

INTRODUCTION TO EXCELLENCE BY DESIGN IN BCPS

In recognition of the fact that the schools of the State of Maryland have more than 20 years of experience with the State's school improvement process, the Middle States Association's Commission on Secondary Schools has entered into an agreement with the Baltimore County Public Schools that to accept certain elements of that process as fulfilling some of the requirements for accreditation when using the Commission's *Excellence by Design* self-study and accreditation protocol.

The Commission has determined that Maryland's requirements for school improvement planning meet, with minor adjustments, the planning processes of the *Excellence by Design* protocol as well as the requirement that the school develops a Plan for Growth and Improvement in student performance and the organization's capacity to achieve the desired levels of performance.

As a result, Validation Team's representing the Commission will encounter some elements of Baltimore County Public Schools high schools' self-study and accreditation documents that differ somewhat from those of non-Maryland schools. Primary among the differences is the fact that the Commission will accept the School Improvement Plan that BCPS submit in compliance with the State of Maryland's requirements. However, because the format of these plans differs significantly from those with which most Middle States volunteers are accustomed, it is incumbent upon the school to provide the guidance Validation Teams will need to find within the School Improvement Plans the elements that respond to the Middle States requirements.

It is also important to note that another effect of the BCPS-MSA Agreement is that Validation Teams will encounter some different terms. For example, Maryland schools use the term "goals" to refer to the Middle States requirements that schools have three, four or five "objectives." Middle States is not interested that the exact terminology found in the *Excellence by Design* protocol is used. Instead, it is interested in ensuring that the spirit and intent are met.