

Eastern Shore Superintendents

Position Paper #1: **No Child Left Behind**

The Eastern Shore superintendents recognize the essential mission of schools is to provide successful learning experiences for all students and they support increasing standards and accountability to ensure that all students achieve at high performance levels. President Bush signed Public Law 101-110 on January 8, 2002. Otherwise known to all as “No Child Left Behind,” this legislation established new learning goals for all students that must be achieved by the year 2014. It imposes significant and wide-ranging requirements on local school systems and individual schools in the areas of:

- student assessment and accountability
- teacher and paraprofessional quality
- safe schools
- school choice and supplemental services for certain students
- public reporting of school performance

The law also requires annual progress toward pre-set goals which are described as *adequate yearly progress* (AYP) in the State plan, as approved by the U.S. Department of Education. All students and students in each of eight subgroups must meet the mathematically calculated *annual measurable objectives* established by the Maryland State Department of Education, as necessary benchmarks to assure 100% proficiency on all standards by 2014. Eastern Shore Superintendents strongly encourage the State Superintendent and State Board of Education to submit a revised plan to the U.S. Department of Education that addresses the unrealistic expectations for the performance of students qualifying for special education services. All members of the legislature are asked to support a growth model for performance expectations for students receiving special education services when the revisions do not compromise rigor but reflect the reality of identified students' limitations and necessary accommodations.

The Maryland State Board of Education has directed a school reform initiative that commenced in the early 1990's. Student performance standards were increased and local school systems were held accountable for the annual performance of the students who were tested. The last phase of the school reform initiative is the implementation of new high stakes high school assessments in English, math, social studies, and science. Students who entered the ninth grade in September 2005, the graduating class of 2009, must pass or achieve a composite score as a graduation requirement. A comprehensive pre-kindergarten through grade twelve academic intervention plan entitled, “Every Child Achieving” adopted by the State Board of

Education in 1999, was developed to ensure that all students would meet success with the new high school assessments. The “Every Child Achieving Plan” is totally aligned with the provisions of the “No Child Left Behind” legislation.

These new federal and state requirements and standards have associated costs not envisioned during the Thornton Commission deliberations. The State Bridge to Excellence Act has resulted in a significant restructuring and improvement of the State school funding formula; however, the local cost of implementing high stakes graduation tests was not included in the determination of "adequate" funding. Federal funding likewise has not been increased to meet the No Child Left Behind Act mandates imposed on non-Title I schools and school systems. The Comprehensive Master Plan and required annual updates, as well as the subsequent Legislative audit oversight of school system financial management, have also added additional requirements on school districts. These added costs are seriously eroding the positive effect of the new State funding formula.

The Eastern Shore Superintendents cannot emphasize strongly enough that while we accept the expectations and accountability associated with both reform initiatives, we must have the fiscal resources to implement the changes required to achieve the desired student performance results. The United States Congress and the President are not providing the fiscal resources from the Federal level that were promised. A significant deficiency still exists with Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) funding that was promised, which is now being exacerbated by the No Child Left Behind legislation. At the State level to this point, the Governor’s, State Senators’ and Delegates’ funding of Thornton as designed is greatly appreciated. It is critical that inflation factor, implicit price deflator (IPD), and the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI) which are included in the law be funded as well. Eastern Shore school systems must have a sustained source of State funds to ensure that our students achieve the standards that have been established.