

**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for School Improvement
Maryland State Department of Education and Baltimore City Public Schools**

I. Background

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is committed to collaborating with local school systems to provide customized support for school improvement. In 2014, MSDE established the Breakthrough Center to coordinate cross-divisional support to low-achieving public schools. In 2017, MSDE reorganized several of its offices to provide services to staff in local school systems in a more effective manner. The Office of Teacher/Principal Evaluation and the Breakthrough Center were dissolved and in their place the Office of Leadership Development and School Improvement was established. The formation of this office allows for targeted and tiered support to improve low-performing schools, with a focus on priority schools.

For the 2016-2017 school year, Maryland identified 24 priority schools. The same priority schools have been identified for support for the 2017-2018 school year. Priority schools are the lowest performing 5% of all Title I schools; and/or have graduation rates below 67%; or are schools that receive Title I school improvement funds under Section 1003g (SIG). Baltimore City Public Schools represent approximately 87% of priority schools in Maryland. MSDE is proposing a partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools to support the identification and implementation of evidence-based strategies aimed at improving student academic performance in priority schools. Through this partnership, MSDE and Baltimore City Public Schools will collaborate to align and leverage resources that will provide targeted support to Baltimore City's priority schools for the 2017-2018 school year.

II. Scope of Work

MSDE uses West Ed's *Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement (2017)* as a framework for school improvement. The four domains include turnaround leadership, talent development, instructional transformation, and culture shift. All support provided by MSDE to priority schools will align with the four domains. Specific support is outlined below.

Turnaround Leadership and Talent Development:

Creating a shared leadership structure within a school and providing focused professional learning experiences can help school improvement goals become a reality. As a result, MSDE will collaborate with Baltimore City Public Schools to provide targeted professional learning experiences for principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders in priority schools. The Priority Principals Program, Promising Principals Academy, and Aspiring Leaders Institute are vertically aligned job-embedded professional learning experiences that foster the growth of effective leaders. Through these programs, a shared leadership structure can be created within a school building to support school improvement efforts. MSDE will collaborate with Baltimore City Public Schools to align program content with school improvement goals. The table on the next page provides a summary of proposed professional learning experiences for leaders in priority schools.

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Name of Professional Learning Experience	Participants	Brief Description
Priority Principals Program	One principal from each priority school	The Priority Principals Program provides support to current school principals in identifying and implementing evidence-based strategies for school improvement. Experienced leadership coaches will be provided to each principal. Priority school principals will form a professional learning community and participate in learning experiences designed to equip them with the skills and knowledge to successfully improve school performance.
Promising Principals Academy	One to two assistant principals and/or teacher leaders from each priority school	Low-performing schools traditionally have a high turnover rate of leadership. The Promising Principal Academy seeks to withstand changes in leadership by preparing the next generation of school leaders. Participants will participate in a series of professional learning experiences designed to equip them with the skills and knowledge to lead school improvement in low-performing schools.
Aspiring Leaders	One to two teacher leaders from each priority school	Aspiring Leaders Institute participants complete a year-long school turnaround project under the guidance of an experienced mentor. The turnaround project is collaboratively selected to address specific school improvement needs.

Instructional Transformation:

Improvement in student learning outcomes is grounded in effective curriculum and instruction. MSDE's English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics content specialists will collaborate with Baltimore City's central office staff in the development and facilitation of professional learning experiences focused on effective implementation of Maryland's College and Career Ready Standards. MSDE will leverage ELA, mathematics, special education, and early childhood specialists to provide on-site and virtual support to educators in priority schools and central office staff. MSDE staff will also review, as necessary, curricular materials to ensure alignment to Maryland's College and Career Ready Standards.

Culture Shift:

As needed, MSDE will leverage specialists to provide support to address specific school culture and climate needs.

Monitoring Progress:

MSDE in collaboration with Baltimore City's central office staff and school administration will continue the current monitoring process which includes but is not limited to central support team meetings, learning walks with documented feedback, school visits, and virtual support. MSDE will also continue the current process for focused and general supervision for special education compliance and performance results.

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III. Funding:

Priority schools receive Title I funds. MSDE will continue to collaborate with Baltimore City's central office staff and school leaders to align the allocation of Title I funds to support school improvement strategies identified in the approved needs. In addition to Title I funds, MSDE will leverage operational and grant funds to support the following:

- MSDE facilitated professional learning experiences for school leaders (teacher leaders, assistant principals, and principals) and educators;
- MSDE leadership coaches for priority school principals;
- MSDE specialists for instructional support in ELA, mathematics, special education, and early childhood; and
- MSDE content specialist to address school culture and climate needs.

IV. Deliverables and Timelines

Month and Year	Key Deliverables All deliverables will be coordinated through collaboration among MSDE's Office of Leadership Development and School Improvement, Baltimore City's central office staff, and priority school leadership teams.
August 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Title I needs assessment in priority schools. • Develop individualized school improvement plans based on prioritized needs. • Establish monthly benchmarks to assess progress towards meeting identified goals. • Identify and coordinate necessary resources to support school improvement goals. • Vet English Language Arts and mathematics curriculum to ensure alignment to Maryland's College and Career Ready Standards. • Align professional learning experiences and resources with identified goals.
August 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene leadership teams from priority schools to review data and begin school improvement planning.
September 2017 – June 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders in professional learning experiences that align with school improvement goals. • Conduct monthly learning walks and data analysis sessions to monitor progress toward meeting established benchmarks. Revisions to school improvement plans will be made based on collected data. • Conduct quarterly fiscal review.
June 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief and reflect on areas of promise and opportunities for growth.

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MSDE Responsibilities

1. MSDE will commit human, fiscal, and material resources to the implementation of the MOU.
2. The Office of Leadership Development and School Improvement (OLDSI) will collaborate with Baltimore City Public Schools to complete all identified deliverables.
3. OLDSI will serve as a liaison between Baltimore City Public Schools and other Divisions within MSDE to identify available resources that support implementation of school improvement strategies.
4. OLDSI will collaborate with Baltimore City Public Schools to establish measurable milestones and monitor progress towards meeting identified goals.

Baltimore City Public Schools Responsibilities

1. Baltimore City Public Schools will commit human, fiscal, and material resources to the implementation of the MOU.
2. Baltimore City Public Schools will collaborate with OLDSI to complete all identified deliverables. A single point of contact will be identified to coordinate support for deliverable completion.
3. Baltimore City Public Schools will require that appropriate personnel meet expectations for participation, cooperation, and attendance in all sponsored professional learning experiences related to or included in this MOU.
4. Baltimore City Public Schools will reduce transience of leadership and teachers within priority schools to ensure consistency in building cohort capacity.
5. Baltimore City Public Schools will analyze, in collaboration with MSDE, vendor support and analogous MSDE support to determine and address areas of redundancy.
6. Baltimore City Public Schools will collaborate with OLDSI to establish measurable milestones and monitor progress toward meeting identified goals.

Modification and Termination

Any and all amendments to this agreement must be made in writing and must be agreed to and executed by all parties before becoming effective.

Effective Date and Signature

This MOU shall be effective upon the signature of the State Superintendent of Schools, Chief Executive Officer for Baltimore City Public Schools, and Maryland Attorney General. The MOU will begin in August 2017 and will terminate in July 2018.

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Signatures and Date



**Dr. Karen Salmon
State Superintendent of Schools**

8/16/17


Date



**Dr. Sonja Santelises
Chief Executive Officer of Baltimore City Public Schools**

9/4/17

Date



**Approved for Legal Sufficiency
Maryland Attorney General**

8/11/17

Date