



## **MSDE BULLETIN**

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### **WORK CONTINUES TO IMPROVE EDUCATION FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS**

Achievement among African-American male students continues to improve in Maryland, but it lags behind most other demographic groups. With that in mind, the Maryland State Board of Education last week took steps to widen the distribution the State's landmark publication, "Report of the Task Force on the Education of Maryland's African-American Males."

The report, first accepted by Maryland's PreK-16 Leadership Council one year ago, set down a list of priorities for educators and policymakers to work toward, such as bringing more highly skilled, culturally competent teachers into the classroom; improving academic standards; and providing the type of in-school support that will lead to success.

State Board President Dunbar Brooks, co-chair of the task force, said that the Maryland Higher Education Commission, University System of Maryland, and MSDE have their work cut out for them.

"This is an aircraft carrier we are trying to turn," Brooks told State Board members last week, reviewing the progress made since the report was completed.

"This isn't about rich or poor," he added. "This is about the African-American community. We need strategies that address the entire community."

The task force launched its work in June 2003 at the request of the PreK-16 Council. The group was charged with evaluating the state's progress in addressing persistent academic achievement problems among African-American males. Meeting over a two-year period, the task force developed its recommendations and ultimately presented an unpublished version of the report to the State Board in December 2006.

The PreK-16 Leadership Council charged a committee with developing an action plan to address the recommendations contained in the report. The action plan is scheduled to be submitted to the new P-20 Leadership Council next month.



**State Board President Dunbar Brooks (left) and Vice President Beverly Cooper review the Task Force report.**

State Board members last week said that educators must not let the report's recommendations lose momentum.

Board member Karabelle Pizzigati said the report needs to be on the agendas of local school boards. "This is a big conversation and it is everybody's business," she said. "But if it is everybody's business, it could become nobody's business. There needs to be a strategic plan of action." ■

### **STATE BOARD APPROVES RESTRUCTURING PLANS FOR SCHOOLS IN THREE SYSTEMS**

The Maryland State Board of Education last week approved restructuring plans for nine underperforming schools spread among three systems. Alternative governance plans were accepted for schools in Baltimore County, Harford County, and Prince George's County.

Landsdowne Middle, Southwest Academy, and Woodlawn High in Baltimore County all chose the school staff replacement option, as did Benjamin Stoddert Middle, Ernest Everett Just Middle, Largo High, Oxon Hill Elementary, and Oxon Hill Middle in Prince George's County. System officials plan to replace teachers not considered "highly qualified" under federal guidelines.

Baltimore County Superintendent Joe A. Hairston said the restructuring plans have taken shape with input from the school community and an eye on achieving long-term, positive results for those schools. Successful restructuring, he said, begins with putting strong leaders and strong teachers in the schools.

**(more)**



**Baltimore County Superintendent Joe A. Hairston (left) and Assistant Superintendent Manuel Rodriguez present restructuring plans to the Maryland State Board of Education.**

### **STATE BOARD APPROVES RESTRUCTURING FOR SCHOOLS IN THREE SYSTEMS (Cont.)**

“You have to look at the needs of the school and find the people who are able to do the job,” Dr. Hairston explained. “We have been able to do that.”

Assistant Superintendent Manuel Rodriguez said the schools in question suffered from too many inexperienced teachers, high turnover, and low expectations of students. The restructuring plan is designed to alter the culture at the struggling schools.

Prince George’s CEO John Deasy said his system has had a great deal of recent success in attracting top teachers to struggling schools.

“[Prince George’s County] is the place to be if you want to work in a rapidly improving urban system,” Dr. Deasy explained. “We have been able to attract a more experienced teaching corps.”

Harford County opted to replace the principal of its school undergoing restructuring. Edgewood Middle School will appoint a distinguished principal from a successful school to build on the middle school’s progress.

The county has gone to great lengths to engage the community in improving the school, according to Harford County Superintendent Jacqueline Haas. The Alternative Governance Board in the county conducted extensive research, involved staff in identifying causes for the academic difficulties and in suggesting solutions, and worked with the community to devise the plan.

State board members closely reviewed the system plans before voting on the restructuring proposals. Many board members lauded the work local systems had gone through to develop their plans. Board member David Tufaro said the efforts gave the State reason for optimism. ■

### ***Honoring a National Award Winner***



**Rocco Aiello (center), a St. Mary’s County physical education teacher, has been named the National Adapted Physical Education Teacher of the Year. Aiello, flanked by Assistant State Superintendent for Instruction Colleen Seremet and Mike Mason, MSDE specialist in physical education, was honored by the State Board for his national award. An adaptive physical educator is an individual assigned at least 50 percent of his or her teaching responsibility in providing services to individuals with disabilities. ■**

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