



Nancy S. Grasmick  
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD

**TO:** Members of the State Board of Education

**FROM:** Nancy S. Grasmick *Nancy*

**DATE:** July 21, 2009

**SUBJECT:** Approval of Alternative Governance for School Improvement (Restructuring Plans) for one Harford County Public School

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**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this action is to approve the alternative governance (restructuring plan) for the Center for Alternative Education in Harford County.

**BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:**

In January 2002, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Section 1116 (b)(8)(B) of this Act, in conjunction with COMAR 13A.01.04.07.C(3), places requirements on local education agencies (LEAs) with schools in the five levels of school improvement. Schools in improvement must target their efforts on content areas and on students who are in greatest need. Once identified for school improvement, schools must develop detailed improvement plans designed to strengthen each subgroup's achievement. Under Maryland's new Differentiated Accountability Pilot adopted in 2008, schools in improvement progress toward alternative governance through two distinct pathways depending on the number of subgroups not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Comprehensive Needs schools will have failed to meet the annual measurable objective (AMO) in the "All Students" subgroup or will have failed to achieve the AMO for 3 or more subgroups. A Focused Needs school would not have achieved the AMO for less than 3 subgroups or is a 100% Special Education subgroup school. Please refer to the attached Alternative Governance Fact Sheet and Maryland's Accountability System for the 2008-2009 for further explanations on school improvement, supportive actions, and the number of schools involved.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) developed Alternative Governance for School Improvement guidelines and an accompanying rubric. A school in restructuring planning is required to follow the guidelines outlining 1) the actions it took during its previous year in corrective action, 2) the rationale behind the selection of its alternative governance option, 3) the LEA's two-year commitment to the implementation of the governance model, and 4) the results of the Teacher Capacity Needs Assessment (TCNA). The TCNA is a tool designed by MSDE to provide schools with data when planning for school improvement. Its primary intention is to identify and address, as precisely as possible, the root causes underlying key issues impacting student performance, either negatively or positively. Its secondary intention is to insure that the staff and administration collectively agree on the recommended allocation of the school's key resources in terms of time, energy, personnel, and money to improve student achievement.

Eight schools in six LEAs were identified for alternative governance planning based on the results of the 2008 State assessments. These schools, in collaboration with central office officials and school and community stakeholders, have spent the last six months assessing school needs and selecting from a list of available alternative governance options. Local Boards of Education and superintendents review and approve each school's alternative governance proposal prior to its submittal to the Maryland State Department of Education.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The following school submitted an Alternative Governance for School Improvement proposal:

Harford County

Center for Alternative Education      0295      Option 1 – Replace all or most of the school staff\*

\* Option 1 – Replace all or most of the school staff, which may include the principal, who are relevant to the school's inability to make adequate progress.

The Center for Alternative Education serves several unique student populations within a day school, night school, and online course program. These populations are comprised of voluntary students, who apply to attend ALT-Ed; as well as suspended/involuntary students, who have been transferred to ALT-Ed from other HCPS high schools due to long term suspension approved by the Assistant Supervisor of Student Services and the Superintendent of Schools. All student subgroups at this high school have met AYP in Algebra/Data Analysis and reading/English. Student graduation rate, however, has kept the school in school improvement. The school's Alternative Governance Proposal outlines many strategies to support students as they strive to meet the school's ultimate goal of successfully transitioning back to their home school environment and graduating from high school.

In addition to selecting Option 1, this school has proposed to implement various actions/strategies based on the needs of students and their families, staff members, and school administrators. Sample strategies include the following:

1. *Establish and secure authentic partnerships with community resources in order to address the mental health, behavioral, and social needs of students and help students to successfully graduate from high school.*
2. *Provide professional development/training to better meet the needs of the at-risk learner through targeted academic interventions, focused assessment limits, and associated mental health needs in order to provide the needed supports of the whole child and lead to high school graduation.*
3. *Increase/standardize communication between home school/Alternative Education and Alternative Education/home school as well as utilize communication to engender greater parent involvement to foster the needed student supports leading to successful high school graduation.*

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4. *Revise, adopt, and share a mission and vision to focus and maximize efforts for all students attending the Alternative Education Center and that speaks to the student transiency rate at the school and the goal to graduate students from high school.*
5. *Modify scheduling/staffing to better meet the needs of the students, provide optimal instructional opportunities in order to improve graduation rate.*

From April through May 2009, teams of MSDE school improvement specialists reviewed the Alternative Governance for School Improvement proposal. As a result of the internal review, the adopted alternative governance is recommended for approval. A copy of Center for Alternative Education's Alternative Governance for School Improvement Proposal is available in the 2009 Alternative Governance Binder in the Caucus Room.

**ACTION:**

The State Board of Education is requested to approve the adoption of Option 1 and the Alternative Governance for School Improvement proposal for the Center for Alternative Education #0292 in Harford County.

NSG:ML:tak

Attachments: Alternative Governance Fact Sheet  
Maryland's Differentiated Accountability -- 2008-2009 School Year  
Center for Alternative Education Packet

