

GOAL 5: All students will graduate from high school.

Indicator 5.1: The percentage of students who graduate from high school each year with a regular diploma.

Table 5.1: Percentage of Students Graduating From High School				
Subgroup	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
<i>Annual Measurable Objective (AMO):</i>	80.99%	80.99%	83.24%	83.24%
All students (Counts toward AYP)	76.9	73.8	81.8	72.91
American Indian/Alaskan Native	-----	-----	----	-----
Asian/Pacific Islander	-----	-----	----	*
African American	73.3	74.0	82.6	76.92
White (Not of Hispanic Origin)	79.8	74.3	80.8	69.44
Hispanic	-----	-----	-----	*
Free/Reduced Meals (FARMS)	77.0	74.5	72.6	66.67
Special Education	72.2	76.2	61.5	47.06
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	-----	-----	-----	-----
Male	69.4	65.4	76.9	62.0
Female	82.7	82.2	86.6	83.5

Graduation Rate Trend Data by School

	2003	2004	2005	2006
CHS – ALL	82.19	76.19	78.82	67.09
CHS – Sp Ed	90.00 (10)	66.67 (9)	66.67 (6)	25.00 (8)
WHS – All	73.77	72.31	83.70	76.61
WHS – Sp Ed	50.00 (8)	83.33 (12)	57.14 (7)	66.67 (9)
SCPS – All	76.9	73.8	81.8	72.91
SCPS – Sp Ed	72.2	76.2	61.5	47.1

GOAL 5 (continued): All students will graduate from high school.

Indicator 5.2: The percentage of students who drop out of school.

Table 5.2: Percentage of Students Dropping Out of School				
Subgroup	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
<i>State satisfactory standard:</i>	<i>3.00%</i>	<i>3.00%</i>	<i>3.00%</i>	<i>3.00%</i>
All students	5.62	5.13	5.36	7.27
American Indian/Alaskan Native	*	-----	-----	*
Asian/Pacific Islander	20.0	0.0	6.67	0.0
African American	5.96	2.67	3.64	7.16
White (Not of Hispanic Origin)	5.26	7.43	6.55	7.79
Hispanic	0.0	0.0	14.29	0.0
Free/Reduced Meals (FARMS)	6.37	5.76	5.84	9.03
Special Education	1.92	6.65	12.93	15.22
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	0.0	*	*	*
Male	7.71	6.41	7.98	9.80
Female	3.72	3.91	2.81	4.87

Drop Out Rate Trend Data by School

	2003	2004	2005	2006
CHS – ALL	6.70	8.29	5.76	5.90
CHS – Sp Ed	4.26	10.00	19.51	18.75
WHS – All	4.74	3.05	4.99	7.99
WHS – Sp Ed	0.00	4.17	90.09	13.19
SCPS – All	5.62	4.13	5.36	7.27
SCPS- Sp Ed	1.92	6.56	12.93	15.22

Special Education vs Regular Education

	Drop Out Rate			Graduation Rate		
	Sp. Ed	Reg. Ed	All Students	Sp. Ed	Reg. Ed	All Students
CHS	18.75	3.78	5.90	25.00	71.83	67.09
WHS	13.19	7.04	7.99	66.67	77.39	76.61
SCPS	15.22	5.87	7.27	47.06	75.27	72.91

1. PROGRESS IN MOVING TOWARD INCREASING THE GRADUATION RATE:

A. The graduation rate for Somerset County Public Schools has decreased.

The graduation rate has declined as an aggregate measure and for every subgroup with a 2006 rate of 72.91%. This measure is 3.99% decrease from 2003 and an 8.89% decrease from last year. A comparison of the two county's high schools shows one in a steady decline over the last four years slipping from 82.19% in 2003 to 67.09% in 2006. The larger high school of the two has moved from 73.77% to 76.61% over that same period. The disparity between the two schools of nearly 10% is cut in half when removing the Special Education students' graduation rate from the all students' percentages and comparing only the Regular Education students' rate.

In reviewing the subgroup graduation rates more closely, two groups stand out. While also declining from last year's rate, females as a group exceeded to AMO for graduation, posting an 83.5%. Among the NCLB subgroups, African Americans posted the highest subgroup graduation rate at 76.92%. The Special Education subgroup lost the greatest ground this year with a graduation rate of less than 50% and 14.44% below last year's rate and stands as the lowest performing group. A closer look at Special Education students' graduation rate trends, sporadic percentages fill the chart subject to the severe swings of small numbers. One of the two schools posted a Special Education graduation rate of 25%, 8 out of 32 special education students entering 9th Grade in 2002 were successfully graduated.

B. The drop out rate for Somerset County Public Schools has increased.

The drop out rate for the 2005-2006 year exceeds the state standard by 4.27% and has increased for every subgroup. The aggregate percentage increased for 2005-2006 by nearly 2%, moving from 5.36% in 04-05 to 7.27% in 05-06.

The drop out percentages range in subgroups from the low of 4.87% for the female subgroup to a high of 15.22% for the special education subgroup. White students are dropping out at a greater rate than the population as a whole. Boys are dropping out at twice the rate of girls and special education students are dropping out more than twice as much as the regular education students. African American students and FARMS students lost the greatest amount of ground with each group posting greater than a 3% increase in drop out rates.

In comparing the two high schools of the county, the school with the substantially lower graduation rate has the lower drop out rate while the school with the stronger graduation rate suffers the greater percentage of drop outs and is posting a 3% higher than a rate over the past 4 years.

Tracking each student who entered the Ninth Grade in 2002, reveals the following information:

Category	%HS #1	%HS #2
Students who Completed all four years at one site*	59%	41%
Students who Remain in School	6%	5%
Students who Transferred	22%	26%
Students who Dropped Out and Earned GED	1%	8%
Students who Dropped Out to Work	9%	12%
Students who are Incarcerated	1%	5%
Students who Dropped Out for Other Reasons	2%	3%

*This number does not include students who transferred into the school after September 30, 2002 and graduated in four years.

2. IDENTIFY PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, OR STRATEGIES AND RELATED RESOURCES

A. Somerset County Public School students in the graduating class of 2006 have been the beneficiaries of a GEAR UP program.

Considerable resources were vested in the Class of 2006 from the point of their entry into secondary education, Grade 6. These students benefited from a full time coordinator who facilitated a partnership with Salisbury University, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, and Wor-Wic Community College to assist students and their parents in gaining early awareness of undergraduate programs. The program provided tutoring throughout the students' seven years of secondary education, provided field trips to multiple colleges, offered summer camps at colleges, gave access for early earned college credit as juniors and seniors, and imparted a wealth of career awareness and exposure.

Throughout the years, participation was low but vigorous for those students and parents who engaged. The result of the program was an 80% commitment and acceptance of the graduating class to a 2 or 4 year higher education program, a statistic in which the county takes pride.

However, the question must be raised: did this program unwittingly and negatively impact students who were less academically inclined and disinterested in a path to higher education? Did they conclude that if they weren't interested in college they probably didn't need a high school diploma? This is an unlikely conclusion, but it must be considered as the county searches for causes in the rising drop out rate and declining graduation rate of this particular class.

B. Strategies that contributed to the relatively stronger graduation rate of African American students.

Specific Implemented Master Plan Action Steps in this area are:

- 1.7.4 Immerse teachers and students in practices to build a success oriented learning environment in each classroom including:
 - ✓ Clear expectations
 - ✓ Appropriate challenges
 - ✓ Appropriate assistance
 - ✓ Increased motivation
 - ✓ Celebration of success
- 1.7.5 Provide students with multiple opportunities to improve the quality of their work
- 1.1.62 Identify and eliminate leveling in classroom instruction that discriminates or segregates by economic, racial, or ethnic majorities and reduces expectations of student achievement
- 1.1.25 Implement recommendations regarding grouping to ensure that all students optimize the development of their academic potential
- 1.2.6 Implement School Improvement Team initiatives to assure reflection of school diversity in all educational programs
- 1.3.9 Implement site and central initiatives to impact overt and covert attitudes of staff that lower expectations and set limits
- 1.3.11 Analyze trend data to ensure that all subgroups are achieving at equitable levels
- 1.2.6 Assure diversity in promotion and selection procedures for all educational programs
- 1.3.9 Implement identified school improvement team strategies to raise expectations for all students.
- 4.1.6 Use textbook materials and resources that have met multicultural criteria
- 4.1.8 Assure ethnic diversity in career speakers

RELATED RESOURCES FOR GRADUATION AND DROP OUT	
Professional Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCPS provided consistent and monitored training activities and skill development in raising student expectations (Dr. Larry Bell: Large group format; small group school improvement planning; observation and feedback; training by job function) 	Cost: \$ 30,400* Source: Local <i>* Duplicated Reference</i>
Core Programs & Interventions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCPS provided career informational and experiential events for students and families as well as activities stressing the importance and value of continuing education 	Cost: \$ 58,937 Source: Gear Up Grant 2005-2006

3. CHALLENGES IN MOVING TOWARD THE GOALS FOR GRADUATION AND DROP OUT RATES:

A. Many Somerset County Public School students come from families who do not value a diploma and lack high school graduate family models.

As a county where many men still make their living on the water and where significant numbers of students live in dysfunctional families with serious problems of drug and alcohol abuse and tremendous economic limitations, students often have several strikes against them when they begin school. It is incumbent for the county to provide a safe haven and a concrete vision of education as a viable ticket to success. This realization has sparked the county's interest in a Residential Charter School.

1. We are challenged to provide for the physical, social, and emotional well being of students necessary for their academic engagement
2. We are challenged to motivate parental and guardian valuing of educational achievement.

B. Male students are dropping out of school at a significantly higher rate than female students.

A review of the drop out data for the last four years identifies male students as dropping out of school twice as frequently as females with both groups increasing in total percentages. The current rate of 9.8% for male students and 4.87% for female students is unacceptable. For males, the drop out rate exceeds the state standard three times. A review of graduation rate data for the last four years shows that female students have consistently outperformed male students. The 2005-2006 gap is particularly alarming; 21.5% fewer males than females graduated with their class.

1. We are challenged to decrease the drop out rate and increase the graduation rate for all students.
2. We are challenged to determine the cause of depressed graduation rates for males students and successfully intervene.

C. The Special Education drop out rate has increased significantly.

Special Education students are dropping out of secondary education twice as frequently as the total population, and in one of the two high schools, three times as frequently. A review of trend data for the past four years shows dramatic escalations from a Special Education drop out rate in 2003 of 1.92% to 15.22% in 2006. Similarly the graduation rate of Special Education students has decreased by over 25% in the last four years, moving from 72.2% to 47.06%.

1. We are challenged to decrease the drop out rate and increase the graduation rate for special education students.

D. The suspension rate for students at the intermediate and high school levels increased dramatically during the 2005-2006 school year.

Somerset intermediate and high schools are suspending students at the un-acceptable rate. Research shows that students who experience repeated discipline problems drop out at a greater rate.

1. We are challenged to decrease the suspension rate for secondary students.

4. CHANGES OR ADJUSTMENTS TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS TOWARD MEETING THE GOALS:

Challenge 3A-1 Provide for the physical, social, and emotional well being of students necessary for their academic engagement.

Although the Somerset County Public Schools charge is education the full wellbeing of students can neither be assumed nor disregarded. By the same token, the schools cannot assume this responsibility alone and needs countywide, interagency support during and beyond the school day and educational activities. In an effort to grow and foster strong collaborative relationships, Somerset County Public Schools continues to develop the newly established mechanisms of student and family support through the Healthy Students/Safe Schools Project; an expanding School Resource Officer Program, liaisons with specific programs of the Local Management Board, Truancy Court, and Juvenile Drug Court. Additionally the county is exploring the feasibility of establishing one or more School Based Health Centers.

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3A-1	
Staffing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate on-going interagency collaboration to meet the physical, social and emotional needs of struggling students and their families (<i>Safe Schools/Healthy Students</i>) 	<p>Amount Budgeted: \$1,200,000* Source: SS/HS Grant Timeline: 2005-2006</p> <p><i>* Duplicated Reference</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff all school sites with School Resource Officers 	<p>Amount Budgeted: None Source: County Commissioners Timeline:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain an active presence as a key player on the Core Service Board, Local Management Board, Local Coordinating Council, and Multi-D Council. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: None Source: Superintendent and Student Services Supervisor Time Timeline: 2002-Present</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate interagency court orders to reduce truancy 	<p>Amount Budgeted: None Source: Student Services and Supervisor Time Timeline: 2006-2008</p>

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3A-1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate interagency court orders to reduce juvenile drug abuse 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Student Services and Supervisor Time Timeline: 2006-2008
Professional Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate Culturally Responsive Instruction through research of the Education Alliance at Brown University and the Educational Laboratory at Edvantia 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Staff Time (Instructional Council) Timeline: 2006-2007
Core Programs & Interventions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the feasibility of establishing one or more School Based Health Centers by conducting a Needs Assessment 	Amount Budgeted: \$2500 <i>(Estimate)</i> Source: LMB Timeline: Fall, 2006

Challenge 3A-2: Motivate parental and guardian valuing of educational achievement.

Somerset County has long been characterized as a location where education has not been valued even though an admirable list of successful individuals across the state have their roots in the county and speak highly of their own educational experiences in the public schools. It is true that a portion of the population makes its living from the water and has scorned the value of academics. That portion is decreasing dramatically. It is true that a portion of the county population suffers from severe economic distress. This group prioritizes basic needs over educational needs. In roads of influence can be made and efforts in that direction include establishing Parent and Community Councils, working directly with the NAACP, increasing teacher and staff contacts with parents and guardians through the telephone and home visits, and coordinating needed services when families are in distress.

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3A-2	
Staffing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a system Parent and Community Advisory Council as well as individual site Parent and Community Councils through the support of the Family and Community Coordinator 	Amount Budgeted: * + 6,200 Source: Local Timeline: 2006-2007 <i>* Duplicated Reference</i>
Core Program & Interventions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet periodically with the NAACP to discuss chronic needs of youth and collaborative efforts to meet those needs 	Amount Budgeted: No Cost Source: Superintendent and Central Office Team Time Timeline: 2006-2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and maintain active communication with parents and guardians 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Staff Time Timeline: 2006-2007

Challenge 3B-1: Decrease the drop out rate and increase the graduation rate for all students.

Impacting the declining graduation rate and increasing drop out rate requires targeted academic intervention focused on the delivery of instruction and students' progress. With this in mind, each secondary school has restructured their daily schedule, enhanced opportunities for direct intervention/assistance within and beyond the school day, increased required monitoring of student progress by staff, and activated the Graduation Progress Report. Additionally, weekly secondary professional development sessions on techniques to increase student engagement have been planned. Additional challenges to graduation are raised for the class of 2009 and every class thereafter with the required passing of High School Assessments (HSA) in Government, Biology, English II, and Algebra.

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3B-1	
Staffing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a weekly review of all teachers' grades of student work by principals 	<p>Amount Budgeted: None Source: Staff Time Timeline: 2006-2007</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of senior students' grades at progress reports, report cards and weekly through Q3 and Q4 1 and conduct one to one meetings with students in need of improving their progress 	<p>Amount Budgeted: None Source: Staff Time Timeline: 2006-2007</p>
Core Program & Interventions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Quarterly benchmarks to guide instruction and provide specific intervention points for struggling students. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: None Source: Superintendent and Central Office Team Time Timeline: 2006-2007</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redesign the block schedule of 8 credit opportunities per year at the high school level to a 5 period day allowing for 10 credit opportunities per year and more time for appropriate assistance and/or enrichment courses. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: None Source: Staff Time Timeline: 2006-2007</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require the bi-weekly review of At Risk and Grade distribution reports by counselors 	<p>Amount Budgeted: None Source: Counselor Time Timeline: 2006-2007</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activate use of Graduation Progress Report available through Power School for every student by counselors, administrators and students. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: None Source: Staff Time Timeline: 2006-2007</p>

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3B-1	
Access full array of HSA core and intervention strategies to assure graduation. (See Goal 5, Page 169 of this Update document.)	
Professional Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place emphasis on student engagement in secondary APD Professional development 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Administrator Time Timeline: 2006-2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor teachers' consistent and positive application of Failure Is Not An Option strategies 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Staff Time Timeline: 2006-2007

Challenge 3B-2: Determine the cause of depressed graduation rates for male students and successfully intervene in their completion of their education.

The severe decline in the graduation rate of male students is alarming not only for the public school system but for the economic development of the region. Although strong efforts are being made with the full student body of each school to increase the numbers of students completing their education, particular attention must be paid to this subgroup. Planned efforts include increasing students' knowledge of and experience with technical training programs offered during their high school years, classroom instructional attention and modifications to assure genuine success; developing and monitoring Individual Graduation Plans for any student at risk to graduate; early intervention responses by the Learning Support Team and counselors to students experiencing a lack of success; exposure to male role models, and incentive based tutoring programs.

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3B-2	
Staffing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Learning Support Team (LST) intervention with early behavior issues to prevent academic spillover. 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Staff Time Timeline: 2006-2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use In School Suspension and Alternative Learning Center placement to address academics as well as behavior issues 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Staff Time Timeline: 2006-2007
Core Program & Interventions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support individual principals' requirement of teachers to develop and submit a written plan for every student not achieving passing grades 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Staff Time Timeline: 2006-2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a common template for Individual Graduation Plans to be implemented through the guidance counselors for students at risk 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Counselors' Time Timeline: 2006-2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensify efforts to increase students' knowledge of and experience with technical training programs offered during their high school years 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Staff Time Timeline: 2006-2007

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3B-2	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase efforts to attract male volunteers who can model successful behaviors to male students. 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Project Achieve Timeline: 2005-2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support an after school secondary program of volunteer tutoring providing 45 minutes of academics followed with supervised basketball play 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Help Our Children Community Organization Timeline: 2006-2007
Professional Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a Gender Differences workshop for secondary staff on teaching for student engagement of diverse populations 	Amount Budgeted: \$700.00 Source: Local Timeline: October 19, 2006

Challenge 3C -1: Decrease the drop out rate and increase the graduation rate for special education students.

Although the strong activities and interventions with students and staff described above will provide significant benefits to the special education population as well as the regular education population, particular attention must be paid to the unique needs of special education students. Planned efforts include the addition of the Graduation Plan to each special education student's cumulative file upon entering 9th Grade; the matching of IEP goals and objectives to the Voluntary State Curriculum professional development for all secondary special education teachers on co-teaching philosophy, skills, and strategies; and the addition of clerks to relieve special education teachers of some of their coordination and paper burdens and provide more student and teacher interaction time during the instructional day.

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3C-1	
Staffing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire four (4) special education clerks to provide IEP document processing and meeting coordination for special education teachers. 	Amount Budgeted: \$ 67,650 Source: Thornton Timeline: 2006-2007
Core Program & Interventions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Individual Graduation Plans for all special education students that are developed and monitored by Special Education teachers 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Special Ed Staff Time Timeline: 2006-2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match IEP Goals and Objectives will be matched to the VSC. 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Special Ed Staff Time Timeline: 2006-2007
Professional Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide special education teachers with focused training on co teaching strategies through secondary APD professional development 	Amount Budgeted: \$ 10,400 Source: MHEC -UMES Timeline: 2006-2007

Challenge 3D: Decrease the suspension rate for secondary students.

The full response to this challenge is located in Goal 4, Page 141 of this Update.

Clarifying Question: What actions are being taken before a student reaches the senior year to reduce the drop rate and increase the graduation rate?

The following actions listed in the 2006 Update document are applied for students prior to their senior year.

Page#	Action	Application
To motivate parental and guardian valuing of educational achievement.		
154	Establish and maintain active communication with parents and guardians	Parent and guardians of all students grades 9-12 will be contacted and provided with information concerning graduation requirements, drop out prevention, alternative methods for earning credits and other related information.
To decrease the drop out rate and increase the graduation rate for all students.		
155	Conduct a weekly review of all teachers' grades of student work by principals.	Principals in all secondary schools review all teachers' (grades 6-12) assignments and grades in PowerSchool. Students not progressing are identified through this process.
155	Use quarterly benchmarks to guide instruction and provide specific intervention points for struggling students	Quarterly benchmarks are already in place for all math courses (grades 6-12) and will be in place for all high school HSA courses by the end of 2006.
155	Redesign the block schedule of 8 credit opportunities per year at the high schools to a 5 period day allowing 10 credits per year and more time for enrichment and appropriate assistance courses.	All students in grades 8-12 now have the opportunity to earn 10 credits per year. This provides for additional opportunities for students to earn make up credits or receive interventions if necessary.
155	Require the bi-weekly review of At-Risk and grade distribution reports by counselors.*	At-risk students in grades 9-12 are identified and counselors monitor grades using PowerSchool. (See program details described at bottom of chart).
155	Activate use of Graduation Progress Reports available through PowerSchool for every student by counselors, administrators and students.*	High school counselors and administrators have been given access to the new PowerSchool Graduation Requirement screen for all students in grades 9-12. This allows easy access to information needed to conference with students on progress toward completing

Page#	Action	Application
		graduation requirements.
156	Place emphasis on student engagement in secondary APD professional development.	Administrators know that the dropout rate and achievement are closely related and both need to be addressed. All secondary teachers (grades 6-12) are participating in professional development focused on student engagement.
156	Monitor teachers' consistent and positive application of the Failure is Not an Option strategy.	Administrators are monitoring teachers application of the Failure is Not an Option strategy for all students in grades 9-12.
To determine the cause of depressed graduation rates for male students and successfully intervene in their completion of their education.		
156	Promote Learning Support Team (LST) intervention with early behavior issues to prevent academic spillover.	Each high school has a Learning Support Team which works with identified students (grades 8-12) on both academic and behavior issues.
156	Use In School Suspension and Alternative Learning Center placement to address academics as well as behavior issues.	Academic support is a part of both the In School Suspension and Alternative Learning Center programs for students in grades 8-12.
156	Support individual principals' requirement of teachers to develop and submit a written plan for every student not achieving passing grades.*	Beginning in 2006-2007, teachers in grades 8-12 are required to submit a written plan to the building principal for every student not achieving a passing grade in their course.
156	Develop a common template for Individual Graduation Plans to be implemented through school counselors for students at – risk.*	School Counselors will complete an Individual Graduation Plan for students in grades 9-12 identified as being at-risk. (see program description below)
156	Intensify efforts to increase students' knowledge of and experience with technical training programs offered during their high school years.	Students in grades 9-11 are presented with information on the CTE programs and career pathways available in the school system.
157	Support an after school secondary program of volunteer tutoring providing 45 minutes of academics followed with supervised basketball play.	Tutoring programs are available at both high schools for students in grades 8-12.
157	Provide a Gender Differences workshop for secondary staff on teaching for student engagement of diverse populations.	The workshop will be presented to all teachers, grades 8-12.
To decrease the drop out rate and increase the graduation rate for special education students.		
157	Implement Individual Graduation Plans for	Graduation Plans will be written for all

Page#	Action	Application
	all special education students that are developed and monitored by Special Education teachers.	special education students in grades 9-12. The plans will be monitored by the special education teachers.

The following project is new beginning in 2006-2007. The actions listed above that are marked with an asterisk (*) are a part of this new initiative.

Drop out prevention/Graduation Project:

The Workforce Development and Community Program Supervisor for SCPS has initiated a drop out prevention project which will also impact the graduation rate. The project begins with school counselors identifying at-risk students, in grades 9-11, through examination of academic, attendance, discipline and course credit records. Once the students are identified, counselors write individual plans for each student that will provide intervention to address the identified needs of these at-risk learners. Examples of strategies used by counselors include, use of PowerSchool to track academics and graduation requirements, referrals to evening high school for credit recovery, parental contacts, and mentors from the staff, community and/or local university for the at-risk students. Plans are then monitored on a regular basis by the school counselors.

Other strategies:

During the summer of 2006, each high school was required to begin to do a root cause analysis of the graduation and drop out date. The results are being used to write School Intervention Plans to address the findings.

Additional MSDE Reporting Requirements

HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

These next four tables ask school systems to report trend data for all students who have passed the corresponding HSA since 2003 (except for English II, which was not available until 2005).

Percentage of Students Passing the English II HSA

Please complete the table by filling in data from the 2006 Maryland Report Card--High School Assessments (comprehensive, by race/ethnicity and gender, and by students receiving special services).

Table 5. 3: Percentage of Students Passing the English II HSA		
Subgroup	2005	2006³
All Students	29.7	
American Indian/Alaskan Native	*	
Asian/Pacific Islander	*	
African American	23.8	
White (Not of Hispanic Origin)	36.1	
Hispanic	-----	
Free/Reduced Meals (FARMS)	22.8	
Special Education	0.0	
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	-----	

³ Data for the 2006 English II will not be available at the time of Master Plan Update completion; therefore, 2006 English II data will be reported in the 2007 Master Plan Update.

HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMANCE (continued)

Percentage of students passing the Biology HSA (2006 Preliminary data available mid-August)

Please complete the table by filling in data from the 2006 Maryland Report Card--High School Assessments (comprehensive, by race/ethnicity and gender, and by students receiving special services).

Table 5.4: Percentage of Students Passing the Biology HAS				
Subgroup	2003	2004	2005	2006
All Students	50.0	44.1	36.5	52.9
American Indian/Alaskan Native	-----	-----	-----	*
Asian/Pacific Islander	*	*	*	*
African American	37.5	27.8	28.1	43
White (Not of Hispanic Origin)	59.1	58.9	46.7	62
Hispanic	*	*	*	*
Free/Reduced Meals (FARMS)	38.0	34.7	33.3	49.5
Special Education	13.3	11.8	18.2	38.9
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	*	-----	-----	*

HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMANCE (continued)

Percentage of students passing the Algebra/Data Analysis HSA (2006 Preliminary data available mid-August)

Please complete the table by filling in data from the 2006 Maryland Report Card--High School Assessments (comprehensive, by race/ethnicity and gender, and by students receiving special services).

Table 5.5: Percentage of Students Passing the Algebra/Data Analysis HSA				
Subgroup	2003	2004	2005	2006
All Students	31.7	58.1	48.8	68.8
American Indian/Alaskan Native	-----	-----	-----	*
Asian/Pacific Islander	*	*	*	*
African American	13.3	43.4	37.1	64.5
White (Not of Hispanic Origin)	46.4	72.2	58.4	71.9
Hispanic	-----	-----	-----	66.7
Free/Reduced Meals (FARMS)	27.8	47.3	39.8	64.3
Special Education	0.0	5.9	13.6	26.7
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	*	-----	*	*

HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMANCE (continued)

Percentage of students passing the Government HSA (2006 Preliminary data available mid-August)

Please complete the table by filling in data from the 2005 Maryland Report Card--High School Assessments (comprehensive, by race/ethnicity and gender, and by students receiving special services).

Table 5.6: Percentage of Students Passing the Government HSA				
Subgroup	2003	2004	2005	2006
All Students	44.9	45.2	49.8	59.5
American Indian/Alaskan Native	-----	-----	-----	-----
Asian/Pacific Islander			40.0	*
African American	28.9	32.2	38.8	42.0
White (Not of Hispanic Origin)	56.9	61.3	57.3	73.8
Hispanic	*	-----	-----	*
Free/Reduced Meals (FARMS)	10.5	8.3	26.7	53.5
Special Education	10.5	8.3	26.7	12.1
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	-----	-----	*	*

HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMANCE (continued)

HSA Performance of the 9th Grade Cohort

This section is designed to collect data for students graduating in 2009 and beyond who are required to pass the High School Assessments in order to graduate. School systems are also asked to provide information on how they've chosen to sequence courses for the majority of students, and the programs and interventions that are in place to support students in meeting this requirement.

Instructions:

Please complete this table which is interested **ONLY** in the performance of 9th grade students for whom taking and passing the High School Assessments is a requirement (i.e. those entering 9th grade for the first time in 2005-2006 and expected to graduate in 2009). Be sure to include the performance of 9th grade students who took the assessment(s) while in middle school.

For each assessment:

- ✓ Provide the number of 2005-2006 first-time 9th grade students who took the assessment while in grades 6, 7, 8, or 9.
- ✓ Of those takers, provide the number and percentage who passed

Table 5.7: HSA Performance of 9th Grade Cohort⁴ (First-time 9th Graders in 2005-2006)

Subgroup	English II ⁵	Biology			Government			Algebra/Data Analysis		
		# of Takers	Passed		# of Takers	Passed		# of Takers	Passed	
			#	%		#	%		#	%
All Students		-----			171	125	73.1	168	122	72.6
American Indian/Alaskan Native		-----			-----			-----		
Asian/Pacific Islander		-----			2	2	100	2	2	100
African American		-----			63	38	60.3	72	46	63.9
White (Not of Hispanic Origin)		-----			105	84	80	93	73	78.5
Hispanic		-----			1	1	100	1	1	100
Free/Reduced Meals (FARMS)		-----			94	58	61.7	83	55	66.3
Special Education		-----			19	2	10.5	9	2	22
Limited English Proficient (LEP)		-----			-----			-----		

⁴ It is possible that local school systems will not have data to report in every column for this cohort.

⁵ Data for the 2006 English II will not be available at the time of Master Plan Update completion; therefore, 2006 English II data will be reported in the 2007 Master Plan Update.

1. PROVIDE AN UPDATE ON HOW THE SCHOOL SYSTEM HAS STRUCTURED ITS SEQUENCING OF ASSESSED HIGH SCHOOL COURSES:

A. The sequence of high school courses has been revised based on an analysis of the VSC, CLG and course sequence selections in other school systems.

Based on an analysis of the CLG, VSC, and course sequences of high scoring divisions on the Government HSA, Somerset County has revised its course sequence by reversing the order of World History and Government. The social studies department decided that students would be more successful by completing World History before Government. New scope and sequences for US History, World History, and Government have spread the content over several years so students entering Government will have a greater chance of success. The 2006-2007 session will be a transition year between the old and new sequences with two grade levels taking world history. The only students taking Government this year will be those who need to repeat the course.

Social Studies Course Sequence

Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
		U.S. History I	World History	Government	U.S. History II	Contemporary Issues
					Psychology	AP Psychology
					Contemporary Issues	Psychology

Mathematics Course Sequence

Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Math 6	Algebra I Part A	Algebra I Part B	Geometry	Algebra II	Pre-Calculus	AP Calculus
	Math 7/Pre-Algebra	Algebra I Part A	Algebra I Part B	Geometry	Algebra II	Fundamentals of College Math
		Math 8/Pre-Algebra	Algebra I	Algebra I	Geometry	Algebra II
				Applied Math	Applied Math	Geometry
					Applied Geometry	Applied Geometry
					Algebra I	Algebra I

English Course Sequence

Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Language Arts 6	Language Arts 7	Language Arts 8	English I	English II	English III	AP English Lit.
						English IV

Science Course Sequence

Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Science 6	Science 7	Science 8	Physical Science	Biology	Marine Biology	Principles of Tech. I
				Principles of Tech.I	Chemistry	Principles of Tech II
				Chemistry	Physics	Anatomy & Physiology
					AP Environmental Science	Physics
					AP Biology	AP Environmental Science
					Principles of Tech I	AP Biology
					Principles of Tech II	Marine Biology

2. IDENTIFY PRACTICES, PROGRAMS, OR STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS PASSING THE HSA:

A. **Professional Development**

Somerset County Public Schools endorses the definition of professional development as stated in the MSDE Guidance Document for the Master Plan Update. It is defined as “a set of integrated professional development activities that extend over a relatively long period of time, include direct follow-up in schools or classrooms, provide opportunities for practice and feedback, and require a substantial investment of resources”. A system initiative to increase student achievement at the secondary level was started by integrating a 75 minute Professional Development period into the secondary teacher’s workday once per week. School administrators are responsible for developing and aligning a site level integrated professional development plan with the SCPS Master Plan and Bridge to Excellence Action Strategies. Plans are based on the Maryland Professional Development Planning Guide and must include both follow-up and resources. The site plans are submitted to the Assistant Superintendent prior the start of school. Principals are asked to revise the plans throughout the year based on available data. Monthly reports of participation, follow up, and findings are given to the office of the superintendent.

In 2006, the Afternoon Professional Development (APD) sessions will be devoted to topics including: Differentiated Instruction, Understanding By Design, Analysis of Assessment Data (including HSA), Strategies for Reading, Creating and Using Spiral Reviews in Math, Looking at Student Work, and Questioning Strategies. All of these topics incorporate the use of technology where appropriate, data analysis and differentiated instruction. In addition to the topics covered at the site level, the district level Professional Development days will be devoted to the topics from Classroom Instruction that Works.

Professional development at the high school level is being targeted toward the Core Courses, especially HSA courses. Summer sessions were held for Government, Biology, English and Algebra teachers to review curriculum, analyze the HSA data, and identify strategies for making the student an active learner. In addition, Government teachers spent time with a master teacher from another system whose students have been extraordinarily successful on the HSA. Teachers also attended a workshop on the new online Government course available through MSDE. English teachers worked with a consultant from Salisbury University on the new *Balanced Literacy* initiative and attended training on differentiation and learning styles. Math teachers spent 7 days this summer with the consultants working with SCPS to revise the scope and sequence, create spiral reviews and complete the benchmark assessments.

Biology and Algebra teachers attended training on the use of a standards-based reporting system in the fall of 2005. The standards from the VSC were entered into PowerSchool, the Student Information System, and teachers were shown how to track student performance on the standards.

Specific Implemented Master Plan Action Steps in this area were:

- 1.1.8 Create a differentiated instructional professional development plan.
- 1.1.10 Implement systematic professional development on specific, selected strategies related to targeted achievement gains.
- 1.1.11 Develop a comprehensive system wide Professional Development Plan which includes accountability, mentoring, school level support, timeline, follow up, and is differentiated.
- 1.1.34 Provide supportive, differentiated professional development through Instructional Facilitators
- 3.7.2 Provide on going support to teachers as they incorporate differentiated learning strategies into their classroom.

B. Alignment of Curriculum

In 2005, SCPS implemented a new plan for curriculum review and revision in all content areas maximizing teacher, administrator, and parental involvement in the review cycle. At the secondary level, teachers of HSA courses met in 2005 to review and share resources and develop common assessments for midterms and finals. Teachers in each content area met during the summer to develop scope and sequences aligned to the VSC/CLG. As a result, Somerset core teachers now have a scope and sequence for each HSA course and all pre-requisite high school courses. The scope and sequences include VSC/CLG goals and indicators in the preferred sequence, the amount of time to be allotted to each, local resources to support the content, and spaces to document when the topics or skills are covered. In all cases, staff members backwards mapped from the HSA goals and assessment limits to included pre-requisite courses so that students entering the tested course already have familiarity with tested content. Each high school core area teacher was provided a CD with the scope and sequences, copies of VSC and CLG, rubrics for BCR's and ECR'S, copies of release tests, and other resources.

Specific Implemented Master Plan Action Steps in this area were:

- 1.1.2 Implement the plan for curriculum review and revision in all content areas.
- 1.1.3 Complete annual review and revision of the PrK-12 curricula assuring alignment with the VSC and Core Learning Goals.
- 1.1.4 Revise and implement K-12 science curriculum ensuring alignment with state content standards and testing schedules.
- 1.1.5 Review and modify social studies curriculum to ensure alignment with state content standards and testing schedule.

C. Assessment and Data Analysis

Assessment and Data Analysis has been a focus of SCPS for the past three years. Administrators have attended the MSDE Data Analysis Workshops and many have completed a 3 credit data analysis course provided by Towson University. Data analysis has become a fundamental part of the School Improvement Team process. Beginning in 2004, teacher training began at the elementary level on using quarterly assessment and performance data to guide instructional practices. This focus was

extended to the secondary level in 2005. Staffs are now utilizing data in a variety of ways, including team discussion and planning, intervention and support strategies and programs, tracking of individual progress, and classroom instructional planning. At the same time, the system realized the need for a data warehouse solution to provide teachers and administrators with access to the needed data.

In 2005, the Supervisor of Secondary Education worked with the facilitators and teachers to revise the common midterm and final exams in all HSA courses to reflect the format of the actual HSA tests. In 2006, teachers will administer common quarterly benchmarks in each HSA and pre-requisite course. The benchmarks will follow HSA format with selected responses, BCR's, and ECR'S. The results will be submitted to *Performance Matters*, our data warehouse contractor. Teachers will then be able to access student data by content strand. Following each administration, teachers will meet by content area to discuss results, make changes to assessments or curriculum and apply them to instructional planning. Teachers who have experienced success in a particular area will share effective materials and methodologies. Math assessments will begin at the first quarter benchmark. Other areas will start at the second quarter benchmark.

Specific Implemented Master Plan Action Steps in this area were:

1.1.23 Implement Formative Assessments in the secondary schools.

1.1.44 Modify and revise math instruction based on student performance on math assessments.

1.1.54 Implement math program revisions based on data analysis

1.1.55 Assess the impact of quarterly assessments on student achievement and make necessary curriculum and instruction revisions.

1.3.6 A data warehouse will be used to correlate quarterly assessments in reading and math to MSA and HSA performance.

3.4.2 School Improvement Teams will continue to develop and implement plans for individual teachers to track and report student achievement data in reading and math.

3.5.1 Continue to analyze and monitor quarterly reading and math assessment data and apply findings.

3.5.2 Correlate skill of teacher in analysis and monitoring of MSA, HSA, and readiness data with student achievement growth.

3.6.7 Continue to develop and/or revise end-of-course assessments for all courses in grades 6-12.

RELATED RESOURCES FOR GOAL 5: HSA	
Professional Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mandatory 75 minute professional development weekly workshop was added to address issues of student engagement, positive school culture, formative assessment, and data analysis and application. 	<p>Cost: \$ 263,327 (06-07)* Source: Thornton (repeated)</p> <p>* <i>Duplicated Reference</i></p>

RELATED RESOURCES FOR GOAL 5: HSA	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teams of teachers from each HSA area worked during the summer of 2006 to align scope & sequences, develop benchmark assessments, and analyze HSA data. 	Cost: \$ 19,100 Source: School Improvement Grant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional Facilitators from each secondary school were trained in the use of the data warehouse, <i>Performance Matters</i>. This was done during the work day. 	Cost: None Source: Staff Time
Core Program & Intervention	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SCPS contracted with <i>Performance Matters</i> as the data warehouse vendor. 	Cost: \$ 25,672* Source: Local * <i>Duplicated Reference</i>

3. DESCRIBE THE PLAN FOR IDENTIFYING STUDENTS, AVAILABLE INTERVENTIONS AND EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THOSE INTERVENTIONS.

A. The appropriate HSA intervention strategy for each student is determined by looking at MSA scores, prior HSA scores, quarterly benchmarks, and course grades.

Somerset County Public Schools has three levels of intervention strategies in place for high school students.

Level I: All regular HSA classes use strategies to help students prepare for the assessment. These include, but are not limited to, reviewing test taking strategies, reviewing the use of rubrics for scoring BCR's and ECR's, using the mini-assessments available on the MSDE website, stressing the use of the proper vocabulary, and using the *PLATO* Learning system for reading and math.

Level II: Additional supportive interventions are made available to students who have been directed by their teachers or independently believe they would benefit from them. The following are examples; the computer lab is available before school for students wanting to use the mini-assessments on the website, Review packets are available for students to sign out and take home, and after school tutoring is available through the local universities and community organizations.

Level III: Students at risk of failure and students who must retake the HSA are assigned to specific interventions based on previous HSA scores, MSA scores, course grades in pre-requisite courses, performance on benchmark assessments and teacher recommendations.

Each student who has failed an HSA assessment is assigned to an advisor by the school counselor. The advisor meets with student to discuss the options for

intervention. The student and advisor develop an Individual Plan for intervention. The student is responsible for monitoring their own progress and reporting regularly to the advisor. This arrangement requires the student to take responsibility for monitoring his or her progress and builds confidence as the student becomes successful.

B. Students who have failed or are at risk of failure on the HSA tests are placed in alternate HSA courses, pull-out review classes or full year courses.

Somerset County Schools offer both year long and semester courses for all HSA subjects at the high school level. One form of intervention is length of study. A student's course grades in the pre-requisite course and their MSA scores determine placement in a year long or semester HSA course. Students earning a final grade below 70 are scheduled into the year long courses. In these courses students will have more time to study and comprehend course content. Teachers also have additional time to work on test taking strategies, related vocabulary, and use in class interventions such as *PLATO*.

Intervention for students needing to retake the HSA assessment is determined by the student's grade on the previous HSA test. Students who fail an HSA test by less than 15 points, but earned a passing grade in the HSA course are not required to repeat the course. However, they must attend a 20 day review course through a pull-out design. Students are pulled out of non-core classes to work through the review curriculum with an assigned teacher. Teachers will use the sections of the curriculum targeted toward the student's areas of weakness.

Students who fail an HSA test by 15 or more points are required to repeat the HSA course in the semester format. These classes have a different focus and are taught by a different teacher. Teachers review the student's HSA scores and focus on those areas indicated as weaknesses.

Within the regular HSA classes, teachers can use software such as *PLATO*, quarterly benchmark assessments, the mini-assessments available on the MSDE website, and course grades to determine students at risk of failure and make interventions available. Tutoring is available both during the school day and after school, students can sign out the take home study packets, and *PLATO* is available for additional use before and after school.

C. The effectiveness of the interventions will be measured by student success on the HSA test.

Effective intervention strategies impact a school's resources, staff, and schedule as well as the students who participate. It is important to ensure that the intervention is meeting the needs of the students. The achievement goal for all HSA intervention programs is for the student to pass the HSA test.

In order to determine the effectiveness of the intervention program, schools need to track which interventions are being used by students and examine the end results. Students and the assigned intervention are being entered into a database. HSA scores

are, by total scores and indicators, entered when they become available. Schools will look at the percentage of students passing the HSA test for each intervention.

The ultimate determination of whether or not the intervention worked for a student is a passing HSA score. However, schools must monitor a student's progress, or lack of progress, throughout the intervention. Assignments must be aligned to the content standards in order for teachers to know whether the student has attained mastery before going on. Teachers must use benchmarks or milestones to monitor whether students are making progress. These milestones will inform the teacher when adjustments need to be made to the program being followed.

ACTIONS & RESOURCES ON HSA INTERVENTION	
Core Program & Intervention	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify students who have failed or at risk of failing an HSA assessment. 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Administrator Time Timeline: 2006-2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide year long courses to students needing more time to complete and be successful with the HSA curriculum. 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Standard Program Timeline: 2006-2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide 20 day pull-out review courses for students who have failed an HSA test 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Staff Time Timeline: 2006-2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reschedule students who have failed an HSA assessment into a semester level course. 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Standard Program Timeline: 2006-2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide tutoring during and after school for students needing to review HSA course material for test. 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Teacher, Volunteer & Student Time Timeline: 2006-2007
Materials & Supplies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create take home study packets to review HSA course materials. 	Amount Budgeted: None Source: Teacher Time Timeline: September 2006
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use <i>PLATO</i> to increase student skills in reading and math. 	Amount Budgeted: \$ 7,770 Source: Local Timeline: 2006-2007

ATTENDANCE

Please complete the table by filling in data from the 2006 Maryland Report Card--Attendance Rate (grade band, race/ethnicity, and by students receiving special services).

Note: The state satisfactory standard for attendance is 94%. Attendance data for 2005-2006, available at www.mdreportcard.org, will be based on data through March 15th.

Table 5.8: Attendance Rates					
Subgroup		2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
All students	Elementary	94.5	94.9	94.5	95.2
	Middle	92.9	91.8	92.8	92.7
	High	94.5	91.0	90.8	90.9
American Indian/Alaskan Native	Elementary	-	-	-	-
	Middle	-	-	-	-
	High	-	-	-	-
Asian/Pacific Islander	Elementary	94.8	94.4	95.2	88.2
	Middle	98.6	94.2	-	-
	High	-	96.2	95.7	99.1
African American	Elementary	95.4	95.5	95.2	95.8
	Middle	93.8	94.1	93.9	93.4
	High	94.9	91.8	91.3	91.4
White (Not of Hispanic Origin)	Elementary	93.8	94.3	93.7	94.7
	Middle	92.2	89.8	91.9	92.3
	High	94.2	90.2	90.4	90.3
Hispanic	Elementary	92.9	95.2	95.6	95.0
	Middle	81.6	89.3	91.0	89.3
	High	-	85.9	85.0	90.3
Free/Reduced Meals (FARMS)	Elementary	94.3	94.7	94.3	95.0
	Middle	92.1	90.9	91.7	91.6
	High	94.0	90.1	90.0	90.1
Special Education	Elementary	93.7	94.8	94.1	94.6
	Middle	92.8	90.3	92.0	92.0
	High	93.3	88.1	87.8	86.4
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	Elementary	95.4	96.9	95.9	93.9
	Middle	85.7	92.5	90.2	85.9
	High	96.7	-	-	-

1. PROGRESS IN INCREASING ATTENDANCE RATES BY GRADE BAND AND SUBGROUPS:

A. Elementary ATTENDANCE has consistently met the satisfactory standard for the aggregate and in 5 of the 7 subgroups.

Aggregate attendance at the elementary level has exceeded the standard every year since 2002 with a rate of 95.6% in 2005. All elementary schools met AYP in 2006 in the aggregate for attendance by exceeding the AMO.

In reviewing the elementary subgroups' attendance, the 2005 performance reveals that 5 of the 7 subgroups exceeded the 94% standard. The African American students had the highest rate at 95.8% which was a .6% increase over the previous year. White (94.7%), Hispanic (95%), FARMS (95%) and Special Education (94.6%) students also exceed the standard. The White student's attendance increased from 93.7% in 2004 to 94.7% in 2005. This represented the largest gain by any elementary subgroup. Four (4) of the seven (7) subgroups have shown steady increases since 2002. The Hispanic subgroup attendance decreased slightly but still exceeded the standard at 95%.

B. High School aggregate ATTENDANCE has increased through 4 of 6 represented subgroups moving schools closer to the standard.

The attendance rate at the high school level increased for the aggregate by .1% in 2005. Asian, African American, Hispanic and Farms subgroups also saw small increases in the attendance rates this year. The Asian subgroup had the highest increase at 3.4% and exceeded the standard with at 99.1% attendance rate in 2005.

2. IDENTIFY PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, OR STRATEGIES AND THE RELATED RESOURCES THAT APPEAR RELATED TO THE PROGRESS.

A. Increased Services for Students

An additional 4 Learning Support Specialists (social workers) were hired through the Safe Schools Healthy Students grant. School counselors and Learning Support Specialist have worked individually with students who have attendance issues. They have been able to help the students and their parents to understand the school system policies and procedures related to attendance. The importance and benefits of being in school are also stressed with both the students and parents.

Specific Implemented Master Plan Action Steps in this area were:

- 5.2.11 Seek grant funding to increase the number of Learning Support Specialists (social workers)

5.2.12 Expand the role of the Learning Support Teams to encompass and address all barriers that may prevent learning including truancy.

B. Revised County Attendance Policy & Procedures

The Somerset County Public Schools attendance policy is reviewed every year. In December 2005 a revised policy was adopted by the Board of Education. The policy now requires students to make up time after exceeding the unexcused absence limit. Although it does not change the number of days absent on record for a student, it does help to make students and parents more committed to attending school.

In addition to the make up time, in the revised policy students and their parents are referred to Truancy Court when they have excessive unexcused absences and are in danger of failing. Court procedures require both the student and parents/guardians participation in services provided. Students and parents must return to court every two weeks for monitoring. Cases are closed after 90 days of successful attendance and compliance of treatment recommendations. There were 32 cases in 2005, 6 were closed successfully, of the 21 that remain open, 6 have shown significant improvement in attendance.

Specific Implemented Master Plan Action Steps in this area were:

5.1.6.2 Implement the revised attendance policy & administrative guidelines.

5.1.6.3 Participate with family services and other agencies to implement a Truancy Reduction Pilot Program.

RELATED RESOURCES FOR ATTENDANCE	
Staffing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four (4) Learning Support Specialists were hired to increase the number in the schools. 	Cost: \$ 211,152 Source: SS/HS Grant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers were hired to monitor students during the after school attendance make-up sessions. 	Cost: \$ 5,706* Source: Local Program will be expanded in 06-07 with \$ 21,765 Thornton.
Core Program & Intervention	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SCPS participates in the county Truancy Court. Students with chronic attendance problems are referred by school counselors. 	Cost: None Source: Supervisor and School Counselor Time.

3. CHALLENGES IN INCREASING THE ATTENDANCE RATE BY GRADE BAND AND SUBGROUPS:

A. The Middle and High School level attendance rates increased for some subgroups but did not met the 94% standard.

The attendance rate for the high school aggregate group increased in 2005; however neither high school (90.9%) nor middle school (92.7%) students met the standard 94%. The overall trend for both levels since 2002 has been a steady decline. Middle level attendance dropped from 92.9% (2002) to 92.7% (2005) and high school attendance dropped from 94.5% (2002) to 90.9% (2005).

Subgroup attendance at these levels has also declined steadily over the past four (4) years. The African American (-0.7%), FARMS (-.05%), Special Education (-0.8%) and ELL (-6.6%) subgroups have all had steady declines since 2002 at the middle level. High school subgroups showing a declining trend in attendance over this same period are the African American (-3.5%), White (-3.9%), FARMS (-3.9%) and Special Education (-6.9%) students. Comparing the data from 2004 to 2005 reveals the same results. At the middle level, four (4) of the six (6) subgroups decreased their attendance rate with the ELL students showing the biggest decline (-4.3%). High school subgroups showed a decrease in attendance rate from 2004 to 2005 for White (-.1%) and Special Education (-1.4%) students.

1. We are challenged to expedite an increase in the middle and high school attendance rate for the aggregate and all subgroups.

4. CHANGES OR ADJUSTMENTS TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS WITH RESOURCES AND A TIMELINE:

Challenge 3A1: Expedite an increase in the middle and high school level attendance rate for the aggregate and all subgroups.

In order to meet this challenge, the system will begin to make contact with students and parents earlier in the process, follow up to contacts will be handled by the Learning Support Teams, offer incentives for good and improved attendance by marking period, and make home visits for chronic absent students.

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3A1	
Core Program & Intervention	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make phone calls home after the second absence 	<p>Amount Budgeted: No Cost Source: Secretaries Time Timeline: 2006-2007</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send attendance letter home after the 3rd, 5th, & 8th absence. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: No Cost Source: Secretaries Time Timeline: 2006-2007</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award PBIS incentive prizes on Fridays. Students must be present to win. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: \$ 8,000* Source: SS/HS Grant Timeline: 2006-2007 <i>* Duplicated Reference</i></p>

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3A1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give Attendance awards for good attendance and for improved attendance each marking period. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: \$1,000 Source: Local Timeline: 2006-2007 (each marking period)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a procedure for making home visits by the Learning Support Staff (LSS) to students with attendance problems. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: No Cost Source: LSS Time Timeline: 2006-2007</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a procedure for Administrators and counselors to make 1-1 contact with students with attendance problems when they are in school and calling home when they are absent. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: No Cost Source: Administrator Time Timeline: 2006-2007</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses professional development at the secondary level on student engagement, making the student an active learner. This shift in the instructional model will improve attendance for some students. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: \$ 263,237* Source: Thornton (Repeated) Timeline: 2006-2006 * total cost of secondary professional development focused on student engagement. * <i>Duplicated Reference</i></p>

Clarifying Question: Clarify the number of cases that remained opened and those that were closed (Truancy Court).

There were 32 cases opened during 2005-2006. At the end of the school year, 11 of the cases had been closed. Six were closed successfully; 4 students moved from the county and 1 student was incarcerated. Of the 21 cases that remained open for 2006-2007, the breakdown is:

- 6 students have shown a significant improvement in attendance,
- 2 are new cases,
- 5 students have chronic issues,
- 1 student has been referred to DJS for contempt of court,
- 1 student is in DSS custody in another county,
- 1 student has been placed in foster care in another county,
- 1 student is pregnant, and
- 4 students will turn sixteen before their next court date.

Out of the 32 cases opened, 4 moved away, 1 was incarcerated, 2 were moved to other county jurisdictions and the 2 new cases did not begin until 2006-2007. Looking at the 23 students that remained in Somerset County from last year, 12 or 52% have shown positive results.

As a result of the first year's statistics, several revisions are being made in Truancy Court operations for 2006-2007. Rather than waiting for excessive and chronic absenteeism, students

will be referred to court after 12 days of unexcused absences and will be supported by the Learning Support Team in the school. Those students who are successful with the Truancy Court experience will be used as mentors for students who are just beginning the process. Schools will be asked to provide some type of recognition for students when they reach the 90 day mark and a completion ceremony at the end of the school year if they have maintained their attendance. Students and parents will be asked to complete an exit survey to use in the evaluation of the program. In addition, cases will be reopened if a student has 3 unexcused absences.

