

# Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education

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## **SUMMARY** **Gap Analysis for Building Block 9**

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# Overall Perspective on Governance

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- The global top performers —
  - Buck stops at single agency—usually the Ministry of Education—that has responsibility for the entire system and the authority to act.
  - This fact enables them to put together systemic plans and to act on those plans.
  - Most of the top performers have faced some sort of existential economic threat at some point in their recent past that forced them to reassess the entire purpose and structure of their education systems.

# Overall Perspective on Governance

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- Global top performers (cont'd)
  - In most cases, major changes in system design and performance have been preceded by extensive public engagement designed to produce very broad consensus on the change in direction that provides continuity of policies through subsequent changes in party and politics. None of this has been true in the benchmark states except in the case of Massachusetts.
- In the United States
  - Governance of education typically deeply fractionated in the U.S. as a whole and at the state level, making it very difficult to build strong *systems* of education.

# Education Governance in Maryland

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- **The state actors**
  - Maryland State Board of Education
  - Maryland Higher Education Commission
  - Higher Education Governing Boards
  - County Boards of Education

# Education Governance in Maryland

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- Other state actors
  - P-20 Leadership Council
  - Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board
- No formal relationships between education governance and economic development system or the social services agencies at the state level
- ***Education actors in silos, arrangements for real coordination and alignment very weak***

# Education Governance in Maryland

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- Unlike most top performers, neither Maryland nor other states have comprehensive long-range plans for their education systems, with measurable goals, clear strategies for achieving them laid out in explicit sequential steps and milestones and measures for gauging progress.
- School systems are required to have master plans but the agencies that make policy for them are not.

# Education Governance in Maryland

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- Due to the fractionation of the governance of the system, the lack of a comprehensive public engagement system for producing widespread involvement in the development of a statewide consensus on direction and the lack of formal planning systems to create coherent, systemic strategies for moving forward, Maryland will find it very difficult to create and implement the kind of powerful, coherent, inclusive and systemic plans that have enabled an increasing number of countries the size of Maryland to outpace the state.

# Accountability in Maryland

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- **School accountability**
  - Framed by federal and state law in great detail since NCLB was passed in 2000
  - Federal framework
    - ✦ Reporting on math, English language arts and science at stated grade levels, by group
    - ✦ Reporting on student proficiency, growth in proficiency, high school graduation rate, progress of ELL students toward proficiency and non-academic indicator chosen by state



# Accountability in Maryland

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- Proposed state framework for school accountability under ESSA
  - A five star rating system based on a combination of school quality and academic achievement indicators
  - The measures of school quality are: chronic absenteeism, school climate and access to a well-rounded curriculum
  - The measures of academic achievement include: performance and growth on test scores; ELL proficiency; high school graduation rate; on track at 9th grade; and completion of a well-rounded curriculum
  - The composite score weights academic indicators 65 percent, and no one indicator less than 10 percent.

# Accountability in Maryland

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- Proposed State Framework for School accountability under ESSA
  - ✦ System for identification of low-performing schools
    - Lowest performing 5 percent of all schools (for Comprehensive Support and Improvement)
    - High schools with graduation rates of less than 67 percent (for Comprehensive Support and Improvement)
    - Schools with subgroups performing below lowest 5 percent and failing to improve after 2 years (for Targeted Support and Improvement)

# Accountability in Top Performers Outside United States

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- Accountability nowhere near as mechanistic as US system
- Based largely on public release of student scores on national/provincial tests at key transition points
- Falls mostly on students rather than teachers or principals

# Accountability in Top Performers Outside United States

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- Poor school performance typically produces visit from inspection team, which leads to recommendations made public and to help as needed, including from other schools, principals and teachers.
- Incentives for teachers and principals to improve their expertise and performance is a function of the way the career ladder system works, not of performance evaluations.
- Performance evaluations typically used to shape professional development, not personnel decisions.

# Observations on Accountability Comparisons

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- Most top performers concentrate mostly or exclusively on the bottom line: academic performance and the acquisition of key credentials by students; the U.S. mixes these desired outcomes with intermediate outcomes (conditions or indicators for producing final outcome – e.g., graduation rates, school climate) with the result that it is much clearer in the top performers what is truly important than it is in the United States.

# Observations on Accountability Comparisons

- Formal accountability in the top performers is rarely used to punish, almost always to identify need for help, which is almost always provided; the converse is true in the U.S.
- Accountability in the U.S. falls mostly on the teachers and principals in the schools, whereas in the top performers it falls at least as much on the students and on the people who run the system.
- To the extent that accountability falls on teachers in the top performing countries, the line of accountability runs as much from teacher to teacher as it does from teacher to supervisor, just as in the high status professions.
- These differences in accountability system design seem to have their origin largely in the low status of teaching in the United States.

# Recommendations

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- Consider whether Maryland should establish a government body with senior executive responsibility for education in the state and for coordinating with other state agencies, including those related to economic development, on the design and implementation of closely coordinated strategies for reaching global standards in education and job training in the state.

# Recommendations

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- Whether or not Maryland chooses to act on the preceding recommendation, the state should consider establishing a government body to monitor and report on the degree to which the state is implementing the recommendations made by this Commission and its successors and achieving the milestones and goals it sets.



# Recommendations

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- To the degree permitted by federal law, Maryland should consider greatly simplifying its education accountability system to concentrate on final outcomes for students and their acquisition of key credentials, especially the new 10<sup>th</sup> grade qualification discussed at earlier meetings; other data should of course be collected to monitor the system and each school in it, but should not be used as direct measures of school accountability.

# Recommendations

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- At the same time, we recommend that Maryland redesign its accountability system so that, as it makes the transition to a full career ladder system providing strong incentives to teachers and school administrators to improve their performance:
  - More emphasis is put on all the measures advocated by the Commission for improving the quality of both teachers and school leaders
  - Less emphasis is put on evaluation of school personnel for the purpose of getting rid of poor performers
  - More emphasis is put on implementing systems in which strong school faculty will hold weak school faculty accountable for their performance
  - Inspection teams, not algorithms, are used to decide which schools are underperforming and what needs to be done to improve their performance
  - Strong educators are given strong incentives to help weaker educators improve their skills

# Recommendations

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- Use the Commission's report to stimulate a conversation in Maryland about the way the Commission's recommendations can help make Maryland one of the world's strongest economies and provide every Marylander with a bright economic future by powering an economy based on high-value-added products and services. The experience of other countries and states like Massachusetts shows that such a discussion can provide the basis of an enduring consensus on education goals and strategies that will outlast the normal changes in party and politics in the state.

# Maryland Commission

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Thank You!