

Key Question Eight:

What must the state do to provide special assistance and support to school systems who need such help to successfully implement these recommendations?

RECOMMENDATION 8.1.

SPECIAL FUNDING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Small school districts or systems with special circumstances that prevent the delivery of special services for gifted and talented students should be eligible for special funds and other technical assistance for staff development, equipment, and instructional purposes.

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RECOMMENDATION 8.1: Small school districts or systems with special circumstances that prevent the delivery of special services for gifted and talented students should be eligible for special funds and other technical assistance for staff development, equipment, and instructional purposes.

PERSPECTIVE: "Some school systems — primarily because of size or geographic location — may be unable within current budget realities to provide the kind of services needed by their students. To ensure the fair and equitable treatment of students across the state, the Maryland State Department of Education will need to provide such school systems with incentives and support in the way of special funding/grants, as well as technical assistance."

RATIONALE: Approximately 12 of the 24 local school districts in Maryland would be considered to be either rural and/or small. These districts tend to be in the Western part of the state and in the Eastern Shore. While only enrolling 12% of Maryland's public school youth, they cover over half of the state geographically.

Such districts face unique challenges in providing services of all kinds to their constituents. The vast distances, small numbers of students, and limited resources (both personnel and equipment) are some of the dilemmas faced by instructional leaders in these areas.

In addition to small and/or rural school districts, other systems may face special circumstances that prevent the full implementation of the recommendations contained in this report. Although size and distance may not be the issue, equally formidable obstacles may have to be overcome.

Special financial support should be available to these schools in the form of "start-up funds" for the purpose of developing initiatives that will enhance education for their gifted students. Specific funding should be provided for transportation and technology for these areas. Since resources are so limited, efforts should be made to help these districts find alternative ways to deliver services, especially through distance-learning.

Efforts should be made to assist systems in organizing regional efforts to provide not only staff development opportunities (e.g., through local colleges and universities and summer centers) but also services for gifted students.

Collaborative efforts should be organized either through colleges and universities, regional staff development centers, or educational consortia to provide leadership in staff development and programming. If possible, systems should be encouraged to share resources, and incentives should be provided to those that do so. Such sharing would necessarily incorporate the flexibility to move students and/or instructional staff between counties/systems in order to provide appropriate instructional opportunities.

"In the final analysis, the true costs [of effective educational programs] depend upon what we think is important. If we value learning, the cost of 'doing it right the first time' is less than the expense involved in 'doing it wrong' and having to do it over again."

National Education Commission on Time and Learning
Prisoners of Time