

## I.A Executive Summary



### SOMERSET COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS Executive Summary for the 2009-2010 Master Plan Update

*“Making your mark on the world is hard. If it were easy, everybody would do it. But it’s not. It takes patience; it takes commitment; and it comes with plenty of failure along the way. The real test is not whether you avoid this failure, because you won’t, it’s whether you let it harden or shame you into inaction, or whether you learn from it; whether you choose to persevere.”*

**-- President Barack Obama**

#### I. INTRODUCTION

##### A. CONTEXT

The words of President Obama spoke to the condition of Somerset County Public School staff, students, Board, and community last year; their wisdom and accuracy continue to echo today when reflecting upon the year past and looking forward to the year ahead. Somerset County is engaged in “hard work” that calls for inordinate amounts of patience and demonstrated commitment. Our students and our staff continue to persevere believing that there is nothing as valuable or promising as an education. The challenge was set eight years ago with the following Master Plan Mission Statement:

***To unite the best efforts of our entire community in order to assure that all students achieve high standards, graduate from high school and are equipped with the skills and behaviors needed to attain success in a rapidly changing world.***

That mission was strengthened this year, as the Board of Directors came together in retreat and developed their own mission as a Board and set the norms on the manner in which they would conduct their business and oversee the system of education for which they have elected responsibility. Their mission reads:

***The mission of the Somerset County Board of Education in partnership with the community is to provide governance and leadership for student success in the global 21<sup>st</sup> Century community by explicitly promoting deliberate policy development, high standards for teaching and learning, responsible resource allocation, and ongoing accountability.***

The Board’s norms reflect the seriousness with which they approach their responsibilities. These norms guide their decision making through their consensus to:

1. Reach agreement through respecting differing views and speaking with one voice in the end;

2. Be open to all voices in our community rather than factions in order to foster solid experiences for our students;
3. Focus our decision making on student achievement, student well being and system morale;
4. Assume responsibility for Board decisions by measuring and evaluating the outcomes and results by asking “What part of the success or problem do we own?”.
5. Be mindful that Board actions affect the entire community;
6. Maintain confidentiality and high ethical standards; and
7. Strive to develop and maintain a strong sense of team through building relationships and celebrating accomplishments.

This piece of work, completed through the workshop guidance of Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), speaks volumes to staff and fosters a sense of “we are all in this together.”

Somerset is clearly contributing to Maryland’s educational success. In spite of economic hurdles, increased standards of performance, and diminishing revenue, Somerset County students, families, staff, and community are seeing significant progress in the educational system and learning. Somerset takes pride in much stronger schools of higher performing students taught by highly qualified and highly effective staffs dedicated to continuous improvement. At the same time, Somerset stands humbled by the distance that must be travelled before **every** child of **every** subgroup has truly reached his or her potential for learning. Furthermore, Somerset strives to complete that journey knowing full well that a new horizon, Maryland’s Third Phase of Education Reform, will await us at the finish point, a temporary stop in a state which endorses and leads continuous improvement.

## **B. BUDGET NARRATIVE**

Maryland has recently been named the wealthiest state in the nation and is identified in the 2009 “Overview of Maryland Local Governments” by the Department of Legislative Services as having “one of the lowest poverty rates in the nation” at 8.3%. The US poverty rate is 13%. Maryland’s Median Household Income is \$68,080. Although one of 24 jurisdictions in Maryland, Somerset County does not mirror these numbers in the least.

Somerset, with a second smallest population of a Maryland County, posts a poverty rate of 20%, just 2 percentage points below Baltimore City. Across the state of Maryland in 2000 approximately 8.7% of all families with related children under the age of 18 lived in poverty; in Somerset that percentage was 22.8%. More recent figures are not encouraging. According to SAIPE ( the U.S. Census Bureau’s Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates), poverty is increasing for all ages in Somerset County. Between 2003 and 2007, child poverty ranged between 24.0% and 27.9%.

Of greater significance, Somerset posts the lowest Median Household Income in Maryland at \$33,700 which is less than 1/2 of the state median and a mere third of Maryland’s highest county’s median. Somerset also holds the spot as the county with lowest per capita total revenue at \$2,307, and the lowest assessable base. Somerset has the lowest taxable income in Maryland, therefore the 3.15% income tax as the second highest in the state, does not yield significant revenue. The

Planning Data Services of MDP cites Somerset County as ranking 1<sup>st</sup> in regard to “unequal income distribution” using the GINI coefficient which measures the equality of income distribution among jurisdictional households. Additionally, the inequality “gap” is increasing, growing larger each year.

Somerset has experienced an 8.6% increase in minority population between 2000 and 2007, and a 5.5% over all population increase. Overall growth in Somerset is less than the State of Maryland.

Somerset’s enrollment is 2925 and is comprised of approximately of 45.8% White students, 41.3% African American students, 6.3% Hispanic students, and less than 1.4% Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students, and 5.2% “More than 1 Race.” Approximately 40% of Somerset’s children live in single parent households; and 61.7% of all students are on Free and Reduced Meals. The 2000 census cites 30% of Somerset’s adult population having less than a high school diploma and 11% with a Bachelor’s Degree or higher.

## **II. BUDGET NARRATIVE**

### **A. STATUS**

The State General Assembly’s enactment of the *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act* in April, 2002 remains a major investment in Somerset’s capacity to provide quality education to its children. Somerset County Public Schools experienced significant increases in funding as a result of Thornton and demonstrated the positive educational impact of those increased resources by outstanding gains in meeting standards (*An Evaluation of the Effect of Increased State Aid to Local School Systems Through the Bridge to Excellence Act* MGT Report, 2005 and 2008). Specifically, between 2004 and 2008 Somerset experienced an increase of over 63% in state revenue. However, no provision for continuing BTE funding beyond June 30, 2008 was made. The result has been continuing decreases in State funding for the last three years.

Attempting to provide some support, the State has applied Federal *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* funds (ARRA or stimulus) to restore state revenue to the 2009 levels. Between 2008 and 2010, Somerset has experienced a 3.5% decrease in state revenue, including State Fiscal Stabilization funding. These funds expire on September 30, 2011. FY 11 shows the State with a negative one-time spending with ARRA and SFSF funds at \$1.7 billion leading to a forecast of a \$1.5 billion state deficit for 2012. Somerset County Public Schools has decreased staff and certain programs over the last three fiscal years and will be unable in future budget years to maintain core program offerings without some measure of a calculated increase from the Maryland State Department of Education.

The Federal Government passed the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (ARRA) during 2009. This legislative infused large sums of money into education to prevent the massive reduction of services to students as school systems nationwide were encountering financial difficulties. These funds were provided for a two year period which ends September 30, 2011 and have unprecedented accountability and reporting requirements. The Board has received over \$1.9 million for FY 2010 and FY 2011 under this Act and has allocated the funds cautiously in order to avoid funding issues at the end of the grant period. However, the loss of these funds will be felt in program, staffing, and

services. Additionally, knowing that the State has used the funds to fulfill its funding obligations to local school systems under Thornton, Somerset anticipates a significant loss of funding for FY 2012.

The approved Budget for FY 2011 reflected a loss of \$205,521 in State revenue and over \$1.5 million in Federal revenue in comparison to the FY 2010 Budget as original and approved. The means required to meet budget limitations involved capitalizing on attrition and severely limiting replacements; retargeting and redistributing funds to the greater areas of need; restricting finding to current initiatives rather than new; working under the guidelines to save positions rather than increase salaries or benefits; and “shaving” all non-critical areas to bare bone essentials.

Recognizing the efforts of the Board to reduce costs, engage in cost saving initiatives such as energy management, and work cooperatively with the local government, the commissioners provided non-recurring cost funds to enable the schools to continue the stalled Technology One-to-One Initiative begun in 2008. This was an extremely well appreciated supportive gesture.

## **B. PLANNED USE OF ARRA FUNDS**

SFSF have enabled the purchase of \$109,200 worth of needed instructional materials and textbooks. Both SFSF and ARRA funds have enabled the restoration of some positions. There were a total of 17.5 positions eliminated in the original 2010 budget. Specifically:

Lost 3.5 Character Education Teacher Positions—Restored 2 in other roles

Lost 3 Reading Coach/Intervention Positions—Restored 2.5

Lost 1 ELL Instructional Aide Position—Restored 1

Lost 2 IEP Aide Positions—Restored 2

Lost 1 Choral Position—Restored by Local funds for FY 2011

Lost 1 Landscape/Agriculture CTE Position—Program discontinued

Lost 6 Learning Support & Behavior Intervention Positions—Restored 3.5

Lost 1 Job Coach (Special Education) Position—Restored in 2011

### **1. Use of Specific ARRA Grants to Support Master Plan Priorities**

Somerset County Public School Master Plan contains three comprehensive priorities with six key strategies as well as the infrastructure for leadership and management priorities including local goals.

#### **a. Master Plan Priority: Student Engagement**

##### **(1) Student Achievement**

**Real Time Intervention for Academic Success** providing

- Addition of Reading, Math, and ELL Tutors (4) **(TITLE I ARRA)**
- Addition of Secondary Reading/Math Intervention Teachers (4) **(IDEA ARRA)**
- Funding to maintain 16 aides **(TITLE I ARRA)**
- Provision of Textbooks and Instructional Materials
- Provision of Extended Year Programs **(IDEA ARRA)**

- Pre school Educational Assessments and Protocols (IDEA ARRA)
- IEP Clerical Support (IDEA ARRA)

**Technology Enhanced Instruction and Management** providing

- Training for teachers with 1:1 consultant
- Strengthening Infrastructure to support educational program
- Equipment and training for highest poverty elementary school (78%) now named as First High Tech Elementary School in Somerset
- Implementation of planned expansion of Technology Initiative—Grade 4
- Continuation of Licensing of Math Software: Success Maker

**Extended School Year Programs for Special Education and Regular Education Students** providing

- Pre-School Interventions and Services (IDEA ARRA)
- Staffing of teachers and assistants for 5 week school based programs focusing on Improving or Sustaining Progress in Math and Reading (IDEA ARRA)
- Staff participation in Summer Reading Home Visits for Elementary (TITLE I ARRA)

**(2) Family Engagement**

- Provision of Family and Community Involvement Coordinator Position for Elementary Schools (TITLE I ARRA)
- A system coordination of character education planned, delivered, and monitored (TITLE I ARRA)
- SIT Parent and Community Involvement planning, implementation, and assessment consistently provided (TITLE I ARRA)
- IEP Clerical Support (IDEA ARRA)

**b. Master Plan Priority: Highly Qualified**

**(1) Highly Qualified Staff**

Resources required for HQ staff revolve around negotiated salaries and funds to support certification training. These are budgeted with Local funding.

**(2) Highly Effective Staff—Professional Development**

**Technology Skilled Staff** for instructional engagement and success supported the

- Provision of 1:1 Laptop Program Consultant (Instructional strategies through laptops to increase academic growth and achievement—this also addresses Master Plan Priority 1: Student Engagement)
- Provision of Improved Technology for Instruction and Management (This also addresses Master Plan Priority 1: Student Engagement)
- Continuation of licensing of **Performance Matters**, student achievement/performance data warehouse
- Continuation of licensing of **Power School** student data warehouse and communication tool

**Critical Professional Development** for leadership staff in central and site key positions working with families, students and the community providing:

- *Beyond Diversity* training by a lead organization including community and Board workshop participation (Multi-year program)
- CEASOM workshop attendance and participation
- Provision of Professional Development in Autism, Co-Teaching, and Building on Strengths

**Special Education Professional Development and Student Program Initiatives** providing

- Training in the development and implementation of programs for autistic students
- Enhancing staff and student capacities for coping with disabilities and building upon one's strengths—academically, behaviorally, and socially
- Consultant training and monitoring for Co-Teaching Initiative for Special Education and Regular Education staff including stipends for participant training

**c. Master Plan Priority: Safe and Quality Environments**

**(1) Discipline Practices**

No ARRA funds have been used explicitly for addressing this goal. However, success in priority one: Student Engagement, significantly and positively impacts student discipline.

**(2) Safe Environments**

- Staffing of Intensive Outpatient Program partnership with ESPS (Eastern Shore Psychological Services) to provide educational and therapeutic services to primary students unable to learn in a regular classroom setting and preventing the effective education of classmates (**IDEA ARRA**)
- Provision of Job Coaches for special education students transitioning to job placements to ready them for graduation from High School (**IDEA ARRA**)
- Provision of transportation, uniforms, school supplies for Homeless students (**HOMELESS ARRA**)

**d. Master Plan Priority: Effective Leadership and Management**

- Accountability and Reporting (**TITLE I ARRA**)
- Food and Nutrition Technology Improved Management (**NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH EQUIPMENT IMPROVEMENT**)

**2. Coordination of ARRA Funding Streams to Support Reform Priorities**

- **Increasing teacher effectiveness and addressing inequities in the distribution of highly qualified teachers (Recruiting, developing, and retaining effective teachers and principals);**

ARRA funding has enabled Somerset County Public Schools to maintain both core and supportive staff at sites limiting the loss of positions. ARRA funding has enabled Somerset County Public schools to continue to build its reputation and results as a successful system thereby increasing its recruitment power. ARRA funds have enabled both embedded and explicit professional development enabling Somerset County to develop teacher effectiveness and principals' effective leadership. ARRA funds have enabled Somerset County Public Schools to maximize technology and technology applications for the classroom teacher serving as a means to retain as well as recruit teachers.

- **Establishing and using a Pre-K-College and career data system to track progress and foster continuous improvement (Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can inform their practice);**

ARRA funding has enabled Somerset County Public Schools to continue its use, development, and expansion of *Performance Matters* data analysis skill and application to student progress for teachers and classroom progress analysis for principals.

- **Making progress towards rigorous college and career ready standards and high-quality assessments that are valid and reliable for all students, including limited English proficient students and students with disabilities (Adopting international benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace; and,**

ARRA funding has enabled Somerset County Public Schools to increase its response to students' performance on high quality assessments with aligned intervention for all students including limited English proficient students.

- **Providing targeted, intensive support and effective interventions to turn around schools identified for corrective action and restructuring (Turning around the lowest performing schools)**

ARRA funding has enabled Somerset County Public Schools to provide effective summer interventions and supportive school year interventions in the core areas of reading and math to turn around the performance of struggling students. Access to these funds and the chosen support assisted in significantly impacting the performance of Middle Level students at the Intermediate School grade levels.

### **3. How has the potential "funding cliff" impacted current discussions and subsequent decisions regarding the most effective use of ARRA funds?**

Knowing the time limitations of ARRA funding has prompted Somerset County Public Schools to use the funding cautiously and with an effort to apply it most often to non-recurring investments such as technology, professional development, texts and

materials, and supportive programs. However, in some cases, staff were needed and the bottom line became an understanding that two years of effective support that was fully monitored and evaluated was far superior to none. Current discussions center on which of those positions has proven most successful to student growth and achievement and what other positions in the system can be eliminated to fiscally enable the most effective positions to remain.

### **C. PROGRESS ON ARRA REFORMS—STATE FISCAL STABILIZATION FUNDS**

#### **How has having State Fiscal Stabilization (SFS) funds available influenced the school system's decisions regarding the master plan priorities for the year?**

State Fiscal Stabilization Funds have enabled Somerset County Public Schools to continue to address its Master Plan priorities as opposed to placing everything "on hold." Specifically the following major resources could be made available and thus enabled:

- Professional Development to continue through bringing expert consultants to sites on selected topics of need identified through the Option 2 process,
- Collaboration to not only occur but be integrated as a way of life among staff led by in-house academic coaches and facilitators continued through the availability of SFS stipends,
- Technology to be updated as necessary in order to enhance both instruction and management;
- Technology training to continue at all levels, elementary, middle, and high school, fostering significant changes in not only engaging students, but challenging them to their highest potentials;
- The culture of our system as perceived by our school leaders and by select community members related to diversity to begin a transformational change which is critical to progress on every one of the Master Plan goals;
- Incentives to be available to strengthen a positive culture at each of our sites
- Summer School to not only continue but to provide HSA supportive Bridge and test preparation classes
- Full time, real time intervention at the intermediate level.

### **III. GOAL PROGRESS**

Progress depends upon both incremental change and systemic development. Both are seen in the progress of Somerset County Public Schools during the 2009-2010 year. Both will be developed in summary comments on each of the Master Plan Update goal areas.

#### **A. Maryland School Assessment/High School Assessments**

Progress as a system is clearly seen at the MSA levels with the elementary aggregates of the percentages of students scoring proficient or advanced in Reading and Math increasing by 16 and 17 percentage points respectively. Reading percentages show a 60% decrease in the expected performance gap (AMO) between African American and White students and a 100% plus decrease between Hispanic and White students. Specifically by 2010 measures, White students are

performing 5.7 percentage points above the AMO; African American students are performing .1 percentage point above the AMO; Hispanic students are performing 2.8 percentages points above the AMO. Mathematics performance reveals a very different picture for this same group. Five years ago, both White and African American students exceeded the AMO with a gap of 17.3 percentage point difference. Hispanic students were not meeting the AMO at that time; the gap between Hispanics and the AMO compared with White students and the AMO was 29.2 percentage points. In 2010, White students performance has dropped to from 24 points above the AMO to 10 and African American students' performance is 1.3 percentage points below the AMO. However, the Hispanic subgroup has moved from a 2005 percentage of 5.3 points below the AMO to 12.9 points above the AMO. (Not to diminish the significant work invested by Somerset teaches and ESOL staff, a portion of the Hispanic improvement is a result of greater numbers of Hispanic students.)

At the Middle Level, the increases in the percentages of students proficient or advanced has grown substantially over the last five years by over 31 percentage points in Reading and 23 percentage points in Math. Particular progress has been made with the Special Education subgroup which shows a proficient or higher percent of 64.1 this year which is a 50 percentage point increase from 2005. Middle Level math has progressed at a much slower rate moving to an aggregate performance that falls short of the AMO target by 2.8 percentage points and the White subgroup standing as the only subgroup exceeding the AMO target. At substantial risk are the Special Education students. In looking at the disaggregated performances, there is a dramatic difference between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders' performance of 84% proficient or higher and the 8<sup>th</sup> graders' performance of 60% proficient or higher. In comparison of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Special Education Subgroup performance of nearly 70% proficient or higher in Math with the 8<sup>th</sup> Graders' performance of 21% proficient or higher, the area of concern and needed attention is clear. These differences of 30 percentage points continue throughout all subgroups with the exception of the White subgroup.

In looking at trends across the years, there are 28 MSA measures of aggregates and subgroups in the Somerset Elementary and Middle levels. Between 2004 and 2010, all measures except 4 have shown continuous improvement. Three of those measures: Elementary Reading All, Elementary Reading Hispanic, and Middle African American Reading have dropped from 2009 to 2010 less than ½ of 1 percentage point. The fourth, Elementary Reading White lost 3 percentage points between 2009 and 2010 the first drop in that subgroup in six years.

The proficient percent of High School Students as a whole and as individual subgroups continues to increase on the HSA English measure. Four groups, All, White, African American, and FARMS, have shown increases of more than 30 percentage points in four years. The largest gain (33.5 point gain) has been achieved by the African American subgroup. The highest percentage of proficiency is seen in the performance of the White subgroup (86.7%) which is 23.7 percentage points above the African American performance and an alarming 65.3 percentage points above the Special Education subgroup's performance. This difference is of critical concern.

In Mathematics, specifically Algebra HSA, there was a 2 percentage point improvement from 2008 to 2009 as well as a significant increase from 66.2% proficient in 2007 to 82.1% in 2009. Nearly 79% of the African American student subgroup achieved proficiency as well as the same percentage of students in the FARMS subgroup. The difference in the performance of Special Education students who measured at 53.8% proficient remains an area of serious concern in Mathematics as well as English.

In addition to meeting the English and Algebra HSA graduation requirements, all seniors completed the HSA Biology and Government requirement in 2009 and 2010. However, over one quarter of the 2009 graduation class used the Composite Score or the Bridge to complete the Biology requirement. Subgroup concerns are particularly apparent in reviewing the 2009 Government performance where three subgroups are participating and performing significantly below the aggregate. These groups are Special Education students, Limited English Proficient students, and the Hispanic students.

### **B. Limited English Proficient Students**

The number of students with Limited English Proficiency continues to increase in Somerset County although resources to serve those students are not increasing. The results of increasingly focused efforts to enhance classroom teachers' knowledge and use of selected LEP skills in conjunction with increasing ESOL teachers' repertoire and application of interactive strategies have led to positive system trends. A three year upward movement in specific domains of proficiency can be seen at the various levels. At the aggregate level, the greatest percentage of ELL students demonstrating proficiency occurred in the Speaking Assessment (62.4%) and the lowest percentage of proficiency occurred in the Writing Assessment (53.16%).

All three AMAO (Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives) goals have been met, exceeding the required percent proficient or having met the target. The most dramatic increase in achievement was found at the Intermediate School where LEP reading performance moved from 30% proficient in 2009 to 77.8% proficient in 2010.

The areas of greatest concern are the loss of positions due to grant completions and the difficulty in maintaining consistency. The complexity of ELL students' needs in order to achieve academic success often goes unrecognized once a student demonstrates LAS success and exits the program.

### **C. Adequate Yearly Progress**

All of Somerset County's elementary schools have continued to meet Adequate Yearly Progress measures. The Somerset Intermediate School did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress in 2009 for the third year. Although they achieved significant overall gains, the ELL student subgroup missed the AMO reading performance target. School staff seized the opportunity to improve the learning results of their students across the Board by fully participating in the TCNA (Teacher Comprehensive Needs Assessment), maximizing their opportunities to collaborate and coordinate instructional efforts among teams, monitoring student progress on a daily basis, and providing real time intervention. The results were outstanding progress and a meeting of the 2010 AYP measures.

#### **D. Highly Qualified Staff**

Somerset County Public Schools have met the HQ criteria and have been relieved of responding to the prompts for 2010. Highly qualified teachers at the Elementary level number 100% as do the paraprofessionals. Highly qualified teachers at the secondary level number 95.46%. Attrition due to retirement and resignation stands at 2.5% for both categories. Attrition due to dismissal or non-renewal is at .007%.

Qualifications are only one side of the coin; assured effectiveness is the other. The first assurance of effectiveness comes in the active formation and implementation of a Leadership Team in each school composed of the principals, assistant administrators, instructional coaches, and key leader teachers. The Leadership Team is responsible for the development, implementation, and assessment of the site's professional development and school improvement plan. The Leadership Team sets instructional "Look Fors", collects data on the "look fors" through palm recording of observations during on going walk throughs, collates collected data, and analyzes findings as a leadership team. These findings serve to direct coaching support to teachers suspected of having low student impact and enable the setting of specific goals for improvement.

A second assurance is student performance on departmentalized common benchmarks. Student data is entered into the Data Management system *Performance Matters* and available for individual teacher analysis and application as well as full subject area team comparisons, discussions, and planning during weekly professional development sessions.

The third assurance is a strong program of support for the entering teacher. Following a full week of orientation, teachers are assigned a trained site mentor who provides on-going formal and informal support regarding instructional effectiveness, building operations, and student services.

Highly Effective teachers, so designated by their building principal by three or more years of outstanding evaluations and observations, have an Alternative Evaluation Option of demonstrating their continued effectiveness through a structured process in one of six areas:

- Individual Action Research
- Team Action Research
- Peer Review
- Peer Observation
- Reflective Journaling
- Portfolio Documentation.

#### **E. Schools That Are Safe, Drug Free, and Conducive to Learning**

Somerset County Public Schools has made a concentrated effort to assure all students a safe and drug free learning environment free from bullying, harassment, or intimidation. The total number of reported bullying incidents increased in 2010 from 35 to 45, which may be a response to a thorough orientation of students and parents to the reporting process and procedures. Each school is currently incorporating a Bully Prevention action plan into their School Improvement Plans for 2010-2011.

Suspension from classroom learning remains an area of high concern; students cannot learn and achieve if they are not in the classroom regularly interacting with their teachers and classmates. There was a decrease in suspensions of students in the African American Subgroup and an increased in the White subgroup. The number of out of school suspensions decreased for all groups.

#### **F. Specific Student Groups**

Somerset County Public School Pre-Kindergartens yield 88% of their students as Fully Prepared for Kindergarten and 11% approaching readiness. This is significantly above the Head Start percentage of 64% Fully Ready. Of all entering Kindergarteners, the Hispanic subgroup demonstrates the highest percentage of composite readiness at 94%. Since Somerset is one of the few counties to provide a Migrant Summer Program, a result of the continuous education program may be increased readiness.

Somerset County Public Schools provide a comprehensive gifted and talented program at the primary level through High School and begins identification at the Third Grade adding 31 students to the roster for both enriched and accelerated learning opportunities at their home schools. The STEM Lego program was introduced in Grades 3 through 5 and a Robotics class began in Grade 6 and will be extended into 7<sup>th</sup> Grade this year. Pre-Engineering classes are now being offered at the high schools. At the secondary level, AP enrollment for 2011 increased by 23%.

#### **G. Cross Cutting Themes**

Somerset County Public Schools has vested significant resources in educational technology firmly believing that the independent learning power of a technology enriched education can be the critical asset that makes **the** difference for all children (especially children of poverty) seeking success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A high quality and highly effective technology enriched education depends as much upon professional development opportunities as equipment. In addition to its required Level I Technology Assessment for all professional staff and available Level II Integration Technology Seminars, several seminars have been developed and provided. These include: Web 2.0 Academy, Promethean Board Academy, a 1 to 1 On Line Course, and Workshops on Teaching in a 1:1 Environment. Although the 1 to 1 Laptop program was stalled for 2009-2010, it is continuing in 2010-2011 and will pick up an additional grade level during the year to make up for the lost time.

Education That Is Multicultural focused its efforts on internal activities and increased awareness of means by which to build cultural proficiency among staff. A realization that meaningful awareness and growth requires external expertise and leadership was reached, plans made, and the initiative begun August 2010.

#### **H. Local Goals and Indicators**

Somerset County Public Schools local goals for 2009-2010 centered on integrated technology for learning, staff effectiveness, fiscal management, and facility improvement. As such success was experienced in:

- increased student and staff instructional fluency and access at the Intermediate Level which contributed to measured student achievement;
- increased staff fluency with data management, analysis, and application;
- increased parent involvement as participants in decision making at both the site and system levels;
- maintenance of high quality and well staffed programming in spite of decreased revenue; and
- full scale progress on High School Renovation Project with Local and State support.

#### IV. SUMMARY STATEMENT

The 2010 Budget required temporarily frozen salaries, the loss of valuable positions, reductions in per pupil allotments, profound reductions in professional development opportunities and support, a delay of anticipated programs, and a slowing of academic progress. The 2011 Budget required a more severe tightening of the belt but permitted a slight increase for classified staff, partial year step recognition for teachers, and a flat sum for administrators. The SFSF and ARRA funding has provided a life jacket but, unfortunately, one with built in obsolescence—it ceases with the close of FY 2011. The progress of Somerset County students and staff in the last seven years is undeniable. The link of resources as a primary cause of that progress is also undeniable: the MGT report provided the specific data based correlation between the achievement of children of poverty and expenditures per pupil. It should not be ignored.

As a county genuinely unable to fund above maintenance of effort at any time in the past or to even begin to approach the state’s calculations of required funding for adequacy, our children’s educational well being and progress stand severely threatened for the immediate future. With shrinking Federal grant support and diminishing state support, the inequity between the educational opportunities available to a student from Somerset County and one from nearby Worcester County or across the Chesapeake Bay: Calvert County, Howard County, or Montgomery County will reach an unjustifiable and shameful difference. We cannot allow this to happen.