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TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Nancy S. Grasmick *Nancy*
DATE: June 23, 2009
SUBJECT: Year One Progress as Reported by the SEED School of Maryland

PURPOSE:

The SEED School of Maryland, a publicly-funded residential education program for at-risk students, opened with 80 sixth graders in August 2008. As required by law and as the 2008-2009 school year has ended, SEED is returning to the State Board to share the school's progress and challenges during its first year of operations. In addition to talking about the launching of the new program, SEED leadership will also share plans for expanding to 7th grade for the upcoming 2009-2010 school year with an expected enrollment of up to 160 Maryland youngsters.

BACKGROUND:

Education Article: Title 8. Special Programs for Exceptional Children: Subtitle 7: Residential Boarding Education Programs for At-Risk Youth (Attachment I) was enacted by the Maryland General Assembly in 2006 to establish a residential boarding education program for at-risk youth living in disadvantaged circumstances and under the supervision of the Maryland State Department of Education. A major purpose of the school is to adequately prepare students for success in college. § 8-101 and § 8-701 through 8-709 defined the eligibility criteria for those students applying to the school as well as established the program as a statewide initiative. The operator selected through the State procurement process is the SEED Foundation, Inc., which formed and incorporated the SEED School of Maryland and has experience operating a charter school in Washington, D.C.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In August 2008, after a year of preparation, the SEED School of Maryland enrolled 80 6th grade students from 12 different local school systems. SEED actively recruits students from all Maryland school districts and this year's admission lottery included applicants from ten school districts. SEED's most recent Progress Report shows that many students qualify for Free and Reduced Priced Meals, are African American, and come from single parent households—with a significant percentage having an incarcerated family member. Expectations for all students are high with most of the 2008-2009 entering class of 6th graders having passed the 2008 Maryland School Assessment despite having had challenges to overcome. Test scores for 2009 have yet to be released.

Students typically arrive on Sunday evening and return home on Friday afternoon by transportation provided through SEED or by parents. Academic classes averaged 12 students this year. SEED teachers provided instruction aligned with the State standards based upon a variety of inputs, including curriculum developed by Howard County Public Schools and shared with SEED. SEED MD participates in Title I as a Targeted Assistance Program and also in the federal School Nutrition Programs.

Diagnostic testing and periodic benchmark assessments are part of the instructional program. Facilities will be expanded for the upcoming school year to include a second set of portable classrooms and general space connected by decking and awnings. The dorm constructed by SEED for the 2008 opening of school has sufficient space to accommodate both the 6th and 7th grade students. The secured campus is located in Baltimore at the former Southwestern High School and there are detailed future plans to renovate this structure. The boarding component of the school provides time for student clubs, homework, and character building activities. The Head of School, Jerry Kountz, oversees all aspects of the SEED School of Maryland. In addition to a leadership team and academic and boarding staff, SEED employs two nurses, a school psychologist, and school counselors to help ensure students' health and well-being.

ACTION:

For information only, no action is required.

NSG/rsf

Attachment