



State of Education Report 2008

Leading the Pack, Continuing to Move Forward

Consistently Improving



Dear Friends of Maryland Public Education:

Have you heard the news? Maryland schools continue to win praise and receive national accolades.

Let me share with you some of the many highlights. For the fourth consecutive year, every Maryland school system has shown improvement on state assessments. From the Eastern Shore to the western mountains, and all the cities and countryside in between, schools are strengthening instruction and helping students achieve at higher levels. We are committed to long-term, continuous improvement. Maryland eschews quick-fix policies, sticking to long-term strategies that lead to long-term results.

Education Week, the nation's preeminent education newspaper, recently named Maryland schools among the very best. Maryland ranked third in the nation, and the publication's research director found that no state has schools that are more consistently excellent. A welcome commendation, but it did not stop there. A few weeks later, the College Board said Maryland students ranked second in the nation in achievement on the rigorous Advanced Placement tests.

"No state is at the top of the nation in everything, but Maryland comes as close as we've seen to a consistent outstanding performer overall."

— Christopher B. Swanson, director, Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, discussing *Education Week's* "Quality Counts" report in the *Washington Post*, January 9, 2008

These reports, and scores just like them, did not come about overnight. Maryland, and its independent State Board of Education, have been working diligently from the ground up to build the highest quality education program, preschool through adult learning. Better schools mean better graduates, and better graduates mean a healthier economy. That translates into a better future for us all.

This publication summarizes some of the many good things taking place in Maryland's 1,400 public schools and looks at the challenges we face in the years ahead. We continue to set the bar high for our students and schools, and your steadfast support has helped our system remain on an upward path. Continue to stand with us as we go about our work improving each and every Maryland classroom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy S. Grasmick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

Our Evolving Classrooms

Enrollment

Maryland classrooms have been minority-majority for several years. According to 2007 enrollment data, White students make up 47.7 percent of the state's enrollment, followed by African American students (38.1 percent); Hispanic (8.3 percent); Asian/Pacific Islander (5.4 percent); and American Indian/Alaskan Native (0.4 percent).

Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander student enrollment continues to rise steadily, while both White and African American student enrollment is slowly declining. Hispanic student enrollment has more than tripled since 1993, growing from 20,265 to 70,997. The Asian and Pacific Island student population also has grown dramatically over that same period, from 27,503 to 46,003.

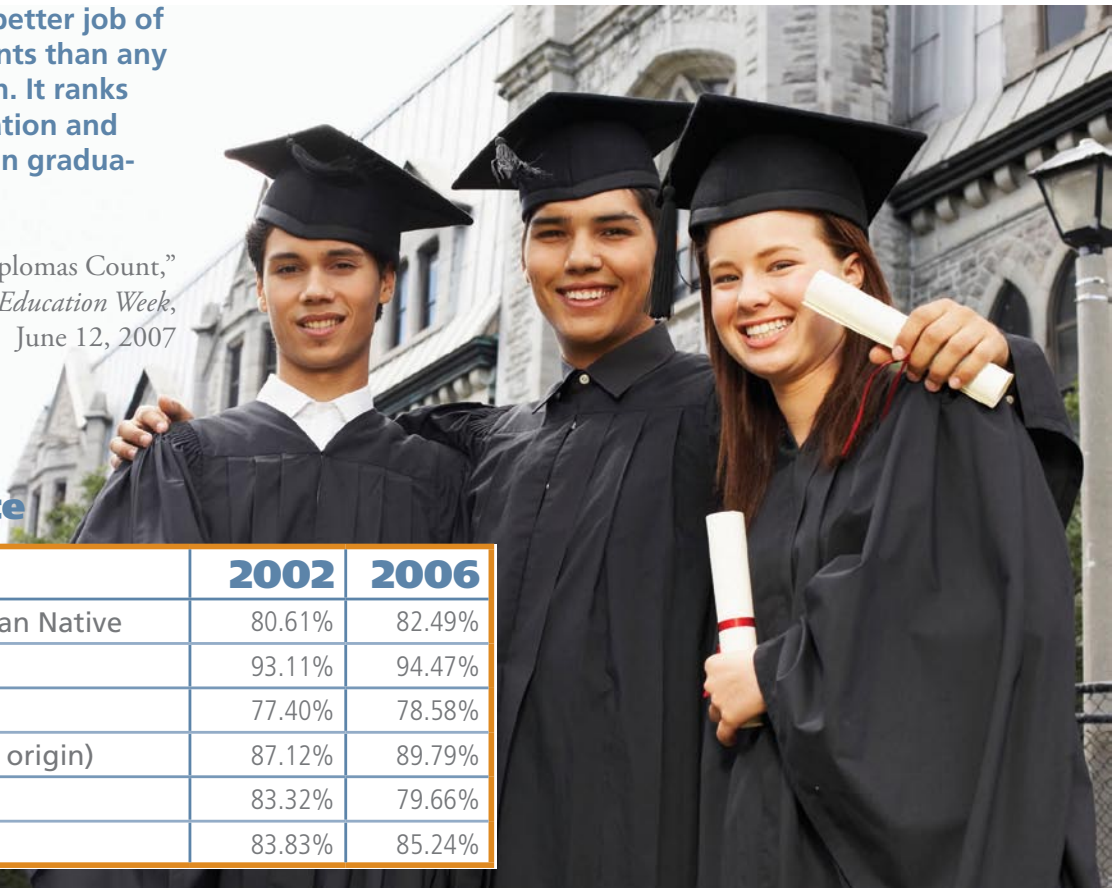
Graduation and Beyond

Maryland's graduation rate topped 85 percent for the first time in 2006 and stayed there last year. The percentage of 12th graders who graduate rose from 79 percent in 1996 to 85.2 percent in 2007. Among subgroups, African American graduation has held steady at about 78 percent, while the graduation rate among Whites nearly reached 90 percent, the Asian graduation rate held steady at 94 percent, and the Hispanic student graduation rate fell by a little more than a point, from 81.3 percent to 79.7 percent.

College is the primary choice for Maryland high school graduates. Approximately 88 percent of students plan to attend college or a specialized training school, either full- or part-time.

Maryland schools do a better job of graduating Asian students than any other state in the nation. It ranks third in Hispanic graduation and sixth in African American graduation.

— Information from "Diplomas Count," a special report in *Education Week*, June 12, 2007



Graduation Rate

	2002	2006
American Indian/Alaskan Native	80.61%	82.49%
Asian/Pacific Islander	93.11%	94.47%
African American	77.40%	78.58%
White (not of Hispanic origin)	87.12%	89.79%
Hispanic	83.32%	79.66%
Overall	83.83%	85.24%

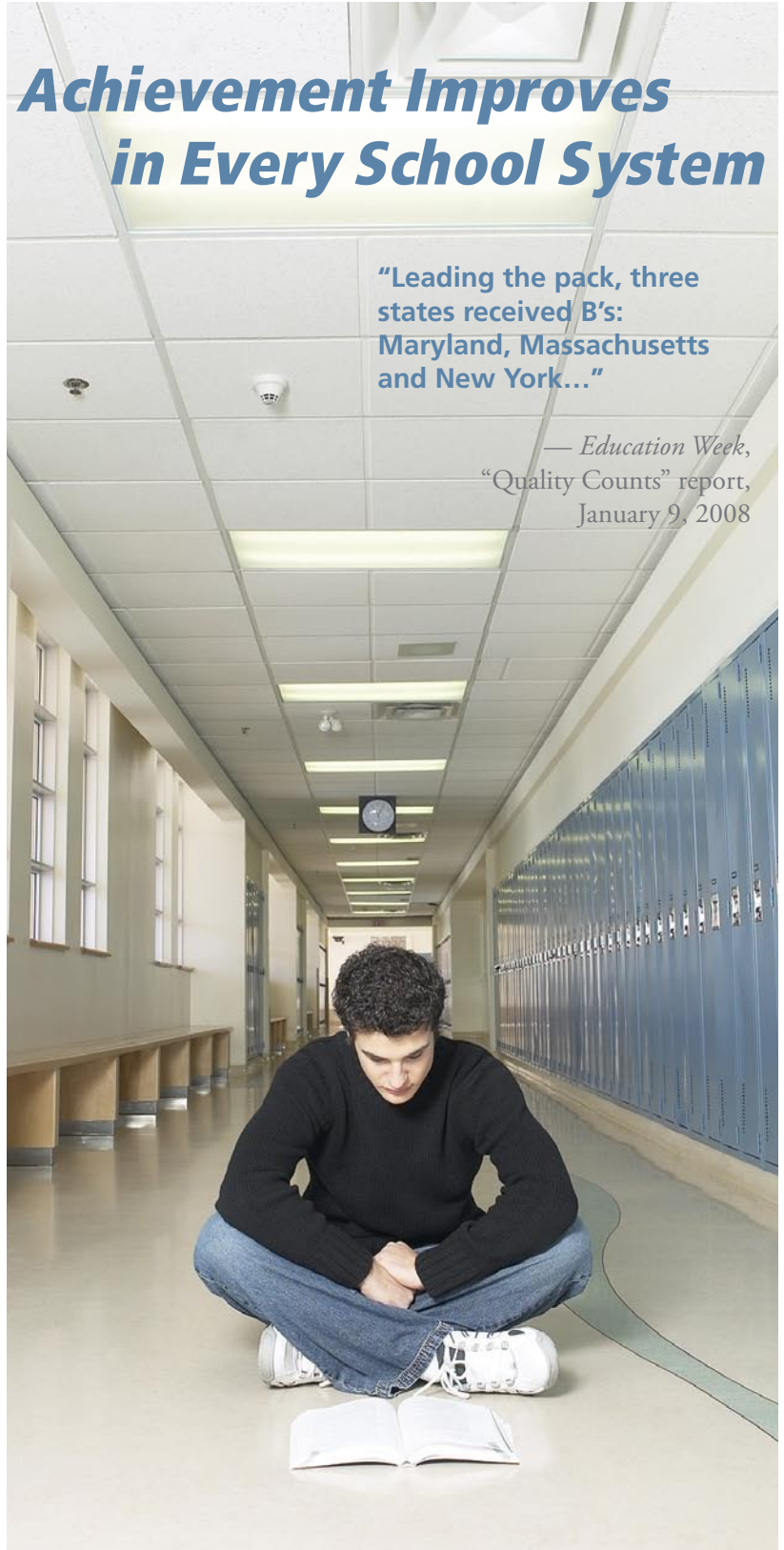
Succeeding at Every Level

Maryland students and educators have not bristled in the face of increasing expectations. Under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, Maryland set into place one of the most comprehensive sets of standards in the nation. The result: students have been improving every year, in every system, at virtually every level, and for nearly every demographic or special services group. Setting goals and sticking to them have resulted in consistent improvement.

Scores on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA), a test required by NCLB, have risen steadily every single year. Overall, MSA elementary reading scores have increased 19 points since 2003, while elementary math scores have jumped 21 points. Middle school reading proficiency has risen 12 points since 2003, while middle school math has climbed 23.5 points. While student performance improves, schools improve. Last year, nearly 80 percent of Maryland public schools made Adequate Yearly Progress, the ambitious, federally mandated target. Nineteen schools that had been struggling in the past—having been placed on the “Needs Improvement” list—left that designation after two straight years hitting their targets.

But Maryland students aren't just improving by state standards. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as “The Nation's Report Card,” found across-the-board improvement on 2007 mathematics and reading tests. Gains in fourth- and eighth-grade reading and math outpaced national improvement in every category.

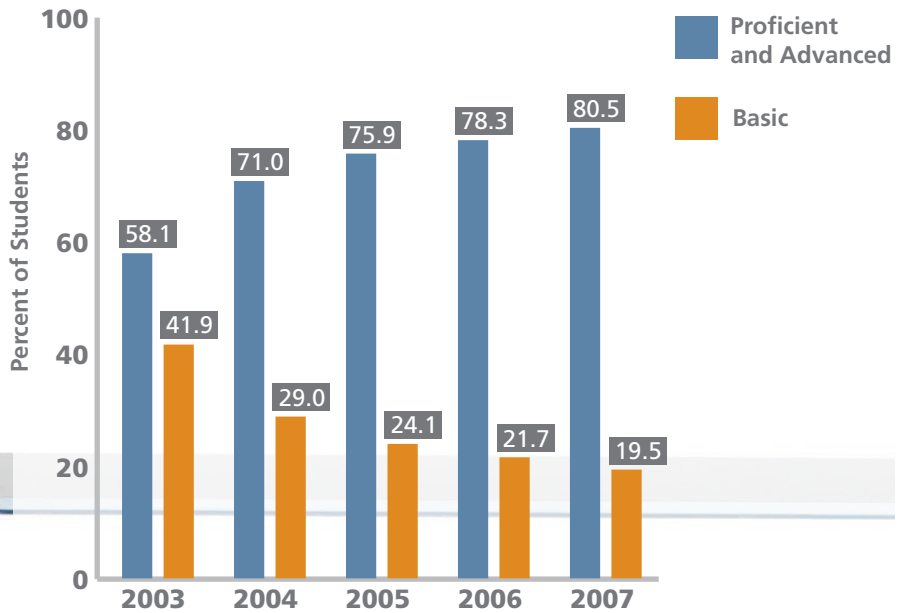
The results have been gratifying. *Education Week*, the nation's leading newspaper covering K-12 education, has long ranked Maryland's accountability system among the nation's very best. This year it assessed all 50 states and the District of Columbia on a variety of measures, including alignment of curriculum, K-12 achievement, preparation of students for higher education, and overall quality. The result: Maryland schools rank third in the nation, just behind Massachusetts and New York. Indeed, Maryland ranked second nationally in K-12 achievement.



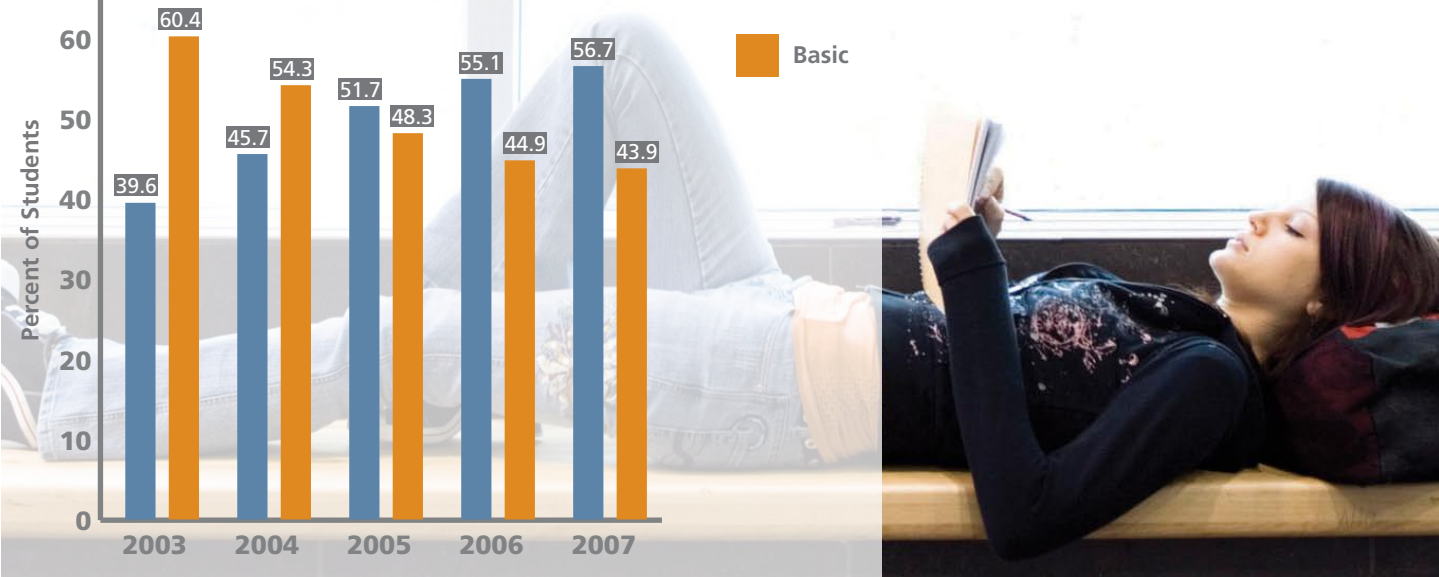
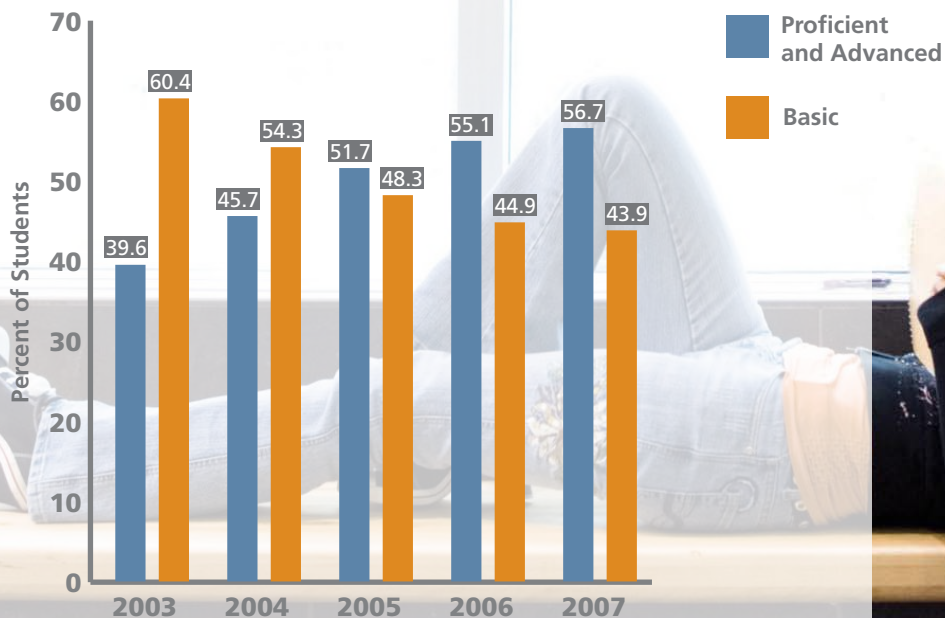
“Maryland earned its highest marks in the ‘Chance for Success’ index, which measures whether students hit key benchmarks throughout their academic careers, and in ‘Transitions and Alignment,’ which tracks whether states have adopted progressive educational legislation.”

— *The Washington Post*, reporting on the “Quality Counts” report, January 10, 2008

MSA Proficiency Levels: Grade 3 — Reading



MSA Proficiency Levels: Grade 8 — Mathematics



Preparing for Life Beyond High School

The Maryland State Board of Education's move in 2004 to institute the High School Assessments (HSAs) as a graduation requirement has paid off for Maryland students. They have become more actively involved in their education, working to make the grade. The result: they are passing the exams at a very high rate. The results tell us that the HSAs will have little effect on the dropout rate, and may well be pushing students to succeed.

This year's junior class is the first group that must pass the HSAs in order to receive a diploma. The result of their work is gratifying: approximately 87 percent of those students who have taken all four tests have now met the requirement, either by passing the tests outright or receiving enough points through the combined-score option. The four HSAs—in algebra/data analysis, biology, English 2, and government—are considered foundational. Without a working knowledge of these subjects, students will have difficulty with higher level learning and falter after high school.

The assessments cover academic material mandated statewide through the Maryland Content Standards, which have been in place since 1996. The State Board instituted the exams on the recommendations of many business and education organizations, such as the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education and the University System of Maryland. A survey last year of Maryland residents by the Schaefer Center for Public Policy at the University of Baltimore found that nearly 9 in 10 Maryland residents (87.2 percent) support the idea that high school students take and pass a series of assessments in key academic subjects to be eligible to receive a high school diploma.

The exams are at a freshman and sophomore level. Students have as many as five times per year to pass each High School Assessment. Should a student be unable to pass an assessment on the first attempt, a variety of online tools and school-based assistance is becoming available to help students prepare for subsequent attempts.

Pointing Our Students Toward the Diploma





Helping Students Meet the Requirements

No state in the nation has done more than Maryland to make certain students meet their graduation requirements.

To graduate, students must pass their coursework, earn the appropriate number of credits, and meet attendance standards in addition to passing the HSAs. There are several ways to meet the HSA requirement. Students can pass the tests outright, or achieve an overall passing score by combining their scores on the four exams. This allows students to offset poorer performance on one exam with better performance on another. Some students with learning disabilities are eligible for the modified HSA, modified assessments whose content is the same as the regular HSAs but whose test question format may be altered. For students for whom a traditional paper-and-pencil test can pose special challenges, Maryland has instituted a rigorous alternative: the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation.

The Bridge Plan—developed in collaboration with local administrators, school-level officials, and teachers—is aimed at bringing those few students closer to their dreams of a high school diploma without lowering standards. The Plan grew out of the work of the Task Force on Comparable Testing Methods for the Maryland High School Assessment and the Task Force for Review of High School Assessment Options as well as research into several other states' alternatives to meeting their own testing requirements.

Students qualifying for the Bridge Plan will be assigned appropriate project modules, and their work will be carefully reviewed according to detailed state guidelines and scoring rubrics.

“State Schools Superintendent Nancy Grasmick has formulated a reasonable, realistic plan ... The high school diploma is a stepping stone to adulthood, employment, and becoming a self-supporting member of society.”

— Editorial in the *Cumberland Times-News* supporting the institution of the Bridge Plan, September 4, 2007

Placing at the Top

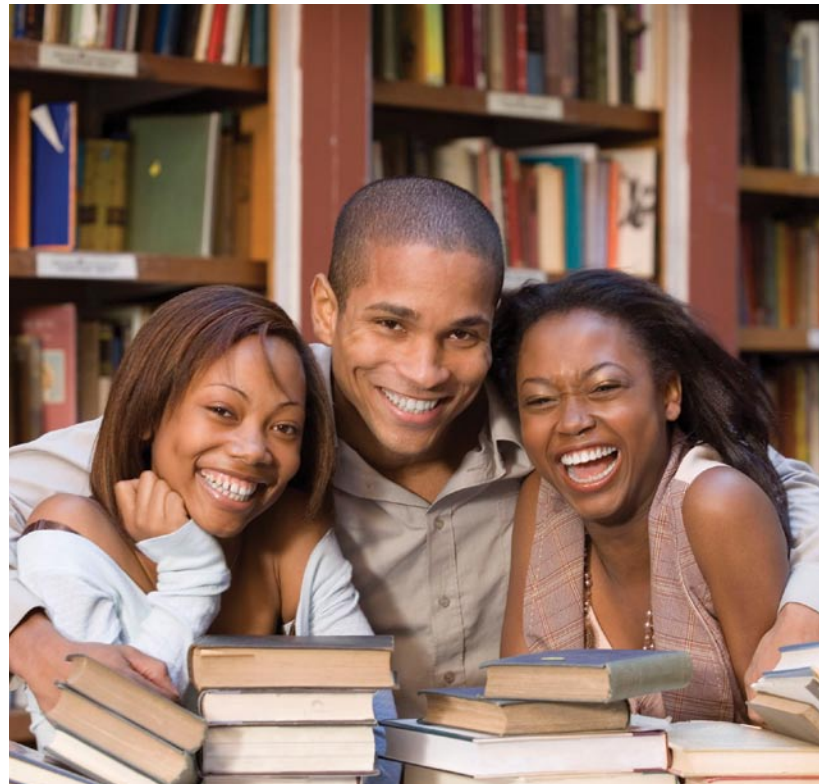
Maryland's increasing standards have benefited all students, but a growing number of students are taking their academic careers one step further through the Advanced Placement exams.

Maryland made the second-largest gain in the nation over the past five years in the percentage of students scoring at high levels on the exams, according to the College Board, which administers the AP program. The percentage of Maryland students earning a score of 3 or higher on AP exams increased 6.0 percentage points between 2002 and 2007, from 16.4 percent to 22.4 percent. That ranks second only to Vermont. A score of 3 or better on the 5-point scale is considered a demonstration of college mastery, as many colleges consider awarding full credit for AP results at that level. Moreover, Maryland ranks second only to New York in the percentage of high school students scoring at mastery levels.

This rising tide has lifted the scores of students who have struggled in the past. Historically, minority groups' representation and success in AP testing have been lower than their representation in public school enrollment, resulting in what the College Board calls the equity and excellence gap. In Maryland's 2007 graduating class, however, Latino students represented 6.2 percent of the student body, but 7.0 percent of the students receiving grades of 3 or better on at least one AP exam. No state in the nation has been able to overcome the gap for African American students, but 8.3 percent of students receiving a grade of 3 or better in Maryland were African American, the fifth-highest percentage in the country.

Maryland's success on the Advanced Placement exams is just one example of the effect higher standards have had on overall educational excellence. There are many others:

- Scores on the most recent ACT exam showed marked improvement, even as participation jumped. The state's 2007 graduates earned an average composite score of 21.6 on the college admission and placement exam, up from 21.4 last year and 21.0 in 2005. That's well above the national average of 21.1. The exam is scored on a scale of 1–36.
- Maryland's cumulative score on the SAT exam ranks second in the College Board's Middle States Region. Across reading, writing, and mathematics, Maryland students posted an average score of 1498, just one point shy of region leader New Jersey.



“Under the leadership of Dr. Grasmick, Maryland now leads the nation in AP participation and performance. I congratulate Maryland’s educators on the results they have achieved and their commitment to preparing all students for success in college.”

— Gaston Caperton, president,
The College Board, February 13, 2008

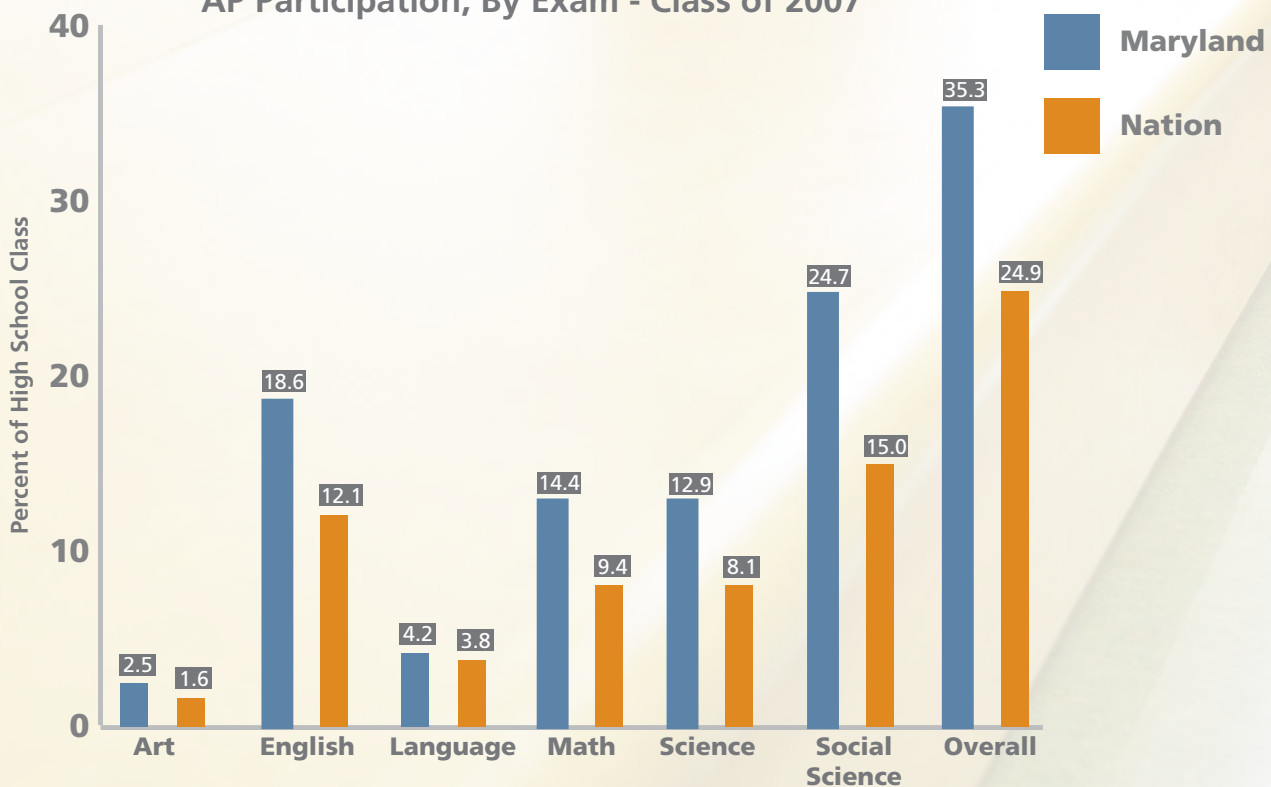
Aiming High; Hitting the Target

Maryland is among the top seven states in the nation in preparing students for college.

— Information from the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education



AP Participation, By Exam - Class of 2007

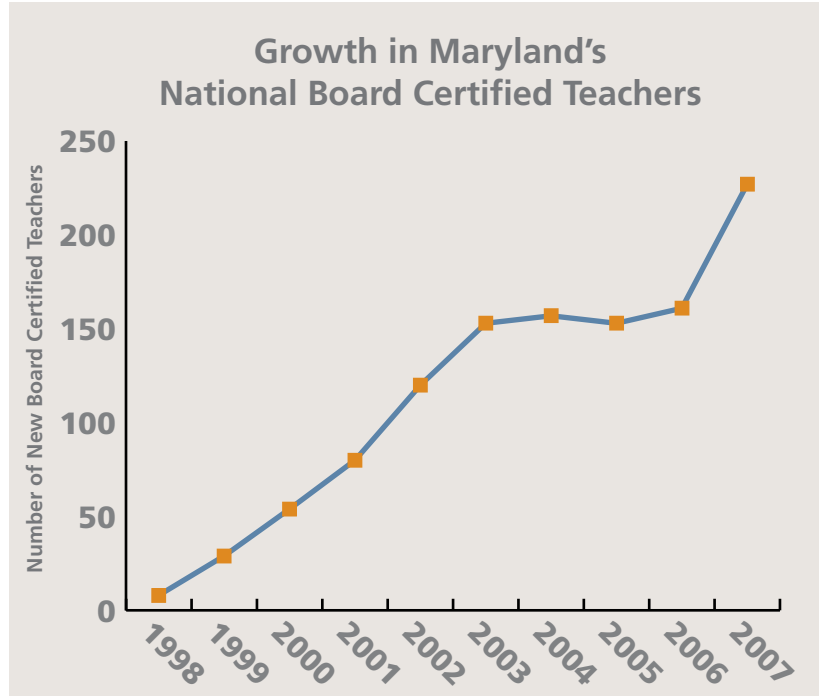


Better Teachers, Better Leaders, Better Students

Maryland welcomed 227 new National Board Certified Teachers in 2007, a new state record. That tally ranked 11th in the nation. Maryland now has 1,056 teachers who have earned the profession's top recognition, the nation's 15th highest total.

Encouraging National Board Certification is just one way the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is strengthening the state's education profession. The need for qualified educators has never been more urgent. Maryland is beset by a chronic teacher shortage, and a large percentage of principals in Maryland are at or near retirement age. But the state is involved in a variety of programs to help our schools strengthen instruction and leadership. For example:

- Nearly 900 principals have completed the Maryland Principals Academy in the past seven years. The training program pairs new principals with experienced principals in year-long professional development experiences.
- MSDE continues to encourage the development of nontraditional teacher certification programs, such as Troops to Teachers and the Resident Teacher programs.
- MSDE in 2007 launched the Educator Information System, a web-based tool designed to cut down the time it takes for teachers to become certified.
- The Principal Fellows Program will be relaunched for the 2008-2009 school year. Started by MSDE in 2002, it brought high-performing principals to four struggling Baltimore City schools. The new program will be open to school systems outside of Baltimore City.



Stronger Instruction Improves Schools

Entering the World of Learning on the Right Foot

Full-day kindergarten is now required in all 24 school systems. Maryland school systems had been moving toward full-day kindergarten over the past five years, but last fall marked the first time full-day programs were required.

Children will be better prepared to meet the rigors of first grade and beyond under the full-day program. It marks another positive step for Maryland's nationally recognized early childhood development initiatives. Since 2005, MSDE has overseen childcare in addition to public school prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, preschool special education, and Maryland's Infants and Toddlers Program. The Department accredits child care programs and credentials providers, operates the Head Start Collaboration Office, and administers contracts for child care resource and referral and family support programs.

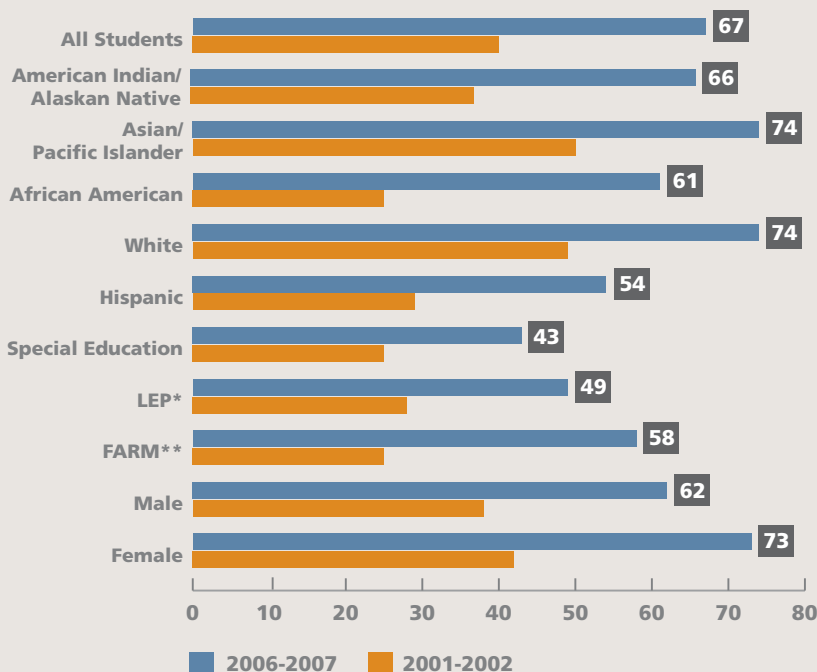
The result: an effective early childhood development program that has made dramatic improvement in the school-readiness skills of children throughout the state. In addition, Maryland's system of childcare oversight ranks among the nation's best, according to the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. Maryland also has a unique assessment for children entering kindergarten, so educators and policymakers know just where they stand in terms of school readiness.

MSDE recently announced a preschool curriculum aligned with Maryland's Voluntary State Curriculum. We know our students are interested in learning. By working closely with early childhood providers, we are assuring that effective education begins before children enter a traditional classroom.

"More children entering kindergarten in Maryland are better prepared to begin school."

— *Baltimore Examiner*,
March 28, 2007

Percentage of Kindergarten Students Assessed as "Fully Ready" in Mathematical Thinking



*LEP = Limited English Proficiency. ** FARM = Free and Reduced-price Meals



Preparing for a Better Life

Maryland residents need to read and write to assure themselves of the future they deserve. At the same time, our state needs a skilled, vibrant workforce to ensure its economic health. Toward those ends, MSDE has put together both a powerful adult education program, and a strong Career and Technology Education (CTE) Program at the high school level.

The Superintendent's Panel on Excellence in Adult Education in late 2005 released "Stepping Up to the Future: Adult Literacy Challenges at Work, at Home, and in the Maryland Community." That report called for a new funding formula for adult education, because Maryland funds adult education programs at a rate far below the national average—even as the need for services increases. One in five adults in Maryland—approximately 20 percent of the population—does not have a high school diploma or isn't fluent in English. There remains a lengthy waiting list for services.

MSDE has developed the infrastructure to make sure that the state's adult education services will be successful. Adult literacy education programs are aligned with teacher standards, graduation standards, and curriculum content. As a result, MSDE's adult education program has met all of its federal performance targets for eight consecutive years.

In high school, CTE programs enroll nearly 120,000 students—more than half of all high school students in the state. About 15,000 students complete a state-approved CTE program, which represents more than a quarter of the high school graduating class. More than half of those students also complete a rigorous academic program that makes them eligible for enrollment in the University of Maryland system.

MSDE is involved in a variety of initiatives to strengthen Maryland's workforce. For example:

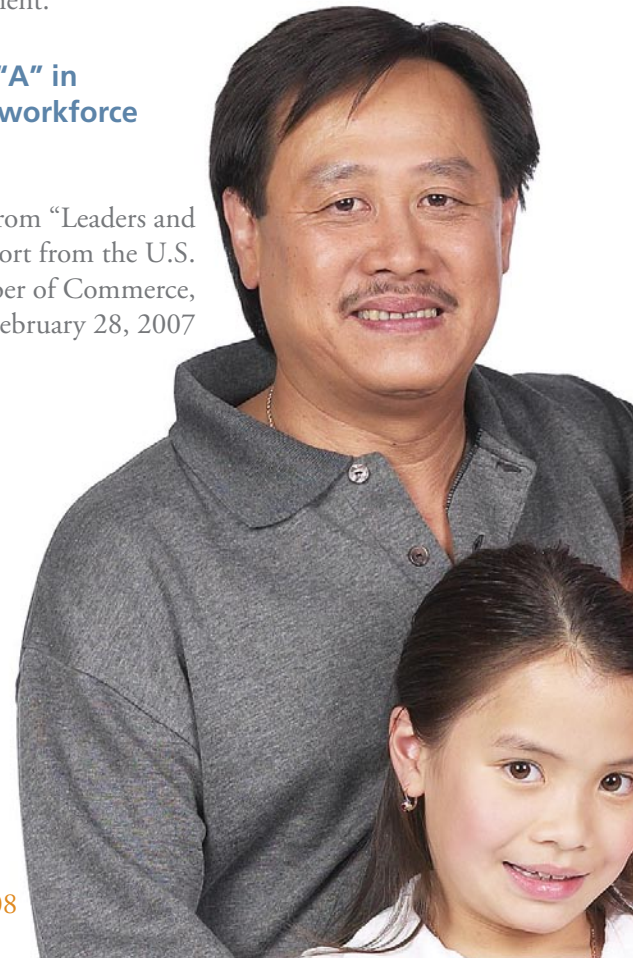
- In fiscal 2007 and 2008, Maryland distributed \$3.6 million in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) grants, helping school systems develop stronger tech-based initiatives to meet the sophisticated needs of higher education and industry.
- Working in close collaboration with the U.S. Department of Defense, the Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation, MSDE is launching a program to educate students about security clearance expectations and processes. It is one of a host of projects related to Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), being developed to help Maryland fill the thousands of new career opportunities generated by military realignment.

Maryland earns an "A" in postsecondary and workforce readiness.

— Information from "Leaders and Laggards," a report from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, February 28, 2007



**Providing
for a Bright Future**



Safe and Healthy Students, Involved Parents

A safe and healthy student is an active learner, and MSDE is working on multiple fronts to protect children. Simultaneously, MSDE has been actively seeking to boost family involvement in the classroom. Learning doesn't begin or end at the schoolhouse door.

State Superintendent Grasmick joined Maryland Attorney General Douglas Gansler last spring to launch CLICKS, the Community Leadership In Cyber Knowledge and Safety program. An Internet safety initiative, CLICKS is designed to equip communities and educators with the resources to teach students and their parents about Internet safety.

“Our response team [to end steroid abuse] included the Maryland State Department of Education.”

— Rep. Elijah Cummings, in “What Ballplayers Do,” a column about the problems involved with performance-enhancing drugs, published in the *Baltimore Times*, March 3, 2007



Parents are the key to this and many other health, safety, and education initiatives. For that reason, MSDE has partnered with Comcast to initiate the Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award, the first program of its kind in the nation. Parents and legal guardians have been nominated for the program, which will highlight the importance of parent involvement in education and the sacrifices they make to see their children and their schools succeed. Honors will be awarded this spring, with one individual to be chosen as the state winner.

MSDE is involved in a variety of other initiatives aimed at improving the learning environment for students. For example:

- Putting a focus on various forms of substance abuse, such as the “Powered by Me” campaign against steroid use, launched in partnership with St. Joseph’s Medical Center and U.S. Rep. Elijah Cummings.
- Raising awareness of and preventing bullying and harassment through data collection and professional development.
- Promoting and providing professional development on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, an effective campaign to reduce school behavior problems.

“The Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award is designed to honor those parents across Maryland whose efforts are truly making a difference and to recognize their contributions to our students and schools.”

— Barbara A. Gehrig, regional senior vice president, Comcast, November 13, 2007



A Thirst for Innovation

The Maryland public schools remain among the nation's most honored systems, thanks in large part to the strong, independent policies of the State Board and consistent, creative direction provided by State Superintendent Nancy S. Grasmick.

Citations from *Education Week*, the College Board, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and others who measure the work of our students prove that Maryland schools are on the right track. By challenging our students, providing technical assistance to our schools, and developing inventive policies for our systems, Maryland has set the stage for continued progress.

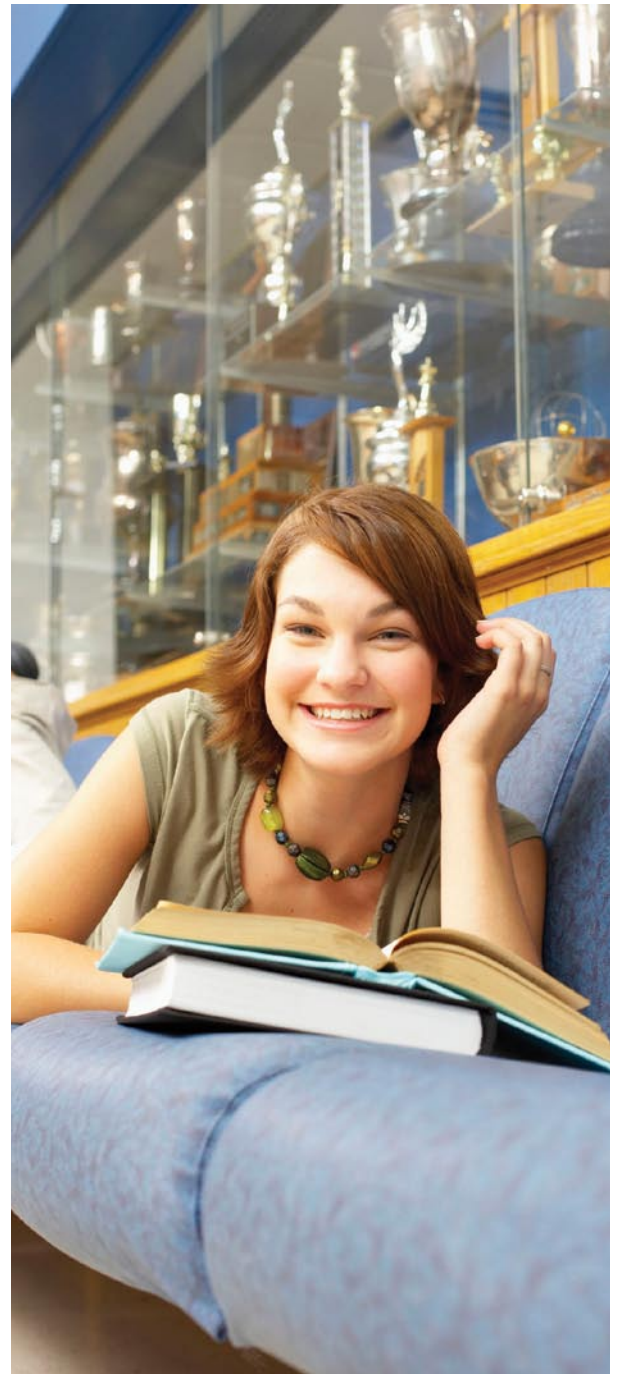
Maryland, its schools, and educators have received a great deal of recognition over the past year. For example:

- Six Maryland schools were named National Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education last fall, the most the state could have. The schools are Burleigh Manor Middle School in Howard County, George Washington Elementary School in Baltimore City, Hereford Middle School in Baltimore County, Red House Run Elementary School in Baltimore County, River Hill High School in Howard County, and Winston Churchill High School in Montgomery County.
- Maryland's unique Comic Book Project last year received a positive evaluation by researchers at the University of Maryland – Baltimore County. It has been featured in both the *New York Times* and *Time Magazine for Kids*.
- MSDE in 2007 launched the Chess in Maryland Schools program, awarding 24 grants of \$10,000 each to school systems in an effort to spur learning and the enjoyment of chess.
- Maryland won the Joseph H. Oakley Excellence in Education Award for the implementation of Project Lead the Way, a national pre-engineering program that prepares students for engineering majors and careers.
- The Johns Hopkins University presented the Maryland State Department of Education a 2007 Partnership State Award for guiding districts and schools in developing comprehensive programs in school, family, and community involvement.

“High Marks: Maryland’s superintendent deserves credit for well-regarded schools”

— *Washington Post* Editorial,
January 14, 2008

Keeping Maryland Schools on the Cutting Edge



Pointing Toward Tomorrow

Maryland schools face many challenges, but are well positioned to meet them. A combination of strong policy directives, consistent educational leadership, and an unprecedented boost in funding through the bold Bridge to Excellence Act has placed Maryland schools on the edge of even greater success.

An independent study of the Bridge to Excellence Act (BTE) this year found that the program is bearing fruit for Maryland. MGT of America, a national consulting firm, said the Act has helped student proficiency levels improve at all grades and among all subgroups tested. The additional funding, combined with the requirement that school systems assess their programs, has sparked continuous classroom improvement.

The Maryland General Assembly in 2002 approved the BTE Act, which has brought an additional \$1.3 billion annually to public schools. The Act set into law many of the recommendations of the Thornton Commission. MGT found that the largest percentage of additional funds went to recruit and retain qualified staff, widely viewed as the most critical school-based factor in improving student achievement. Other instructional items, such as supplies, textbooks, and other teaching materials, also received additional dollars.

The master planning process required by BTE has effectively improved school system performance, according to MGT. Each of the 24 school systems is required to develop and update a five-year master plan, which is reviewed and assessed by MSDE staff. The plans target specific local areas of need.

The funding made possible through BTE, plus continued strong policy and oversight from MSDE, has laid the foundation for continued academic improvement. The challenges are great, but we know that every student can achieve. We have the proof.



Bridge to Excellence funding has gone to:

- Recruiting and Retaining Qualified Educators
- Data Utilization and Analysis
- Research-based Programs
- Differentiated Instruction
- Graduation Enhancement
- Academic Intervention/Acceleration
- Professional Development

Source: MGT of America

“In the three-year period from 2004 to 2007, the gap in percentages of Maryland students who needed to demonstrate proficiency to meet the No Child Left Behind goal of 100-percent proficiency by 2014 was closed by 35 percent in reading and 42 percent in math for the statewide aggregate of students in the elementary grades (3-5); and 17 percent in reading and 30 percent in math for the aggregate of students in the middle grades (6-8).”

— MGT of America’s report on Bridge to Excellence, January 2008

Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

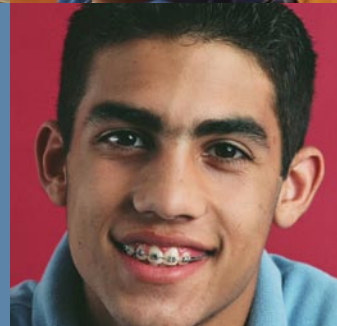
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