Principal and Teacher Evaluation and Support

Professional Development:

In the past three years, City Schools underwent a far-reaching organizational restructuring, in which the role of central office changed to an emphasis on providing guidance, support, and accountability to schools. Since 2008, the support and development of both teachers and principals was the responsibility of the Chief Academic Office (CAO). City Schools’ new structure moved the accountability function from the CAO into the office of the Chief of Staff (COS). This new model’s theory of action is based on the premise that separated support and accountability bolsters trust and role-clarification between the central and school-based levels.

The CAO expanded opportunities for school-based professional development by targeting professional development offerings to teachers’ identified needs. During SY 2009-2010, City Schools released an online tracking system for teachers’ mid-year evaluations, which allowed for data collection about individual teachers’ strengths and weaknesses, as noted by principals during teachers’ mid-year evaluations. The CAO also created a new online professional development catalogue system call iLearn, an online database that allowed teachers to choose professional development opportunities that would most benefit their practices. While we hope to have a direct link between the online evaluation tracking system and iLearn, our initial system roll-out focused on giving teachers choices to expand teacher investment in the systemic professional development process. Additionally, teachers may participate in one or more of the following on-going professional development opportunities:

· **One-on-one sessions with Teacher Leaders:** Teacher Leaders are individuals identified by the Office of Teaching and Learning as being the top echelon of teacher practitioners in City Schools. Other teachers can choose to meet with these selected individuals during advertised office hours throughout the work week.

· **Observation of or observation by a Teacher Leader:** Teachers can choose to visit a classroom of a teacher leader or be observed by a teacher leader to learn best practices.

· **Participation in monthly “Works” sessions:** These sessions are targeted by grade level and content area and led by exemplary teachers. Sessions cover the upcoming curriculum, and both short-term planning (and accompanying resources) and long-term planning are discussed. Frequently, issues of classroom management are also addressed.

· **Workshops:** Throughout the year (based on needs) various workshops are facilitated on topics that are relevant for that point in the school year. For example, various workshops on classroom management are offered at the beginning of the year.

· **Observation by Teaching and Learning staff:** The Coordinator of New Teacher Support or Teacher Fellows may be asked to observe and debrief with a teacher. Usually, participation in all of the professional development activities above is required before such a visit would occur (due to staff capacity), but each case is handled individually and support is provided as needed.
Although all of these activities are available to all teachers, new teachers in particular are invited regularly to all events by the Coordinator of New Teacher Support, who oversees the support and transition of all new teachers.

For principals, the restructuring has been similarly expansive. For SY 2009-2010, City Schools created a new department within the CAO’s office – the Network School Support Office. The Network office contains fourteen different four-member teams. Each team includes a Team Lead, a Business Support liaison, an Academic Support liaison and a Student Support liaison. Central office strategically associated all schools with one network team, with each network assisting between 10 to 15 schools. The network team’s purpose is to serve as the principal and school community’s key support lever. Network teams are customer-service focused, and network team member evaluations are based on principal approval of support received. While the district holds monthly principal meetings for broad professional development purposes, the network teams serve as the ongoing professional development mechanism within the district.

**Teacher and School Leader Performance**

Teacher performance is currently measured on the Performance Based Evaluation System (PBES). PBES functions within four domains: Planning and Preparation, the Learning Environment, Instruction/Instructional Support and Professional Responsibilities. Teachers are required to meet twice yearly with their administrator to review professional development goals and observational feedback. At the end of the year, every teacher is evaluated on each of these four domains to receive a score of proficient, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory. Teachers complete an individual development plan at the beginning of the year to clearly lay out goals and benchmarks for their own professional development. To date, City Schools is not able to tie teacher evaluation to student achievement systemically. However, an administrator may choose to use this data by accessing the Online Achievement and Reporting System (OARS) to inform their mid-year and yearly evaluation conversations.

City Schools is currently exploring development of a “Value-Added Model” (VAM) for measuring teachers’ success in raising student achievement. The difficulty of implementing such a model rests in the system process of tying teachers to individual students. For many of our K-8 schools, students are associated with individual homerooms, not individual teachers. Moving forward with our new Student Management System, City Schools will be able to better link students and teachers by requiring “block scheduling” by teachers, but this does little to overcome the linkage barrier for prior years.

Additionally, Maryland’s assessments for K-8 students only test reading and mathematics. The High School Assessment (HSA) only measures algebra I, English II, U.S. Government and biology. Thus, there is no assessment measure for other non-standard content areas, such as foreign language, elementary social studies, etc. Even with a value-added algorithm, the lack of a content test makes measurement of student performance difficult in a quantitative process. We are considering various methods for overcoming this barrier, but such implementation will be difficult to accomplish before SY 2011-2012.

Principal evaluations are done by one of the two Executive Directors. This year, a summative
tool called the School Progress Report that uses metrics from the school climate survey, attendance results and other survey tools will be used to inform evaluation conversations with principals. This tool does not directly link student progress to principal evaluation, but it informs the conversation as to whether the school as a whole is improving student achievement relative to the its peer schools (similar student demographics). With a value-added model in place, City Schools will be better able to link school performance to principal leadership, at least as it applies to traditional content areas.

**Development Opportunities: Career Pathways**

Teachers do not currently have clear career path development opportunities. There are various school-based opportunities such as the teacher leader position, instructional support teacher positions and mentoring positions that exist for advancing teachers. However, no clear career pathways have been established. In response, City Schools is working to align its compensation and career paths for teachers starting in school year 2010-2011. Within this system, teachers will have control over their own professional development, aligning it with compensation, student outcomes and leadership opportunities. City Schools is in the midst of collective bargaining agreement negotiations to create this teacher career ladder.

Pending agreement by the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU) and the Board of School Commissioners, the new model would establish four career levels: standard, professional, model and lead teacher. The new levels would offer higher salary ranges than currently exist under our established “lane” system (which bases lane movement on acquiring a masters degree, a masters plus thirty credits, and a doctorate degree, respectively). In the new career level model, teachers could choose to move up a level by presenting evidence of success to a peer-review committee (comprised of both BTU members and central office staff). City Schools would use a rubric based on certain domains to judge whether a teacher would move between levels. These domains would include evidence of demonstrated success in (a) moving student achievement, (b) instructional ability (evaluations), (c) professional development advancement, and (d) school leadership initiative. With each increasing level, the teacher would earn substantially more base pay while accepting greater responsibility within the school.

In the current structure, teachers’ salaries increase automatically for each year of service (the traditional “step” within each “lane”). Under the new model, City Schools would replace “steps” with “intervals.” Teachers would move through intervals, earning percentage increases in their salaries, by participating in professional development linked to student achievement, thereby earning Continuing Education Units (CEUs). As teachers accumulate more CEUs, they would move to higher intervals within their career ladder. Teachers could also move to a higher interval within a career level by achieving a “proficient” evaluation for two consecutive years.

The new career level model would allow new teachers to move faster through the compensation plan, thereby allowing for ownership of one’s teaching career. Additionally, the new model bases compensation on a teacher’s initiative to develop his or her own practice, rather than basing salaries on masters degrees and years of service. This would be a revolutionary new frame of teacher compensation, and City Schools anticipates that it would require a significant shift in the way we view the teaching profession in Baltimore (should the BTU and the Board of School
Commissioners adopt the new model).

**Data Systems to Track Performance**

The OARS database tracking system is in place to track student performance on benchmark and standardized tests. This tool allows a teacher to upload scores on predefined tests and use the data to create additional assessments and intervention groups to improve student performance on specific subsets of skills.

**Non-Performers**

In the case of non-tenured teachers, removal of non-performers is a relatively simple process. However, tenured teacher dismissal does not occur frequently, due to the amount of paperwork and time required. In many instances, principals either encourage the teacher to voluntarily transfer or surplus the staff member from their roster in order to address the performance issue. Additional training is necessary to equip principals with adequate support and skills to manage the performance of all staff. Additionally, proper tools for performance management must be in place to increase performance in key areas.

Principals are given very little feedback or training in staff management under the current management structure. School leaders need additional coaching and mentoring support in order to successfully address these challenges.