



## Building State Capacity to Support Districts and Schools

DE • DC • MD • NJ • PA

## Highlights of Three Years of Progress in Mid-Atlantic States

The George Washington University  
Center for Equity & Excellence in Education  
Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center



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## Acknowledgments

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We'd like to thank our state and regional coordinators for their great work over the past three years and for their contributions to this publication. Thanks also to Marilyn Muirhead, Associate Director of MACC for her vision and dedication to MACC's work as a whole. Also, thanks to Martha Vockley of Vockley, Lang for her assistance in preparing this publication, interviewing staff, and synthesizing and writing the state and regional stories.

This publication was produced under a U.S. Department of Education grant, by The George Washington University Center for Equity & Excellence in Education.

The Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center (MACC) at GW-CEEE, is funded by the US Department of Education to provide technical assistance to state education agencies (SEAs) on the implementation of No Child Left Behind. Serving Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, MACC focuses on assisting SEAs with the development of policies and practices that improve their capacity to support districts and schools identified as needing improvement. Charlene Rivera, Executive Director of GW-CEEE is the Principle Investigator and Director of MACC.

The mission of The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education is to advance education reform so all students achieve to high standards. GW-CEEE conducts policy and applied research, designs and implements program evaluations, and provides professional development and technical assistance. GW-CEEE's clients include state education agencies, school districts, schools, foundations, and federal agencies.

## A Partner for Positive Change

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Over the past three years, the Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center (MACC) at GW-CEEE has been a valued partner with the states in the mid-Atlantic region in building their capacity to address a major national priority: improving K–12 student achievement, particularly among low-performing students.

MACC has been instrumental in empowering states to take on their challenging new role as agents of change in an era of accountability. States, in fact, must play a “pivotal” role in supporting underperforming districts and schools, according to the U.S. Department of Education. This shift in focus—from agencies primarily focused on compliance issues to creating and implementing effective statewide systems of support for districts and schools—demands that states work in new ways, set new priorities, and deepen their leadership, organizational and professional capacity.

Every state education agency (SEA) in the region—Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania—faces both unique and common challenges. MACC works in partnership with state leaders as a provider and broker of services (including research, data analysis and technical assistance), critical friend, coach, and convener to address these challenges, with both customized and collective solutions.

MACC staff includes educators from a wide range of professional fields, many of whom are nationally known experts with rich experience in research, policy and practice. This expertise—in areas such as organizational change, school improvement, instructional leadership, the use of data, professional development, teacher quality, coaching and facilitation, curriculum, instruction, assessment, literacy and English language learners—is especially relevant to states’ challenges. MACC has the staff capacity to identify, synthesize, and summarize research that is highly relevant to state policies, statewide systems of support, and district and school improvement strategies.

### Meeting ‘Absolute Priorities’

MACC is one of 16 regional comprehensive centers charged by the U.S. Department of Education to provide frontline assistance to states. This assistance is targeted at implementing federal school improvement programs and at increasing state capacity to assist districts and schools in meeting their student achievement goals. Regional centers are required to be responsible for developing strong relationships in their regions as “on the ground” providers of technical assistance.

Specifically, MACC and the other regional centers must provide a program of technical assistance to states that meets the “absolute priorities” of the US Department of Education requirements:<sup>1</sup>

- Assessing the improvement needs of districts and schools and assisting them in developing solutions to address these needs.
- Building and sustaining systemic support for district and school improvement efforts to close existing achievement gaps and adopt proven practices to improve instruction and achievement outcomes for students in schools identified as in need of improvement.

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<sup>1</sup> These requirements are specified in the US Department of Education’s 2005 request for Regional Center proposals.

- Improving the tools and systems for school improvement and accountability for the achievement outcomes.

To meet these priorities, MACC and the other regional centers draw from resources and expertise provided by the five national content centers, established by the US Department of Education to support their work, and from other expert sources.

MACC also has strategic partnerships with other education networks, such as the Regional Education Laboratories, which affords access to high-quality, scientifically valid education research, and with national and regional education organizations, such as the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Southern Regional Educational Board. These collaborative relationships also support states with relevant research, best practices and resources.

### Strengthening Statewide Systems of Support

Throughout its state and regional work, MACC focuses purposefully on strengthening statewide systems of support. Without coordinated, coherent and responsive statewide systems of support, states cannot possibly fulfill their obligations to districts and schools. Thus, improving states' leadership, organizational and professional capacity empowers states to deliver effective assistance to districts and schools, especially those with the greatest challenges.

MACC meets states where they are and works in partnership with them to move them to where they want—and need—to be. SEA needs drive all of MACC's work. All projects with states encompass one or more of MACC's three goals areas for SEAs, all of which are aligned with the US Department of Education's priorities for the regional centers' work with states. Working toward these goals puts states on the right path to support districts and schools in improving students' academic achievement. These goals are reflected in the projects highlighted in this publication.

#### Three Goals of MACC's Work

Goal 1: SEAs foster relationships, resource sharing and comprehensive planning across divisions for the purpose of meeting **technical assistance** needs of districts and schools identified for improvement.

Goal 2: SEAs use data to **identify and differentiate the needs of districts and schools** identified for improvement so that appropriate assistance can be delivered to address these needs.

Goal 3: SEAs design and use **ongoing, job-embedded professional development** that helps district instructional leaders build effective practice in schools identified for improvement.

## Profiles of Progress

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With targeted support from MACC, every state in the mid-Atlantic region has made substantial progress in living up to its obligations to districts and schools.

This publication profiles a selection of MACC accomplishments in each SEA over three years. Rather than tracing single, isolated projects—the purpose of the U.S. Department of Education’s annual evaluations of the regional centers—these state profiles tell a different and more comprehensive story:

- MACC adds **value** to state work across projects and over time.
- MACC empowers states with **knowledge and skills, research and data analysis, and technology tools**.
- MACC encourages **innovation** in education policies and practices.
- MACC builds **momentum** for positive change and leverages state progress throughout the mid-Atlantic region and beyond.
- MACC contributes to **improved student achievement**.

These state profiles do not reflect all of the projects MACC has undertaken with states. Instead, they exemplify a range of projects in which MACC has made a positive impact in states over time as they reposition themselves to support districts and schools.

## Strengthening a Statewide System of Support

Delaware, the nation's First State, is also among the first states in the nation to undertake a systematic examination—and improvement—of its statewide system of support.

The Delaware Department of Education found itself at a crossroads in its efforts to support underperforming districts and schools. Having established the Delaware Education Support System (DESS) and made strides in service delivery, department leaders wanted to take the measure of their impact, make mid-course adjustments, and prepare for a smooth transition to anticipated new leadership.

*“Our assistance is much more targeted and focused on needs.”*  
- SEA staff

Delaware discovered the perfect way to go about this work at a MACC regional conference. There, MACC introduced states to a powerful new self-assessment developed by the Center on Innovation & Improvement (CII), one of the five content centers that support the regional centers' work in states.

### Using a Research-Based Framework to Assess State Capacity

As outlined in its publication, *Strengthening the Statewide System of Support*, CII created a framework for self-assessment for states. The framework is the culmination of an analysis of current research from within and outside the field of education. It identified a set of functional categories that appear to be the most likely to change educational practice:

- Creating **incentives** for educators to engage in change
- Building the **capacity** of organizations and individuals to effect change
- Providing organizations and individuals with **opportunities** to change

The self-assessment is designed to allow states to explore their policies and practices in these critical categories. The framework resonated with Delaware leaders, who asked MACC to facilitate a self-assessment in their state. Thus, a cross-functional department team conducted the self-assessment inventory of the capacity of DESS to effectively assist districts and schools in need of improvement.

### Empowering Improvement in Critical State Functions

The self-assessment process enabled the department to examine the strengths and weaknesses of its statewide system of support in the three categories and empowered Delaware with substantive ways to plan for improvement.

*Strengthening the Statewide System of Support* is not a compliance monitoring process, a rating system, or a means of comparing one state's system with another's. The sole purpose of the research-based framework is for SEAs to fully examine their capacity to support districts and schools, determine ways to strengthen the system and develop a plan for improvement.

From its unique position as an outside consultant with some inside perspective on how the Department functions, MACC produced and presented the culminating report of the self-assessment process. SEA leaders subsequently embraced the report findings and recommendations. Now, with MACC's continuing support, the SEA is working to implement the

recommendations, including:

- Clarifying the vision and mission of DESS within the department, with contracted service providers, and with districts and schools
- Refining the data analysis process used to prioritize district and school needs, technical assistance and other resource allocations to districts and schools
- Coordinating and aligning DESS services to districts and schools with those of contracted service providers, and tracking fidelity of services provided
- Assessing the knowledge and skills of all department staff members and contracted service providers and developing a professional development plan for them based on assessed needs
- Improving technology systems to better communicate with districts and schools and track their plans and improvements, professional development and technical assistance, DESS priorities and projects

With MACC’s assistance, Delaware determined the next steps in improving its statewide system of support—and is working on implementing changes that will improve services to the highest-need districts and schools.



# District of Columbia

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## Developing Leadership, Organizational and Professional Capacity

The District of Columbia is in the midst of perhaps the most radical metamorphosis in the nation in terms of its educational support system.

Until very recently, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) functioned as both a local education agency (LEA) and as an SEA for itself and for the very different District of Columbia Public Charter School Board.

### Creating a State Education Agency *and* a Statewide System of Support

Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), however, every state must have an independent SEA. For the District, this meant creating an SEA that did not depend on LEA staff *and* implementing a statewide system of support for the two LEAs - DC has 61 charters that operate as a separate LEA.

MACC has served as a critical friend and knowledgeable resource to the SEA. MACC collaborated with key leaders in the newly organized SEA to assist the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) by providing a comprehensive review and advice on OSSE's strategic plans.

*"Thanks to undaunted assistance from MACC, we are watching our statewide system of support unveil before our eyes." - SEA staff*

Now, MACC has developed a tool that might assist in helping OSSE develop the leadership, organizational and professional capacity to fulfill its accountability obligations to DCPS and to the charter schools. At the

same time, OSSE is building its statewide system of support to assist underperforming schools. All of this work is occurring at a time when DCPS itself is undergoing considerable change under mayoral authority and new leadership.

### Taking the Measure of Schools to Provide Differentiated Support

MACC has supported OSSE with professional development, technical assistance, and "train the trainer" models to build SEA capacity. Specifically, MACC:

- Sponsored a leadership retreat to help OSSE clarify its vision and mission in creating an aligned, coherent and coordinated education system focused on common goals around improving student learning and achievement.
- Offered practical workshops to help OSSE turn its organizational objectives into a five-year strategic plan.
- Worked with CII to support OSSE in developing an annual school review process to determine the different needs of underperforming schools.

Known as the Patterns of Practice School Review, the school review process is based on a teacher classroom observation instructional observation tool and 49 research-based indicators associated with substantial school improvement, according to CII's *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement* (2007). From these indicators OSSE, with MACC support, developed a framework of nine standards of excellence—covering curriculum, assessment, instruction, comprehensive and effective planning, school culture, professional development, leadership, and organizational structure and resources—for high-performing schools.

- Assisted OSSE in training staff members and consultants to conduct the Patterns of Practice School Reviews, which began in 2008.
- Contributed to OSSE's outreach to families by developing practical parent guides to education standards.

MACC's will continue to provide guidance in helping the SEA focus on research-based policies, innovative practices and effective instructional strategies, and help OSSE as it provides targeted, needs-based technical assistance to District of Columbia schools.

## Leveraging One State’s Focus on Middle and High Schools to the Mid-Atlantic Region—and Beyond

For several years, the Maryland State Department of Education has been especially concerned about high school performance, particularly now that students must pass end-of-course exams to earn a diploma. More recently, the state paid heed to research that indicates that the middle years, and the middle-to-high school transition, are critical to high school preparedness and success.

As a result, improving teacher quality—particularly among middle and high school teachers in core subjects—has taken on a new urgency in Maryland. Teacher quality is at the heart of Maryland’s school improvement and statewide system of support initiatives, which included a Middle School Steering Committee focused on improving the middle to high school transition.

MACC is assisting with these efforts with research, technical assistance, and technology-based communications and collaboration tools. Just as important, MACC is leveraging Maryland’s trail-blazing progress so that other mid-Atlantic states—and states across the nation—can benefit from it as well.

### A Unique Contribution from a Regional Center

The leveraging began at a “superregional” conference that examined research and best practices on the middle to high school transition. The highly rated conference that MACC cosponsored with the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC), drew teams from 18 SEAs.

MACC showcased Maryland’s work at the conference, which was timely and relevant to the state’s work. The research expertise and lessons highlighted from around the country informed the state’s focus on middle and high schools. Following the forum, Maryland brought MACC on board to support the work of its Middle School Steering Committee. MACC contributed resources and a research synthesis to the committee’s comprehensive report, *The Critical Middle*, which set the state agenda for improving middle school education, teacher quality, and professional development.

MACC also created and managed a blog and website to keep working groups of teachers, administrators, parents, and business/community and higher education members on the same page. This work, coupled with the keen interest of states in middle and high school improvement, served as a foundation for a deeper examination of this topic.

MACC conducted an original study on the leadership and strategies that contribute to improved student achievement in the middle grades. The resulting report, *Strengthening the Transition from Middle Grades to High School in the Mid-Atlantic Region*, captures the “state of the states” and presents comprehensive recommendations for improving the curriculum, instruction, teacher preparation, student supports, school leadership, technical assistance, and guidance.

The report is a unique research contribution from a regional center. It fills a need for current research that states themselves typically do not have the capacity to conduct. States throughout the nation could benefit from the findings.

In Maryland, meanwhile, MACC continues to support the state in rolling out its middle years agenda, which includes:

- **Improving the supply and deployment of high-quality teachers.** MACC provided Maryland with a detailed analysis of district efforts to increase the percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers, address the disproportionate distribution of teachers between high- and low-poverty schools, and provide targeted induction and mentoring programs to new and veteran teachers. This analysis informed decisions made by state leaders regarding how they could better support their districts.
- **Supporting ongoing, job-embedded professional development for middle and high school coaches and teachers.** MACC partnered with SEA staff to revise the training provided to Governor's Academy coaches so that the purposes, benefits and specific actions of instructional coaches were more clearly communicated. Governor's Academy coaches then work throughout the school year to assist their middle and high school teacher colleagues in implementing research-based instructional strategies to improve student achievement across the content areas. MACC has also helped the state consider new ways of recruiting and supporting the work of Governor's Academy coaches across the state.

The collaborative work with Maryland shows how MACC can amplify the regional—and national—impact of one state's progress so each state does not have to start its improvement efforts from scratch.

### Focusing State Policies and Practices on Districts and Schools in Need of Improvement

#### Coordinating and Aligning Support

For many years, the New Jersey Department of Education has been charged with improving student performance in the 30 lowest-performing districts in the state, formerly known as Abbott districts, which were under court order to improve equity and outcomes. While many divisions in the department have worked to support the Abbott districts, the services had mixed outcomes. One reason: challenges in coordination across divisions responsible for supporting Abbott and other underperforming districts.

*“We don’t always get the opportunity to discuss policy and technical assistance as a group. MACC gets the conversations started. With MACC at the table, we are now on the same page.” - SEA staff*

For the past three years, the New Jersey Department of Education has partnered with MACC to establish a new organizational structure, the New Jersey State Committee, which now is implementing plans and coordinating support for districts and schools. The State Committee brings together the Deputy Commissioner of Education and the assistant commissioners of three critical divisions: the Division of Student Services, the Division of District and School Improvement, and the Division of Educational Standards and Programs.

As an integral member of the State Committee, MACC is instrumental in keeping the department focused on creating aligned, research-based policies and practices. MACC leverages its expertise in research, data analysis, comprehensive planning, professional development, technical assistance, and facilitation to strengthen collaboration and shared decision making across divisions, offices and programs.

Over time, the State Committee has begun to implement strategies that reflect a shared vision for supporting low-performing districts. The strategies draw from data analysis by MACC, including an in-depth analysis of New Jersey’s Comprehensive Assessment for Planning and Achievement (CAPA), a needs assessment for schools in corrective action and restructuring.

Using Marzano’s theory of action (*What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action*, ASCD, 2003), MACC helped the department organize and make sense of the CAPA data, reducing a long list of school needs to seven “power indicators,” or factors affecting student achievement. The factors identified through the data analysis and highlighted in the power indicators include the need for:

- Differentiated supports for students
- Effective teaching (review of standards, curriculum and student work)
- Professional development that uses adult learning strategies
- Effective school leadership

These factors correlate to student achievement in high-performing schools.

## Turning Research into Practice

Together, MACC and the State Committee are using the research and lessons learned from experiences with low-performing districts and schools to develop coherent, aligned policies and practices that more effectively support districts and schools. These include:

- **Training programs** for department staff and strategic partners who provide professional development and technical assistance to low-performing districts and schools. These training programs are designed to build department knowledge and skills to support districts and schools consistently.
- **Comprehensive explanations and examples** of the seven “power indicators” of effective schools, which enable state service providers to focus on the most important strategies for improving student achievement.
- **Case studies** of 26 schools that have made significant changes in practice and student achievement since they were identified for Corrective Action. In addition, MACC is assisting the department in monitoring and assessing its services to 39 schools in restructuring.
- **Documentation of best practices**, such as principal walk-throughs to monitor teaching and learning in schools and classrooms. This cataloguing of best practices is used to give state service providers practical strategies that can be shared with district and school administrators and educators.

## Organizing to Support Student Achievement

With MACC’s steady presence in New Jersey, the State Committee, and staff from key department divisions, offices, and programs now are working together more efficiently and effectively to improve student achievement.

As a trusted third party, MACC regularly facilitates the State Committee toward implementing a theory of action, using comprehensive data analysis to determine the needs of low-performing schools and findings from empirical research to drive decisions on policies, plans, organizational roles, practices and budgets. MACC also is working with the State Committee to maintain a focus on its core mission and unified actions to improve teaching, learning, and student achievement.

# Pennsylvania

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## Improving Teacher Quality and Classroom Instruction

Pennsylvania is the biggest state in the mid-Atlantic region and the sixth most populous in the nation—and it has big ambitions for improving educational policies, practices and results. MACC is pleased to partner with the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) in their efforts to improve student achievement, particularly through the Keystone Teacher Quality Initiative.

*“I wanted to follow up with a huge  
THANK YOU to each of you for your  
cooperation, contributions,  
dedication and hard work ...”  
- SEA staff*

This high-priority initiative began in 2005, when the governor signed an executive order to establish a Governor’s Commission on Training America’s Teachers:

*“The Commission plans a deliberative process focusing on the knowledge and teaching skills with which our teacher preparation programs must equip future teachers; a seamless system of pre-service and in-service teacher education for lifelong learning; ways to meet the shortages and geographic imbalances in the supply and demand for high-quality teachers ...”*

MACC began needs sensing in preparation to support the initiative in 2006, after state officials made clear at two conferences—one hosted by the National Comprehensive Center on Teacher Quality—that MACC’s assistance would be welcome. PDE wanted to benchmark other states’ revisions to teacher certification requirements, teacher preparation programs, and recruiting for hard-to-fill positions. MACC gathered and shared this information at the workgroup meetings and with the consultants that PDE used as facilitators and writers.

### Supporting Work Groups to Establish New Certification Requirements

PDE convened three work groups to develop new teacher certification guidelines for PreK-4, grades 4-8, and special education teachers. MACC staff was involved in all three work groups; providing informational presentations as requested by PDE staff, reviews of teacher certification policies in other states, resources, comments on key topics, and support to the technical writers between work group meetings.

### Supporting Instructional Coaches Statewide

The Pennsylvania Department of Education established the Collaborative Coaching Board (CCB) in October 2006 in order to establish consistency between five Pennsylvania initiatives that have major coaching components as part of their school improvement design. CCB members represent PDE coaching programs, higher education, and the state’s regional service providers. MACC was invited to join the CCB in October 2007 to support the CCB’s efforts to engage in collaborative planning and resource development in order to connect and strengthen the work of all Pennsylvania’s coaching initiatives. MACC joined the CCB to provide support to its efforts to build on the emerging research that indicated that instructional coaching, a form of job-embedded professional development, offers great promise for school improvement.

One focus of MACC’s work with the CCB is knowledge creation and dissemination. MACC supports the CCB’s acquisition and use of current research and professional knowledge on instructional coaching, and its dissemination of knowledge through CCB policy documents and

professional development initiatives for instructional coaches. To support this focus MACC engaged in the following activities:

- MACC facilitated a Virtual Open House to collect feedback from Pennsylvania coaches on the knowledge and skills they felt were most critical to their coaching role, in order to enhance the CCB's development of *Instructional Coach Endorsement Minimum Competencies and Training Information*, which specifies the knowledge and skills required for effective instructional coaching.
- MACC assisted with the planning, facilitation, and presentations for the CCB's Governor's Institute on Instructional Coaching in September 2008. The Institute was well received by the 120 coaches in attendance who requested that PDE offer another Instructional Coaching Institute in 2009.
- MACC led a coaching design team which presented four sessions on specific aspects of instructional coaching to both new and experienced Classrooms for the Future Coaches at PDE's October 2008 CFF Boot Camp.
- MACC arranged to have coaching expert, author and former MACC staff member Mary Catherine Moran share information from her book *Differentiated Literacy Coaching* (ASCD 2007) as a keynote speaker at the CCB Governor's Institute and during an online Book Talk held as part of the Virtual Open House.

Pennsylvania is making significant improvements to its teacher education, professional development, recruiting, and retention policies and practices, which will contribute to increased numbers of highly qualified teachers statewide. MACC is pleased that the support it has provided through planning assistance, information collection and dissemination, expert consultation and facilitation has contributed to these important efforts.



## Mid-Atlantic Region

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### Identifying and Meeting Pressing Regional Challenges

MACC technical assistance to the mid-Atlantic states is based on identified needs, which are determined both formally and informally.

MACC regularly surveys state officials to identify pressing challenges—and to assess their readiness and capacity to address these challenges in their support to districts and schools. Typically, states face different challenges, and are at different stages of readiness and capacity, which calls for differentiated technical support from MACC through individual state projects.

MACC staff members collaborate routinely to synthesize the surveys, the body of work and emerging issues in states, which yields insights into common issues or challenges in the region. In these cases, MACC responds with technical assistance and professional development opportunities that the states value highly.

*“MACC helps illuminate the issues and brings fresh perspectives and fresh thinking.” – SEA staff*

For example, MACC—often in partnership with other regional centers, national content centers and educational organizations—has organized regional and “superregional” conferences on:

- Assessing English language learners and meeting their instructional needs
- Understanding the middle to high school transition years and improving secondary outcomes
- Building effective statewide systems of support
- Restructuring and corrective action

These regional events prominently feature research- and evidence-based strategies from leading experts for supporting districts and schools. Equally important, these events give state officials rare opportunities to collaborate with their in-state colleagues across divisions and with their out-of-state peers throughout the region and beyond. The opportunity to cross-pollinate ideas gets states officials out of their sometimes insular and idiosyncratic approaches to common problems.

This collaboration lasts longer than the one-time events. MACC-hosted Webcasts, wikis and blogs, for example, enable states to collaborate virtually—and reduce travel time and costs. By offering these kinds of follow-up opportunities, MACC keeps states focused on critical issues and results that matter.

In effect, these events and technology-based follow-ups are job-embedded professional development opportunities, with expert coaching for states as they work on solutions to real and current challenges. Indeed, simply networking with their counterparts in other states—and learning what works elsewhere—has led some state officials to breakthroughs on knotty problems.

### Assessing and Meeting the Needs of Migrant Students

MACC also has been working in each mid-Atlantic state individually on a collective challenge: assessing and meeting the needs of migrant students and their families.

States are required to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) to identify the migrant students in their districts and schools, assess their instructional and individual needs, and develop a comprehensive service delivery plan for meeting these needs.

Each state now is focused on its migrant population like never before. Pennsylvania, for example, has convened migrant education working groups in early childhood, elementary and secondary education; in the content areas; and in parent outreach and after-school activities. MACC is facilitating these meetings, providing continuity, offering best-practice examples and resources, and keeping the work on track. The state is setting targets for increasing achievement among migrant students.

In Maryland, the data and demographic information collected in the CNA process have convinced the state to expand its assistance to migrant students beyond its full-day summer school program. This data-driven decision could result in a support program for school transitions in the fall, stepped-up pre-K school registration drives and a home tutoring program.

For most mid-Atlantic states migrant students have been an underserved population. With MACC's migrant expertise, credibility and assistance in synthesizing the results of the CNAs and making recommendations for improvements, each state realized the value of the CNA process. Indeed, the process is a microcosm of what they should be doing for *every* segment of their student populations. As such, the CNA process has been a valuable capacity-building exercise for the mid-Atlantic states.

## A Partner for Positive Change

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Strengthening statewide systems of support for underperforming districts and schools is a new paradigm for every state in the mid-Atlantic region.

MACC has been and continues to be a partner for positive change as states respond to this new paradigm with new visions, missions, policies, organizations, policies, practices and relationships. The magnitude of these challenges demands research and innovation, knowledge and expertise, flexibility and adaptability, problem solving and critical thinking.

As a credible independent organization with a depth of knowledge, expertise and resources, MACC brings fresh perspectives and unflagging persistence to SEAs. MACC staff members have become trusted insiders as well, working side by side with state education officials to devise comprehensive, coherent and coordinated statewide systems of support.

This “outside–inside” role affords MACC and the other regional centers a unique opportunity to provide unparalleled strategic advice and customized technical support to states. As a result, states are building their leadership, organizational and professional capacity to support the most urgent needs of districts, schools and students. This capacity will be ever more critical—as will states’ need for partnerships with regional centers—as the nation continues to focus on improving student achievement in the years ahead.

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