly address the new professional development standards. For example, applicants could be asked which standards and indicators their proposals and plans address and how. Some solicitations might specify which standards and indicators should be addressed. This approach may be especially appropriate for solicitations in particular content areas. MSDE may also require all proposals to address all three of the process standards. Using the standards and indicators to review and rate proposals, make funding decisions, and monitor implementation will require new rubrics and protocols for these processes, as well as familiarizing staff with the standards and indicators and how to use them.

1.4: *Significantly increase investments in formal evaluations of MSDE teacher professional development programs and initiatives and create formal mechanisms for ongoing review of evaluation results across programs and divisions.*

As noted earlier in this report, there is little evaluation of the effects of teacher professional development on teachers’ instructional practices and student learning outcomes. As a result, there is little solid evidence of the return on investments in professional development and of which programs and initiatives are working and which ones are not.

The Council recommends that the fiscal year 2006 evaluation spending target be a minimum of 15 percent of the total expenditures for professional development, with the stipulation that 80 percent of the evaluation resources support careful measures of the impact of professional development on teacher performance and student learning. This recommendation applies to all teacher professional development activities, including activities in which teachers participate with other educators. In addition, this recommendation applies to professional development programs conducted by MSDE, as well as programs

supported with funds managed or allocated by MSDE, including federal funds that pass through MSDE.

The Council recognizes that MSDE is likely to rely on external evaluators to assist with this work. MSDE will thus be the client and audience for the evaluations. Alternatively, MSDE may want to hire external evaluators as trainers and consultants to increase current staff evaluation capacity.

1.5: *Create an internal review mechanism to ensure that all proposals and planning documents that seek external (to MSDE) support for professional development are explicitly aligned with the professional development standards.*

MSDE routinely applies for external funds (e.g., federal grants and contracts, foundation funds, corporate support) for professional development activities. To ensure that these funds support professional development of the highest quality, the Council suggests that applications clearly reflect the standards in all phases of proposed plans. Applications could, for example, pay careful attention to the three process standards and indicators as well as the appropriate professional development content standards.

MSDE could develop a template aligned with the standards to guide preparation of proposals. One of the final steps prior to submitting proposals should be a review of the plans for their alignment with the professional development standards.

1.6: *Incorporate the Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development into the annual calendar of data collection and reporting activities and coordinate the survey and reporting activities with other scheduled data collection and reporting.*

Initial experience suggests that the survey can provide useful data for MSDE and school districts. The data can inform discussions about professional development quality, identify gaps and weaknesses in current activities, and inform future plans and activities. In addition, the survey data can help districts and MSDE examine and report on progress in implementing master plans. However, to maximize their usefulness, survey data must be timely. If districts are expected to report on their master plans in August or September, the survey data should be available in late June or early July. This means that survey administration, analysis, and reporting must be completed in late spring.

As with other recommendations discussed here, it will be important for MSDE to work closely with the districts on all issues related to the continued

development and use of the survey and survey results. For example, MSDE should work with districts and its contractors to coordinate schedules to ensure maximum benefit from the survey data. In addition, depending on forthcoming federal reporting guidance, MSDE and the districts could also explore the prospect of the survey being voluntary for districts and that it be administered every two years instead of annually.

1.7: *Develop an internal system for tracking and reporting spending on professional development that meets the professional development standards.*

Currently, MSDE does not have an internal mechanism for tracking and reporting its teacher professional development spending. Divisions and programs within divisions can prepare spending reports by culling through files, but this process is time-consuming and unlikely to yield much information on the extent to which activities are of high quality, as defined by the new professional development standards.

The Council encourages the development of a short reporting template for MSDE staff to use in reporting spending on teacher professional development that meets the new standards. The template could call for (a) a brief description of the activity or program, with a clear, concise statement of the content and process standards that it meets, (b) the number of participants and a summary description of who they are, and (c) the costs of the activity or program in terms of the actual expenditures, estimates of MSDE staff time, and in-kind costs to support and facilitate participation. MSDE staff could submit the completed template as part of the planning process or at the culmination of the program or activity.

1.8: *Model the professional development standards in all planning and design activities, especially those that entail collaboration with school districts and other partners.*

MSDE can exert powerful leadership by modeling the new professional development standards in its own teacher professional development initiatives. Several current MSDE working groups and initiatives, including the Professional Development Coordinating Committee, the School Improvement Committee, the Reading First Initiative, the Governor's Academy, and the High Schools That Work Initiative, bring MSDE into close relationships with districts on issues related to teacher professional development. Therefore, these activities afford excellent opportunities for MSDE to demonstrate how the standards can and should be used to plan, coordinate, and provide high-quality professional development. This work also affords excellent opportunities for MSDE to articulate in concrete terms how responsibility for high-quality professional development can and should be shared among key stakeholders. Finally, these

efforts are excellent opportunities for MSDE to increase understanding of the standards and to build local capacity to implement them.

1.9: *Use the teacher professional development standards as a foundation for defining strategies, establishing performance measures, and setting targets for accomplishing Goal 2 (“Instruction, curriculum, and assessment will be aligned and accessible.”) and Goal 3 (“All teachers will have the skills to improve student achievement.”) of the agency’s strategic plan for the Governor’s Management for Results state government accountability initiative.*

Adhering to the professional development standards and related indicators in this way will signal the agency’s commitment to them and will help focus agency-sponsored professional development activities on the dimensions of quality. Careful internal review of annual reports on progress in meeting the targets, as well as discussions of factors that facilitate or impede meeting or exceeding the targets, will also help focus attention on the standards and build capacity for implementing and using them.

The Council notes that the internal reporting system suggested in Recommendation 1.7 could facilitate tracking progress on MSDE’s strategic plan.

Recommendation 2

District efforts to improve the quality of teacher professional development should begin with adoption of the new standards and continue with integration of the standards into all efforts to improve instruction and student learning.

Because professional development is essentially a local process, much of the responsibility for creating a statewide system of high-quality professional development will fall to the districts. In making this observation, the Council recognizes that districts can not do the job alone and that they should not be expected to. Indeed, the success of district efforts will depend—in some cases, to a great extent—on the support and assistance that districts receive from MSDE and elsewhere. The fact that much of the support can come from MSDE underscores the notion of shared responsibility for professional development. Finally, even though the Council outlines fewer recommendations for districts to consider in improving teacher professional development, the actions that MSDE takes in exercising the recommendations offered above will have a significant impact on district efforts.

2.1 *Incorporate the new teacher professional development standards into requirements and strategies for school improvement planning, implementation, and assessing progress.*

The standards offer a solid framework for school improvement teams and school leaders to use in planning professional development that supports school improvement. By incorporating the standards into planning guidance, districts can help schools and school improvement teams plan high-quality professional development and assess its impact on teacher performance and student learning. The standards can also inform the development and use of rubrics to help district staff review school plans for professional development, gauge the reasonableness of budget requests, and provide feedback on the plans to principals and school improvement teams.

2.2: *Review negotiated agreements, negotiating strategies, school and district schedules, and teacher performance appraisal systems to identify ways to (a) allocate time for professional development during the work day; (b) define engagement in high-quality professional learning as a core component of teachers' professional responsibilities; and (c) support teacher participation in high-quality professional development.*

School and district schedules, negotiated agreements, and teacher performance appraisals are three of the myriad contextual factors that can support or discourage teacher participation in high-quality professional development. The Council encourages districts to leverage these factors in ways that encourage and support teacher participation in high-quality professional development. The Council also recognizes that an essential part of any effort to pursue these opportunities for ensuring teacher participation will be to enlist the active support and influence of teachers' unions, school boards, and county commissioners in establishing appropriate policies and practices.

Districts and teachers' unions can work together to ensure that negotiated agreements clearly and explicitly recognize the importance of teacher participation in high-quality professional development. Sections of negotiated agreements that address teachers' professional responsibilities can include participation in high-quality professional development as one such professional responsibility. Sections describing the work schedule can include professional development among the scheduled activities.

The Council strongly encourages districts and schools to include time earmarked for school-based professional development on their calendars and schedules. District staff and school leaders can work together to identify and disseminate examples of these schedules.

The Council recognizes the potential benefits of setting aside professional development days during the school year. Unfortunately, the benefits that can accrue from these days can be diminished by disjointed and uncoordinated professional learning activities. To make the most of the time set aside for professional development on these days, the Council encourages district staff and school leaders to work closely to ensure that activities planned for these days meet professional development standards.

Teacher performance appraisal systems, including requirements for developing and completing individual professional development plans, can be explicitly aligned with the professional development standards. Teachers and principals can work together to ensure that the professional development activities included in these plans are of high quality and that they do not include or approve activities that do not meet the standards.

2.3: *Provide extensive induction support for all first- and second-year teachers.*

Research on teacher attrition and teacher retention consistently points to the benefits of participating in high-quality induction programs. These programs contribute to improved instruction and organizational stability. In addition, they can eliminate or substantially reduce costs associated with recruitment, selection, and additional training of new teachers. Experience and expert opinion suggest that effective induction programs focus on helping new teachers develop instructional skills. These programs also devote special attention to recruiting and training full-time mentors. Finally, ongoing formative assessment of new teachers is a key to identifying their strengths, as well as areas in which improvement is necessary.

The Council encourages districts to expand and enhance current induction programs to serve all first- and second-year teachers. The Council also encourages districts to ensure that these induction programs meet the new teacher professional development standards.

Recommendation 3

Key stakeholders should work together on five tasks necessary for establishing and maintaining a statewide system of high-quality professional development for all teachers.

These recommendations call on MSDE, districts, and IHEs to work on five tasks related to (1) ensuring effective school-level leadership for professional development; (2) reviewing the effectiveness of school-based professional development positions; (3) developing local evaluation capacity; (4) examining

the role of PDS as providers of school-centered professional development; and (5) gauging the quality of graduate courses on professional development.

3.1: *Ensure that all leadership training programs, job descriptions, performance review processes, and reward systems treat teacher professional development as a critical component of instructional leadership.*

School and district leaders play pivotal roles in teacher professional development. They create the environments in which teachers learn and take responsibility for their learning. They also secure adequate resources for teacher professional development and seek to convince parents, community members, and others that professional development is a regular part of teachers' responsibilities.

The Council encourages districts, IHEs, and MSDE to join forces to ensure that school leaders understand that facilitating and supporting teacher professional development is a critical function of their instructional leadership roles. Training and professional development designed for school and district leaders should highlight this teacher professional development component of the instructional leadership role. For example, the *Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework*, which is being developed in the MSDE Division for Leadership Development, clearly articulates the relationship between school leadership and teacher professional development. In addition, performance appraisal systems and systems of rewards and incentives for school leaders can focus on teacher professional development as a component of leadership for student achievement. It is important that principals and other school leaders be familiar with and able to use the standards to plan high-quality professional development and to create environments in which professional learning flourishes.

3.2: *Review the effectiveness and costs associated with the current array of school-based professional development positions.*

MSDE and interested districts can work together to review similarities and differences in how these positions are defined, the impact that they are having on classroom instruction and student learning, the kinds of training and other support that contribute to effectiveness, strategies for effective collaboration and coordination with principals and other school leaders, and the costs associated with these positions. The review could compare and contrast the effectiveness of these positions in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. This review and the products that it generates can yield insights about effective practice and generate models that districts can use to improve practice. Finally, this review can suggest possible options and alternatives for MSDE's role in

assisting in enhancing the capacity of school-based professional development staff, and it could suggest a possible new focus for university course work.

If key stakeholders pursue this recommendation and Recommendation 3.4, which is discussed below, the Council suggests at least informal coordination of the two efforts because both focus on school-based professional development and related investments.

3.3: *Develop local capacity to monitor and oversee evaluations of the effectiveness of teacher professional development in improving teacher performance and student learning.*

MSDE could extend its internal focus on evaluating teacher professional development to interested districts. For example, professional development and training of MSDE staff in program evaluation could include district staff. Similarly, as MSDE develops its own evaluation capacity, the agency could provide technical assistance to districts in the development of generic data collection tools, such as surveys, observation protocols, or frameworks for examining student outcomes. The primary perspective in all of this assistance should be that of district staff as clients of evaluation as well as the audience. The Council suggests only limited attention to the role of district staff in actually conducting evaluations. MSDE and districts could explore the potential benefits of identifying a pool of program evaluators who have proven track records and who can be called upon to assist districts in evaluating teacher professional development.

3.4: *Continue to examine the role of PDS as providers of school-centered professional development and institutional components of local professional development systems.*

This examination could focus on the amount and quality of teacher professional development provided by PDS, with special attention given to the similarities and differences in the professional development activities in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. Given the increased importance of and attention to school-based professional development staff, this review could yield insights about the coordination of these roles and the persons who occupy them. Finally, this review could examine the extent to which the current PDS capacity could be expanded to meet more teacher professional development needs in PDS and other schools. Any consideration of expanding capacity should rest on careful analysis of additional resource needs and the opportunity costs for schools, university faculty, and districts. The Council suggests that any review of the quality and impact of professional development in PDS should be informed by both the standards and expectations set for the PDS and the new teacher professional development standards.

One starting point for examining the role and contributions of PDS could be a review of the forthcoming (late-December) report on professional development in PDS that is being prepared by the MSDE Division of Certification and Accreditation for the Maryland K-16 Council. This report will provide extensive quantitative data on professional development in PDS across the state.

As suggested above, under Recommendation 3.2, a review of PDS and a review of the roles of school-based professional development can both benefit from an informal coordination of the two activities.

3.5: *Develop and pilot test approaches to gauging the quality of graduate courses as teacher professional development.*

The Council proposes that a small number of IHEs and school districts jointly develop procedures for using the new teacher professional development standards to review selected graduate courses as professional development. Ideally, the review process would examine course content and learning opportunities, including feedback and assessment of mastery of new knowledge and skills, to identify current strengths. The process could focus on a sample of courses typically taken by teachers who intend to upgrade their skills and remain in the profession. The process could also identify gaps in quality and ways of closing them, with particular attention to the extent to which IHEs and districts can share responsibility for closing the gaps. For example, if the initial review indicates that there is little follow-up support for teachers after they complete graduate courses, how can districts and IHE faculty work together to ensure that such support is available? This review will almost certainly need to identify ways of striking a viable balance between preserving IHE faculty autonomy in establishing content and defining content in ways that explicitly address K-12 priorities.

Recommendation 4

The State Superintendent of Schools should institutionalize the Professional Development Advisory Council as a standing advisory group.

The Council could be charged with the responsibility of reporting to the State Superintendent of Schools and key stakeholder groups on the progress and challenges of implementing the new teacher professional development standards and, more generally, on the statewide state of the art in teacher professional development. The Council could also offer recommendations for state and local teacher professional development policy and program initiatives. Finally, the Council could work with MSDE, districts, and IHEs to develop and monitor a five-year plan for implementing the new professional development standards.

The current Council *does not* recommend that such a plan would be binding, but rather that it provide a framework for collaboration on the statewide professional development system.

The Council also suggests that about half of the current members be retained for one year, with new members appointed for two-year terms. This would ensure regular inclusion of new members and new perspectives. Leadership responsibilities should be shared by MSDE, the K-12 system, and higher education, possibly on an annual rotation.

APPENDIX A

What Stakeholders Say About the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards

**WHAT STAKEHOLDERS SAY ABOUT
THE MARYLAND TEACHER PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

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August 2004

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What Stakeholders Say About the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards

In December 2003, after 12 months of work, the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Advisory Council (PDAC) submitted a set of new teacher professional development standards to the Maryland State Superintendent of Schools. The Council also recommended that the State Superintendent initiate a stakeholder engagement campaign to inform educators about the standards and solicit their feedback.

As part of this campaign, in March, 2004, the State Superintendent of Schools invited all of Maryland's school districts and key professional associations to convene focus groups of key stakeholders to discuss the new standards. To facilitate focus group discussions, staff of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) worked with the PDAC to prepare an information packet with the draft standards, a PowerPoint presentation about the standards, a set of questions and answers to provide additional information, and suggestions for conducting focus groups and reporting the results. The PowerPoint presentation featured a video with comments on the standards from the State Superintendent of Schools on the importance of the effort.

By the beginning of June, 2004, 72 focus groups had met. They included over 900 teachers, principals and other school leaders, district staff and leaders, and faculty and staff from institutions of higher education.¹⁸ Most of the focus groups were organized at the district level, although a number of professional organizations and interest groups also convened focus groups. (For a breakdown of participants by stakeholder group and additional information about how focus group results were compiled, see Attachment A.)

The focus groups addressed five questions:

- Do the standards and indicators adequately address the needs and interests of key stakeholder groups? If not, what needs and interests should be addressed more explicitly or extensively?
- Are the standards and indicators clear? If not, what needs to be clarified?
- Is there adequate state and local capacity to ensure that professional development meets the new standards? What kinds of training, assistance and other support are needed to develop the necessary capacity?

¹⁸ Of the 68 focus groups that submitted reports, information about the total number of members of those groups was known for only 52 of them. The remaining 16 groups did not indicate how many people attended the session.

- What do we need to stop doing to pave the way for full implementation and use of the standards?
- What will the Maryland State Department of Education, school districts, professional associations, and institutions of higher education and other key providers do to make good on the fundamental principle that professional development is a shared responsibility?

Overall, key stakeholders welcomed the new standards as an important and positive step in improving the quality of teacher professional development. They also offered a number of suggestions for presenting the standards and raised some important questions and concerns about using the standards to ensure high-quality professional development for teachers. This report synthesizes their comments.

Question 1

Do the standards and indicators adequately address the needs and interests of key stakeholder groups? If not, what needs and interests should be addressed more explicitly or extensively?

Most focus group participants responded positively to this question. “The value of standards is that they promote high-quality staff development for all and promote consistency across the system,” one participant observed. This participant recognized the standard as data driven, including evaluation, designed for adult learners, research-based, promoting collaboration among colleagues, aiming for excellence, and addressing the needs of stakeholder groups.

Yet, there was clear concern that the standards’ and indicators did not adequately address all stakeholders equally. Many respondents indicated that the standards’ concentration on teachers gave teachers too much burden of responsibility for professional development. These respondents recommended more precisely addressing the roles of other stakeholder groups in teachers’ professional development as well, especially the role of institutions of higher education in preparing teachers and administrators to incorporate professional development into their daily activities. Said one participant, “[The standards address] the needs and interest of teachers, students, parents, local systems, but not the critical role of higher education in initial teacher preparation.” Another respondent called the exclusion of the higher education “the notable exception.”

Others in the groups said that, in addition to the role of higher education in professional development, the roles of administrators, parents, students, the community, and local businesses as stakeholders needed to be clarified. “It seems

that the other stakeholder groups need to be sure they are applying the standards when developing professional development opportunities for teachers,” a participant observed.

Accountability and leadership were two needs that respondents indicated should be addressed more explicitly. Teachers, in particular, were concerned about accountability, and asked who will be held accountable and how will they be evaluated. Teachers also drew agreement from principals and professional development staff when they addressed the need for standards for principals, particularly as they pertain to leadership. A principal remarked, “The standards assume that leadership is already developed. This is more focused on teachers. Should the standards be broader?” Some participants commented that the standards should address leadership directly.

The inclusion of family involvement in the standards contributed to some confusion among some focus group members. A principal commented that including parents as stakeholders make the standards unclear for the parent community. Another principal asked why family involvement was under content standards. Some teachers recommended eliminating Standard 8 entirely, and addressing parents and community as critical stakeholders. Others indicated that Standard 8C needs to include the use of other forms of communication.

Additional comments:

- Yes, the standards and indicators are very specific. Not only do standards rely on disaggregated data to inform planning, but also the quality of professional development will be assured as standards and indicators are implemented.
- No, learning communities, leadership, and resources are not addressed.
- Standards are adequate, implementation is the question.
- The standards could better address the needs of each stakeholder group that they explicitly included—principals, instructional leaders, and paraprofessionals, and when appropriate, parents.
- Needs and interests are adequately addressed. The question is whether adequate resources are available to ensure that all stakeholders, teachers especially, have the time to internalize and implement the laudable goals outlined in the document.

Question 2

Are the standards and indicators clear? If not, what needs to be clarified?

Focus group respondents gave a mixed response to these queries. Some indicated that the standards were clear, some said the standards were clear for educators but less so for people outside the education arena, and others cited a lack of clarity in specific areas. They sought definitions to terms such as “adult learning theory,” “capacity,” “high quality,” “learning communities,” and “school culture,” among others, and suggested including a glossary to explain specific words. They also questioned the effectiveness of the format of the document in which the standards appeared and their overall length, suggesting that the professional development standards of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) perhaps offered a better model. One respondent, a school-based professional staff, said it was unclear how many indicators needed to be met in order for the standards to be satisfactorily met.

Respondents reserved most of their comments, however, for the lack of models for best practices and the implementation of professional development. They clearly wanted examples of what the standards and indicators would look like when successfully implemented. “The standards are clear but exemplars would provide support during the implementation process,” said one. “The ‘how’ is here, the ‘when’ should be delineated. Show us a guideline on how to do this,” echoed another. The lack of specific examples and guidelines on how high-quality professional development looks like in practice was a concern to all stakeholder groups.

In an early focus group, participants in the Achievement Initiative for Maryland’s Minority Students (AIMMS) urged the PDAC to add content standards and indicators pertaining to student diversity and establishing safe and secure learning environments. The PDAC complied, but combined these two elements into one content standard. AIMMS participants responded that combining them had the potential of communicating the wrong message about the relationship between student diversity and safe schools and, as a result, the two elements were separated into separate standards. The AIMMS group also recommended that the indicators for these standards reflect AIMMS standards for quality teaching.

Focus group participants who were familiar with the NSDC standards argued for the inclusion of three standards to define the context that is necessary for effective professional development. Specifically, they recommended adding standards about professional learning communities, leadership, and resources. They also argued that discussing these three contextual factors in the introduction to the standards would most likely mean that they would not be addressed in

planning and designing professional development. As one participant put it, “If it’s not on the test, people won’t pay any attention to it.”

Additional comments:

- Limit the number of indicators, as some repeat or overlap with other standards.
- Too long
- Too wordy
- Keywords need to be more prominent
- Use a graphic organizer to show the relationships among the standards

Question 3

Is there adequate state and local capacity to ensure that professional development meets the new standards? What kinds of training assistance and other support are needed to develop the necessary capacity?

The overwhelming response to the first of these questions about capacity indicated that respondents clearly thought that the funds and the capability to mount the high-quality professional development that the standards entailed were lacking. While they often mentioned the need for more time and money for professional development, they identified other capacity issues as well.

Teachers, principals, and school professional development staff themselves brought the capacity of building staff to deliver professional development into the discussion. There is a huge range of capacity in that regard, they said. It’s wrong to assume that presenting information to individuals provides them the tools to train others, a central office staff added.

One teacher expressed doubt about the capacity of the people who are responsible for professional development in schools to differentiate professional development among teachers’ individual needs. Others around the table and across focus groups agreed that most professional development consists of broad topics that are not made relevant to the different teachers in the school. Both professional development policies as well as the skills of professional development staff need to be flexible enough for everyone to have different professional development.

A school-based professional development specialist, mentioned being unsure of the kind of training was needed to implement the standards, but support from MSDE will be a must when needs arise. Several mentions were made of the need to identify staff who are most talented and capable of delivering high-quality professional development and MSDE giving them whatever support they need through site visits and distance learning technology.

Respondents said they needed training assistance in the interpretation and use of student data, evaluation of professional development, instructional leadership, and the content areas.

Concerns about state and local capacity to mount professional development to meet the new standards were widespread across nearly all the focus groups. Nonetheless, some respondents tilted the conversation toward ways to acquire the necessary resources. Several groups suggested that perhaps professional development resources were not being used in the most efficient manner, and grants and other funding might be reallocated for activities that help teachers meet the standards. “MSDE should coordinate the professional development and technical assistance they provide,” commented one focus group member. “Sometimes there are too many different initiatives taking place in the same LSS or even the same school, and MSDE is unaware of the overlap.” Some participants suggested renegotiating teachers’ union contracts to make more time for professional development and increasing inter-district cooperation so that districts can share resources.

Additional comments:

- Conduct more consistent assessments of professional development needs across the systems and from school to school.
- Conducting professional development activities after school, evenings, or weekends weakens teachers’ access to it. Teachers are tired. Professional development activities should take place Monday through Friday from 8 to 4.
- All levels of the education community need technical assistance in linking data research to the classroom and understanding how to interpret it.
- Beginning teachers need additional time during the school day to meet the standards.
- Buy substitute time for study groups and in-depth study of initiatives.

- Evaluation may need to involve others, such as the Office of Research and Development, to create tools and synthesize data.
- We need support in creating a calendar/school year that supports professional learning.
- Time could be saved if county plans were developed and personalized at each school.
- Using technology can make professional development more efficient.

Question 4

What do we need to stop doing to pave the way for full implementation and use of the standards?

Respondents had a long list of practices they said ought to be stopped because they would interfere with the implementation of the professional development standards. . Their list included professional development programs that focused on inconsistent priorities and were not aligned, mid-stream changes in priorities, not sticking with initiatives long enough to complete them and assess their benefits, piling initiatives atop one another, and not evaluating them adequately.

A representative of a professional organization summed it up succinctly by saying, “Stop moving the target.” “And, one principal expressed it, “We continue to pave over past practices and initiatives. We need to abandon or haul away outdated and ineffective approaches before implementing new practices.”

Other practices they said ought to be stopped were one-shot professional development activities that have no follow-up support, and mandating schools and teachers to implement programs simply because the funds are available to support them.

Additional comments:

- Stop making professional development irrelevant
- Stop professional development just for the sake of professional development
- Stop reinventing the wheel.

- Stop talking about it and start doing it and implementing the results of the research.
- Stop constant revision of instructional standards.
- Stop implementing without accountability and an evaluation plan.
- Stop one size fits all. Each teacher has a different need.

Question 5

What will the Maryland State Department of Education, school districts, professional associations, and institutions of higher education and other key providers do to make good on the fundamental principle that professional development is a shared responsibility?

Each of these groups, said respondents, needs to make a commitment to engage in meaningful professional development. It is important that stakeholders see the need for professional development and the value of professional development time. Such a commitment would have a common focus that would be clearly communicated to LEAs, along with delineated roles and responsibilities.

One respondent suggested creating blueprints or guidelines for making sure all stakeholders are involved in the decision making process.

Teachers in the focus groups made it clear that they want a say in their own professional development and principals supported them on this issue. Teachers also want more choice of professional development activities. A school-based professional development staff suggested that teachers should be able to follow up their professional development activities by contacting the professional developers with questions or for advice.

Areas where discussions of shared responsibility for professional development surfaced concerns were accountability, leadership, collaboration, and communication.

Additional comments:

- MSDE should be the expert and operate all of the train-the-trainer programs. The focus ought to be on content driven professional development and not on show-and-tell products or theory.

- Make sure all of the stakeholders attend professional development, offer credit hours, and some type of motivator and reward. Take attendance. Schools should come up with their own staff incentives.
- Plan professional development topics in advance to coordinate it among stakeholders.
- We need to make sure that everyone is communicating the same message and that everyone is being held accountable. The development of statewide “milestones” may assist in collecting more data.
- Develop partnerships and enhance those that exist between locals and higher education.
- Central office needs to provide principals some flexibility in scheduling so professional development activities can be scheduled to meet the constraints of time in individual buildings.
- In particular, the higher education link is key to this partnership, and I do not think we have “cracked the nut” on how to make K-16 planning a reality.

Attachment A

Information on Focus Groups and Data Analysis

Focus groups, organized by school districts, but occasionally by professional organizations and others, met over a period of 6 months across Maryland to respond and react to Maryland's standards for teachers' professional development.

Focus Group Participants

As of June 7, 2004, 68 focus groups had met, representing six stakeholder groups, and reported their responses. The breakdown among these respondents by role group was:

- Principals—12 groups
- Teachers—14 groups
- Professional Organizations—14 groups
- Central Office Staff—14 groups
- School-Based Professional Development Staff (13 groups)
- Students—1 group
- Faculty and Staff of Institutions of Higher Education—3 groups

Overall, an estimated 900 educators participated in the focus groups. Participation was voluntary, with individual focus groups conducted in a variety of ways. Therefore, the groups and the feedback that they provided can not be viewed as representing the views of all educators. Nevertheless, a large number of educators from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives reviewed the draft standards and provided their feedback.

Data Analysis

Upon receiving each focus group's responses, analysts read the responses and coded each by key word, tallying the responses for each key word. Different procedures for recording focus group comments made inconsistent data collection inevitable. As a result, giving meaning to the actual number of responses per key word was impossible.

Analysts then compiled the key words into nine main issues and linked the issues to one of the five questions, writing a summary for each. Analysts also selected comments pertaining to each main issue and noted the stakeholder group from which it originated.

Numbers were reported to give a general sense of how often an issue appeared in responses, not to indicate an exact number of respondents who expressed that thought. Some interpretation of comments was also required in assigning key words and issues.



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