

Restructuring Schools in Maryland

Lessons Learned



Restructuring

Here is Edward Bear coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment, and think of it. And then he feels that perhaps there isn't. (A. A. Milne)

Sondheim Report

- Report of the Governor's Commission on School Performance (1989), known as the Sondheim Report, called for developing a system of school accountability guided by three principles:
 - All children can learn
 - All children have a right to attend a school in which they can progress and learn, and
 - All children shall have a real opportunity to learn equally rigorous content

Before the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

- Maryland had an accountability system as early as 1992.
- Beginning in 1994, Maryland designated low-performing schools as “reconstitution eligible (RE).”
- The first two schools in this list were Frederick Douglass High School and Patterson High School in Baltimore City.

2003

- At this time, Maryland had 120 schools designated as reconstitution eligible.
- To translate into NCLB accountability language, all schools designated as RE were labeled “corrective action.”
- Therefore, with the 2004 assessment results, 120 schools entered Restructuring Planning, because they did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

2004

- The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) began with the NCLB law regarding eligible alternative governance options:
 - Zero base
 - Charter
 - Third Party
 - State Takeover (MD law did not choose this one)
 - Other

2005

- MSDE took “other” off the table.
- We defined some “other categories or options” that were acceptable, such as turnaround specialists.
- Locals had to choose from our list.

2006

- We ditched turnaround specialist.
- We began working more directly with the school system in the selection of the alternative governance and the submission.
- We instituted a formal review with a rubric for determining the probability of success.

2007

- We dropped all other categories except distinguished principal (a locally developed program supported by legislature).
- We offered three remaining options:
 - Zero base
 - Charter
 - Third party

2008

- With new proposed regulations, we will drop the distinguished principals option.
- Our proposed Differentiated Accountability Plan would allow for more options if the school is only facing a narrow or focused problem.

NOW

- We are engaging in more discussion about “What is really needed to turn this school around?” rather than what is compliant with NCLB.

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