



Maryland Classroom

A Publication from the Maryland State Department of Education

State Superintendent Grasmick Calls for "Next Steps in Education Reform"

On January 28, State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick unveiled results of the 2001 Maryland School Performance Report, and said it's time to take the next steps in education reform. "We have to build on our system of accountability and begin providing more support to improve classroom instruction," said Dr. Grasmick, echoing the recommendations of the Visionary Panel for Better Schools, which she established last year to draft a plan for accelerating student achievement.

Dr. Grasmick delayed release of the annual Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) results for about six weeks to examine unusual fluctuations in the data. National education experts have since verified those results as sound and accurate.

Scores Leveling Off

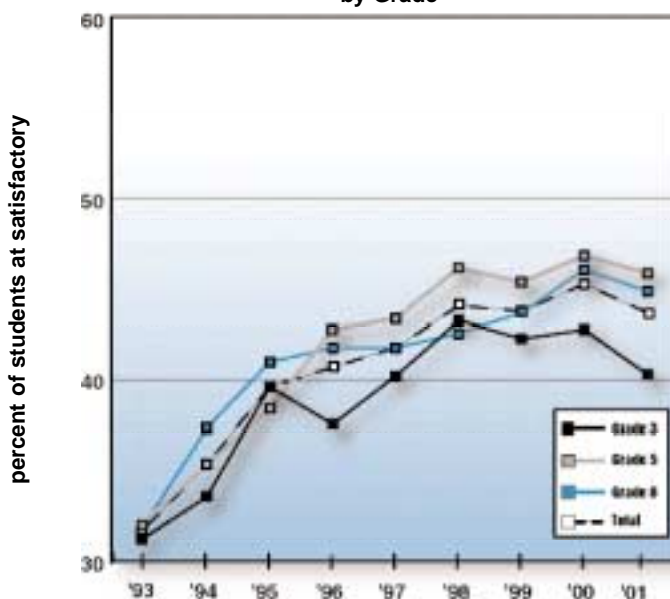
For the second time since the statewide testing program began in 1993, average scores declined slightly. Down 1.6 points to 43.7% of students performing at "satisfactory," the results show *statistically* no change from the previous year. While this year's scores reflect an overall gain of 12 percentage points since testing began in 1993, results have actually leveled off over the past couple of years, and many schools are finding it increasingly difficult to make progress on MSPAP and on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS), which measures similar content.

"The hard work of the last decade has helped us understand that we can make a difference, and we have, in terms of significant improvement in student performance, standards and accountability, school safety, attendance, and dropouts," said Dr. Grasmick. "But clearly, there's much more work to be done."

The Changing Student Body

Maryland's flattening performance on MSPAP could be linked to a number of factors, one of which may be a significant swell in enrollment (since 1993, enrollment has grown by more than 100,000 students) and an increase in the proportion of students requiring special services.

State MSPAP Composites by Grade



And yet Dr. Grasmick pointed out many examples of schools that have addressed these issues successfully. Deale Island School in Somerset County, with a poverty rate of nearly 50%, outperforms other schools statewide in 5th-grade math and social studies. City Springs Elementary in Baltimore City, despite its poverty rate of 94%, has improved so much that it moved out of local reconstitution this year. "While many schools are working hard to meet the needs of these students, their significantly increased numbers outpace the resources required to address the problem," said Dr. Grasmick.

The New Teaching Force

Another challenge is the fact that Maryland has hired nearly 8,000 new teachers in the past year, a number expected to rise as high as 12,000 by 2003.

And more than 30% of the state's public school teachers have fewer than five years' teaching experience — nearly double the number of novice teachers a decade ago. "We have to support these new teachers with more mentoring programs. And we need to guarantee prospective teachers a performance-based certification system that includes better, more thorough preparation in academic content and intensive classroom internships," said Dr. Grasmick.

She also called for more incentives for all teachers. These incentives are especially important, as Maryland's colleges and universities produced fewer than 2,200 graduates last year — the lowest number in a decade and one that's not expected to rise.

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Inside MD Classroom

- ✓ Recommendations from the Visionary Panel
- ✓ The State of Education
- ✓ Analyzing Your Performance Data


USDE Approves Changes to MSPAP

The U.S. Department of Education has approved MSDE's plan to expedite its adoption of the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) testing requirements. The approval means that local systems not receiving Title I aid for middle schools will be able to opt out of administering 8th-grade MSPAP this year.

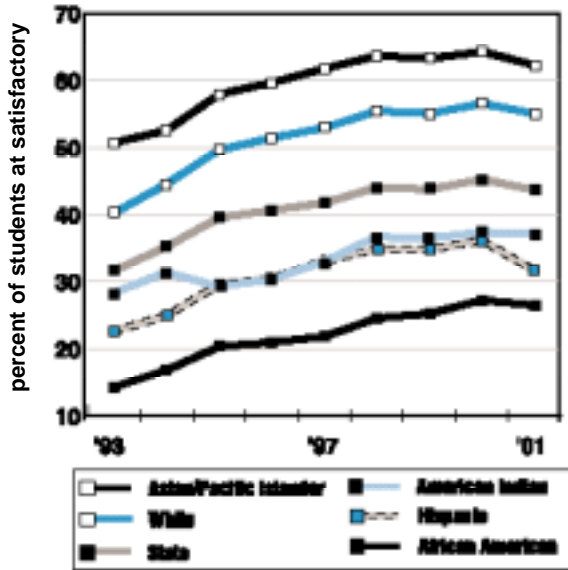
Federal officials said the plan provides adequate test data to meet the accountability requirements of both the new and expiring ESEA provisions. The plan requires Maryland to:

- Administer MSPAP to all students in grades 3 and 5.
- Administer MSPAP to all students in grade 8 in school systems with at least one Title I middle school. This allows the state to track Title I middle school progress, as required by federal law, and establishes a baseline for marking progress under the new ESEA provisions.

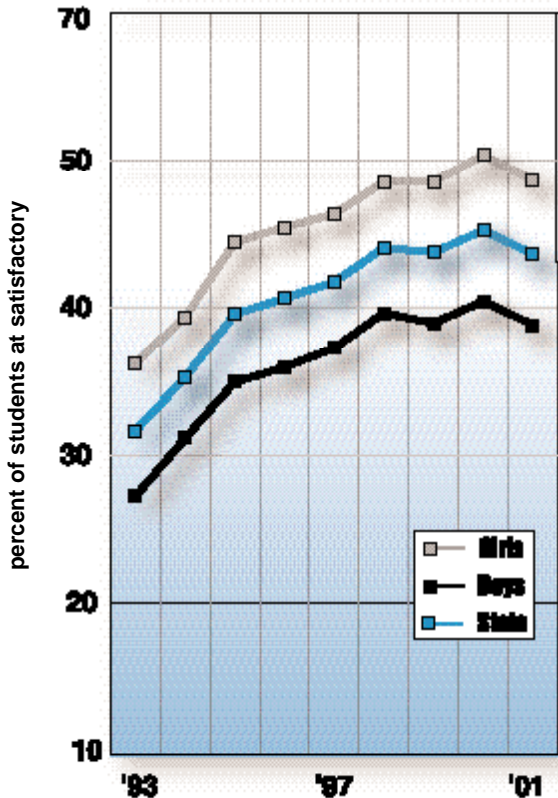
- Begin developing a new test for grades 3, 5, and 8 to be administered in the 2002-2003 school year. The new test will include a combination of multiple-choice and written-response items and produce individual results that same school year.
- Expand the new test to all grades, 3 through 8, in 2004-2005, with individual student scores reported in all grades the following year.
- Begin work on a science assessment, to be administered at least once in each of the following grade bands: 3-5, 6-8, and 10-12.
- Make sure standards are aligned with the new High School Assessments, and build appropriately from kindergarten through grade 8.

"This plan guarantees Maryland's compliance with federal law," said Dr. Grasmick. "But more importantly, it offers us the flexibility we need to strengthen our accountability program." 

The Achievement Gap
MSPAP Composites by Race



The Gender Gap
MSPAP Composites by Sex



Next Steps

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Gaining Some Perspective

However, Dr. Grasmick also cautioned that MSPAP, like all tests, is merely a snapshot of student performance. The researchers who verified the 2001 results advised the Department to look at them in context — to analyze trend data and how the current year affects the trend line; to consider student achievement on other measures, such as CTBS and local assessments; and to examine students’ work. Members of the Department’s instructional team are visiting schools across the state to do just that.

The Next Decade of School Reform

Dr. Grasmick cited the just-released Visionary Panel report, policy recommendations offered by national school reform advocacy group Achieve, Inc.,

and President Bush’s education bill, “No Child Left Behind,” as providing a blueprint for improving Maryland’s reform program and accelerating student achievement in the decade ahead. Among other recommendations, the Visionary Panel calls for a voluntary statewide curriculum, better alignment of curriculum and testing, and better teacher preparation (see page 3). The plan also recommends placing experienced teachers, specialists, and principals in the lowest performing schools.

“The bottom line is that the state must provide more instructional and financial help to meet students’ and teachers’ changing needs,” said Dr. Grasmick.

Building on the Foundation: The Next 10 Years of Reform

by Jack Jennings and Sr. Helen Amos

When MSDE released its annual report card this year, the results were a bit disappointing — MSPAP reading scores leveled off and math scores dipped — and yet they weren’t entirely unexpected. In fact, a full year before January’s report card release, State Superintendent Nancy Grasmick established the Visionary Panel for Better Schools to help accelerate student achievement over the next decade of reform.

The state’s reform course actually has been one of the country’s steadiest so far. Maryland sowed accountability’s seeds in the late 80s, and they blossomed in the 90s. By and large, then, the work that lies ahead is tending its fruit: higher standards, on the one hand, and students struggling to meet them, on the other.

The Visionary Panel’s plan affirms the work of this past decade — establishing one of the best accountability systems in the nation — but calls on the state now to build on this foundation, to apply what a decade of standards and testing has taught us.

And it’s taught us a lot. It’s taught us that many students are struggling to meet standards, that student progress is slowing across the state, and that, academically, poor, minority, and non-English speaking students persistently lag behind their peers. Accountability has told us — told us quite specifically — where we need to be and how far we are from getting there.

But actually getting there will mean rethinking some of our most basic educational policies and practices. It will mean providing a statewide curriculum for each subject and every grade — one that is clear, specific, based on state standards, and aligned with state tests. It will mean helping teachers translate the curriculum into instruction, so that we know, without a doubt, that what we test is what we teach.

Breaking through the achievement barrier will mean expanding the scope of accountability, so that all schools — not just consistently poor-performing ones — get the guidance they need to improve. And it will mean explicitly addressing the achievement gap by making every school accountable for the progress of every student.

Accelerating achievement will mean changing teacher preparation and certification so that prospective teachers have to demonstrate subject-area knowledge and teaching expertise. It will mean placing our best teachers and principals in our poorest performing schools and giving principals the time and freedom they need to focus on shaping instruction, not managing operations. And, of course, it will mean demanding adequate and equitable funding for public schools.

If we see these recommendations through, we will change Maryland’s educational landscape. But, make no mistake, it is a landscape drawn clearly by an accountability system that was conceived and calibrated to guide improvement.

Maryland has one of the nation’s strongest foundations for school reform. It’s time to build.

Jack Jennings, co-chair of the Visionary Panel for Better Schools, is director of the Center on Education Policy.

Sr. Helen Amos, co-chair of the Visionary Panel for Better Schools, is the executive chair of the Mercy Hospital Board of Trustees.

Maryland School Performance on the Web
www.msp.msde.state.md.us
www.mdk12.org



A Vision of the Future

The Visionary Panel was established in January 2001 to size up the state of education in Maryland and recommend ways to improve it. With such a large job to tackle, the panel drew on the work of seven task groups established to examine the biggest issues facing public education today: accountability, the achievement gap, assessment, leadership, learning, public support, and teacher quality.

These seven task groups, totaling 165 members, met nearly 60 times over seven months, and at the end, forwarded 33 recommendations to the panel. The panel considered them all and found they had a lot in common.

What It Boils Down To

Essentially, each task group said that accelerating achievement ultimately means enabling high-quality instruction, which, in turn, means supporting the teachers who deliver it. The state and local school systems, then, should align every aspect of education — educators' preparation and professional development, policymaking, testing, curriculum, leadership, and funding — to support the classroom teacher.

The panel took this sentiment one step further, saying that if teachers will have to assume greater responsibility for student achievement, the state and local school systems will have to assume greater responsibility for their preparation, development, and career-long support. That responsibility will mean:

- ❑ hiring only qualified teachers and professionals and placing the most qualified staff in the poorest performing schools.
- ❑ ensuring that all teachers have access to a precise and challenging curriculum, one that is uniform in content and expectations and fully aligned with state standards.
- ❑ making sure all teachers have the technical assistance and support they need to translate curriculum into effective, individualized instruction.
- ❑ ensuring that the professional development provided to teachers is targeted to their needs and to the needs of their students.
- ❑ providing each teacher with a qualified principal whose primary responsibility is improving teaching and learning in his or her school.
- ❑ improving teacher recruitment, retention, and advancement by providing compelling incentives to prospective and current teachers.
- ❑ ensuring that state and district testing programs provide timely and relevant data that are useful for improving the classroom teaching and learning processes.
- ❑ ensuring that instructional materials and technology resources are available to teachers to focus and improve their instruction, accelerate student learning, and facilitate data analysis.

It was these principles that guided the panel's eight official recommendations.

1. Develop a statewide K-12 curriculum.

The panel wants a statewide curriculum for each subject and every grade — one that is clear, specific, and aligned with state tests — to ensure that what is tested is, in fact, what is taught. Where Maryland's standards leave room for misunderstanding, said the panel, a curriculum does not.

And yet the panel doesn't recommend that this curriculum stringently dictate every single lesson, every day of the school year, nor that it comprise everything that is taught in each grade — merely the minimum. And the panel doesn't recommend that its adoption be mandatory. After all, many districts like the autonomy and flexibility locally created curricula provide; many others, however, lack the staff and money needed to develop curricula that are well aligned with state standards and, therefore, state tests. Providing a sample curriculum for every grade and every subject, then — which school districts can adopt or modify — would likely find favor across the board.

2. Align K-12 curriculum and testing.

Obviously, curriculum, instruction, and assessment have to be closely aligned and supportive of one another. To ensure the continuity of elementary, middle, and high school expectations — and that each set of expectations ultimately prepares students to pass the High School Assessments — the panel recommends that Maryland reexamine instruction and testing at all school levels.

A good assessment system helps improve students' learning, the panel says, and should support teacher decision making. Therefore, the system should include a variety of testing and response models that provide information on basic and critical-thinking skills. Finally, the panel cautioned that, while tests are valuable for improving instruction, they should be among many data sources consulted when making instructional decisions.

3. Widen the focus of accountability from low-performing schools to all schools.

Panel members agree that Maryland's accountability system is effective in focusing attention and resources on the state's lowest performing schools. Where it needs help, they say, is in providing more systematic and consistent

guidance to all schools, including those that are neither especially low-performing nor making especially rapid progress. Adopting a more highly differentiated series of rewards and interventions will mean many more schools identified as making good progress (entitling them to state rewards) and many more identified as needing improvement (entitling them to state help).

But with more help will come more accountability for results. While the current system largely holds the district leadership accountable for school system and school performance, the panel recommends engaging principals, teachers, and parents in a system of shared accountability.

4. Make every school accountable for the performance of every child.

Of course, if real accountability is to affect teachers and principals, they must be guaranteed an assessment system that yields timely, accurate, and relevant data on the progress of each student and groups of students from one assessment interval to the next. The data must be disaggregated for information on the progress of every child; able to be classified into different achievement levels (e.g., above satisfactory, satisfactory, below satisfactory); and communicated clearly to everyone involved in students' education — parents, principals, teachers, and students themselves.

The panel says that accountability also must be guided by a comprehensive school plan, monitored by the school district, which defines the performance measures that will be used to judge progress and the process by which data will be collected and evaluated.

5. Certify only those teachers who can demonstrate high-level knowledge and teaching skills.

The panel recommends an overhaul of the state's teacher preparation and certifications systems so that they're performance-based and aligned with preK–12 student achievement. While the panel wants to protect multiple paths to certification, members said all applicants should have to adhere to a common set of rigorous standards, have extensive preparation in academic content, and intern in a school classroom setting.

Because support for teachers early in their careers is critical, the panel encourages local school systems to employ modified teaching schedules and focused mentoring during teachers' first 3–4 years in the classroom.

And because ongoing support is every bit as important as early support, the panel wants teachers assured on-site professional development and individual guidance as they carry out professional development plans and certificate renewal requirements. All of this will take time. To provide it, the panel says that state and local funding should allow for 12-month teaching contracts.

6. Place more highly qualified teachers and principals in our lowest performing schools.

Because research indicates that teacher quality is the single most important factor affecting student achievement, the panel says local school systems and employee unions should work together to ensure that district policies and collective bargaining rules support placing the highest qualified staff in the state's lowest performing schools. Clearly, recruitment strategies and incentive programs must help persuade our best teachers to go to these schools.

And because the research also indicates that excellent principals are particularly critical to reshaping low-performing schools, school systems should formally provide job security for principals undertaking high-risk, difficult school leadership challenges.

7. Shift the focus of the principal from administration to instruction.

The principal's primary role must be instructional leader, says the panel. That role must take priority over all others, and any responsibilities impeding the principal's ability to fulfill this role must be removed.

Those responsibilities should go, instead, to the building manager — a new position responsible for such operational duties as transportation, facility use and maintenance, business transactions, and cafeteria supervision, all support functions that now fall to the principal.

8. Demand full funding of existing reform plans designed to solve our worst educational problems.

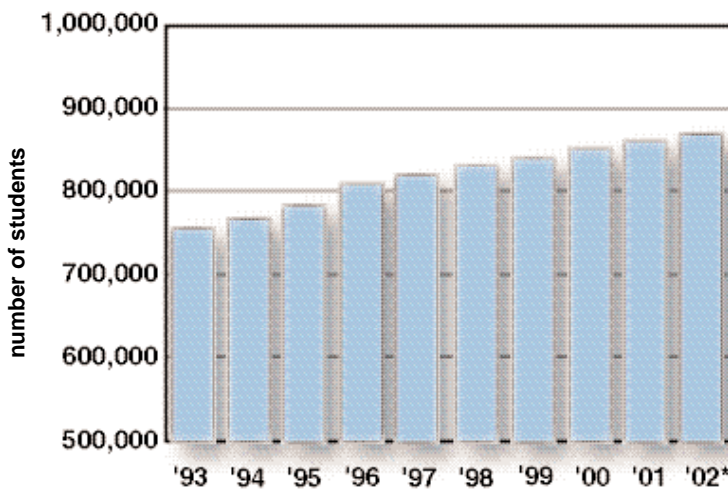
In 1999, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted a preK–12 academic intervention plan to ensure that no child, regardless of his or her circumstance, would be left behind in the state's move toward higher standards. This plan, *Every Child Achieving*, lays out strategies to intervene when students start struggling academically, to strengthen teachers' skills and administrators' leadership, and to ensure school readiness among very young children.

And yet only a fraction of the money needed to implement *Every Child Achieving* was ever allocated. As that's left many of its provisions to flounder, the panel exhorts Maryland educators and citizens to demand full funding of the plan. 🐼

The State of E

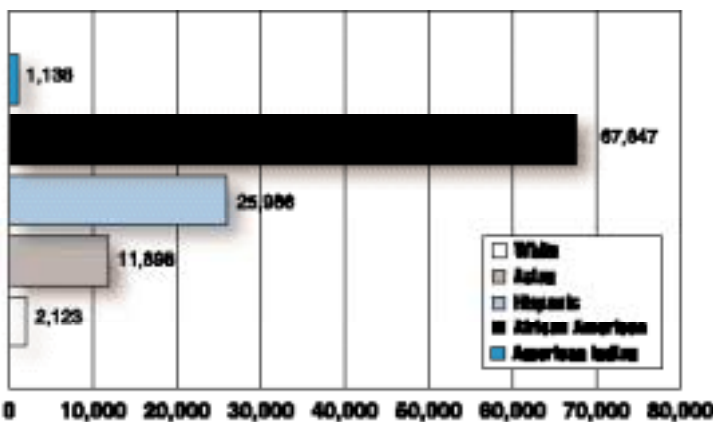
Coinciding with the MSPAP release was the publication of State of Education, a narrative and graphic description of how the state's schools, students, and teachers fared in 2001.

Student Enrollment



*Enrollment is measured on September 30 of the year prior. Therefore, the '02 bar reflects student enrollment as of September 30, 2001.

Changes in Student Enrollment 1993-2001



Students

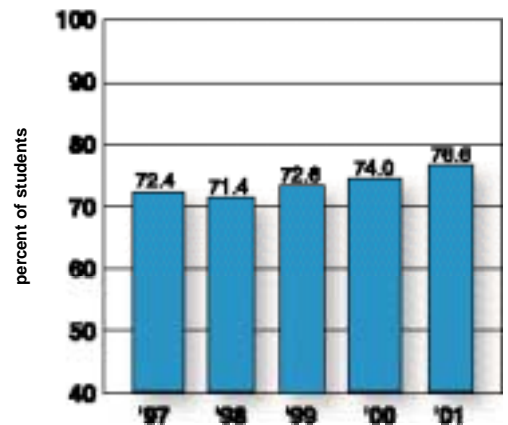
Enrollment, Attendance & Diversity

Maryland's public school system is rapidly becoming one of the nation's most diverse, requiring districts to evolve quickly to meet the needs of a growing — and changing — student body.

Student enrollment continues to rise steadily. More than 860,000 students were enrolled in the state's public schools as of September 30, 2001, compared to 771,377 students in the fall of 1993. Attendance — the percentage of students present in school for at least half the average school day during the year — is up slightly, rising .3% in 2001 to 91.8%.

- Just over half (52.4%) of the students are white, a percentage that has been declining for more than a decade.
- African-American students make up 37.2% of the enrollment — a percentage that's been leveling off — but they dominate in the Baltimore City (87.7%) and Prince George's County (77.4%) school systems.
- The number of Hispanic students is on the rise, and now makes up 5.4% of the total student population. More than half of the Hispanic students attend school in Montgomery County, where they make up 17.2% of the total.
- Students of Asian and Pacific Island heritage are the fastest growing group in the state, now representing 4.8% of the population. Their numbers are most significant in Montgomery County, which has a 13.9% Asian population, and Howard County, which has a student body that is 10.4% Asian.

9th Graders Completing High School



Graduation

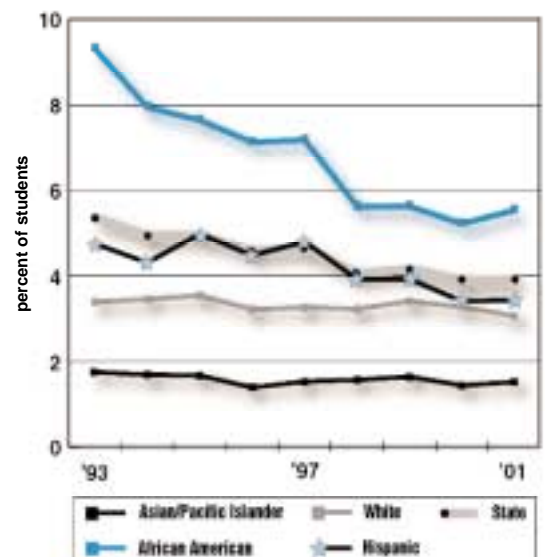
Graduation rates have been inching up in recent years: The percentage of 12th graders who graduated rose 1.3% last year to 96.7%, and 9th graders who went on to graduate reached 76.7%.

According to the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Maryland's 2001 graduation rate ranks 13th nationally — but 5th for African-American graduation, and 3rd for Latino graduation.

Dropout Rates

The dropout rate in Maryland remained virtually unchanged from 2000 to 2001, following eight years of relatively steady decline. The rate stood at 3.91% (compared to 3.90% in 2000), down from 5.4% in 1993. The dropout rate has fallen for all ethnic groups over the past nine years, with the African-American rate dropping from 9.31% in 1993 to 5.54% in 2001, and the Hispanic rate falling from 4.75% to 3.45% over that same period. Several programs, many of them teaching workplace skills, have helped Maryland stem the dropout tide.

Dropout Rate by Race



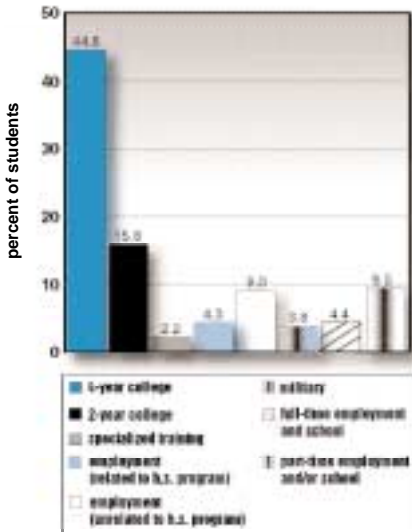
education: 2001

Postsecondary Education

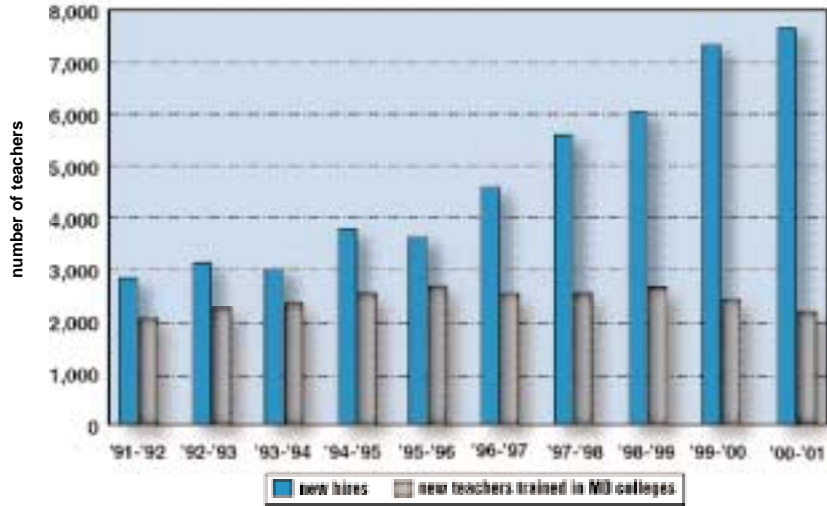
The more rigorous the high school course load, the better prepared students are when they attend college, according to the most recent Student Outcome and Achievement Report, released in November 2001 and based on the 1999-2000 academic year. Considerably fewer students taking college-prep courses need remediation in math (26%), for example, than those taking a less difficult course load (38%). The report also noted a rise in the average college freshman grade-point average among students who had taken a college-prep curriculum in high school, from 2.5 to 2.6. Among the other highlights of the report:

- For the sixth consecutive year, the best predictor of college performance was high school grade-point average, meaning a good grade in high school usually means a good grade in college.
- The proportion of community college students who needed remediation in reading dropped sharply in 1999-2000 to its lowest level in six years.

Grade 12 Documented Decisions



The Teacher Shortage



Teachers

Teacher Recruitment

The teacher shortage is a critical problem in Maryland. Every county in the state has reported shortages, and local systems will have to hire thousands of teachers each fall just to keep pace with swelling enrollment and teacher retirement. In fall 2001, local school systems needed to hire nearly 8,000 new teachers. By this fall, that number will likely grow to about 8,700 and reach 12,000 two years later. Meanwhile, the number of teachers trained in Maryland colleges fell in 2000-2001 to 2,176.

This yawning teacher gap is increasingly being filled with teachers trained in out-of-state universities, whose preparation programs have no connection with Maryland's content standards and learning outcomes.

Certification

Maryland's commitment to a well-qualified teaching force means that teachers must be certified before entering the classroom. It also means an ever-increasing number of nationally certified teachers on Maryland's educator rolls. A record 65 educators in the state earned certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) last year, bringing to 136 the number of teachers who have earned the distinction since 1998. State Superintendent Nancy S. Grasmick was recently appointed to NBPTS.

Climate

School Safety

One of the tenets of Maryland's school reform movement is that all children have the right to attend schools in which they can progress and learn. That means excellent teaching, but it also means providing a safe, healthy climate for learning.

Maryland's schools, like most others across the nation, have had to put safety at the top of their agendas. Recent episodes of school violence and the September 11 terrorist attacks have reconfirmed the need for up-to-date emergency plans and communication protocol. Since the tragedies last fall, MSDE has:

- kept in contact with local education agencies;
- posted the latest safety information on the Department Web site,
- developed a guide for parents and teachers to use when talking to children about tragedy; and
- made experts available to schools to discuss the crisis and children's fears about it.

And yet, despite the new challenges to our sense of security, students generally feel safe at school and at home, according to MSDE's Maryland Adolescent Survey. Three out of four students surveyed last year said they never or rarely felt unsafe at school.

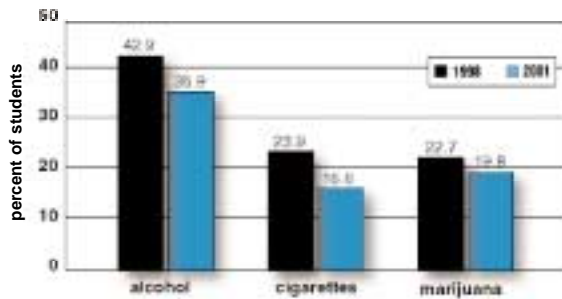
Health

According to the Maryland Adolescent Survey, fewer Maryland students are using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. The rate of substance use is down for all grades surveyed, and Maryland's rates come in below national averages.

- State 12th graders were less likely than their peers nationally to have used alcohol in the 30 days preceding the survey (47.5% vs. 50%).
- Maryland high school seniors also were less likely to have used cigarettes during that same period (25.5% vs. 31.4%).

A growing area of concern for Maryland, as well as other parts of the country, is the increasing use of designer drugs, including Ecstasy. The use of designer drugs among high school seniors increased from 2.7% to 4.8% between 1996 and 2000.

Substance Abuse by 10th Graders in 30 days prior to survey



Family Involvement

Recognizing that strong, constructive family involvement is key to school improvement, the Maryland State Board of Education approved in October a policy designed to guide collaborative family outreach efforts. The policy charges schools with involving parents more effectively in education, and parents with providing a home atmosphere conducive to learning. MSDE is helping local school districts adapt the policy to meet their own needs.

The Department also has expanded the Family Reading Plan, a program for preK-grade 2 children and their families established in October 1999. More than 100 schools have now been trained in the program.

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Three Perspectives — One Path

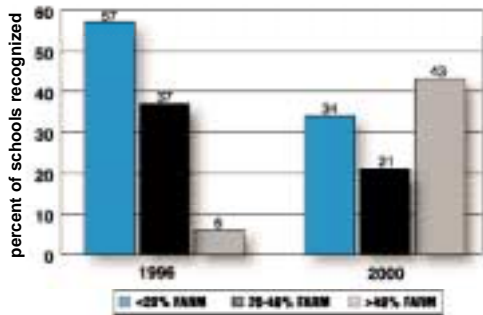
While the Visionary Panel for Better Schools was conducting its review of school reform and student performance in Maryland last year, Achieve, Inc. — a bipartisan organization created by the

nation's governors and business leaders — was conducting a review of its own. Mere weeks before the publication of those reports came the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001,

Congress' reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The three documents have a lot in common and together paint a clear picture of the work that lies ahead for Maryland.

	Visionary Panel Achievement Matters Most	Achieve, Inc. Aiming Higher	ESEA Reauthorization No Child Left Behind
Curriculum	The state should develop a voluntary statewide curriculum for every subject at every grade, K-12. This curriculum will represent the minimum content/skills to be taught.	The state should coordinate an effort to develop a voluntary statewide curriculum to ensure that schools have access to a rigorous, proven curriculum.	No provision
Alignment	The state should align curriculum, standards, and tests to ensure students are prepared for high school and the Maryland High School Assessments.	The state should align curriculum, standards, and tests.	The state should align content standards, performance standards, and assessment.
Assessment	<p>The state should provide individual student results on all assessments.</p> <p>The state should work with school systems to make diagnostic assessments available to schools.</p>	<p>The state should provide individual student results on all assessments.</p> <p>The state should work with school systems to make diagnostic assessments available to schools.</p> <p>The state should create a "transparent" assessment system that allows educators and the public more access to test items and provides quicker access to test results.</p> <p>The state should move forward with the Maryland High School Assessments and build connections to postsecondary education and employers.</p>	<p>By 2005-2006, the state must administer reading and math assessments annually in grades 3-8, and at least once in grades 9-12, and provide individual student results.</p> <p>By 2007-2008, the state must administer a science assessment at least once in each of the following grade clusters: 3-5, 6-9, 10-12.</p>
Accountability	<p>The state must widen the focus of accountability from low-performing schools to all schools.</p> <p>The state should create short-term (1- to 3-year) performance targets for each school.</p> <p>Based on the progress of all students toward short-term targets and state standards, each school should receive a rating that describes its performance (e.g., "Below Standards, Improving" or "Above Standards, Declining").</p> <p>The state should reconstitute failing schools and offer more support to more schools struggling to improve.</p> <p>The state must make every school accountable for the performance of every child. Performance designations and rewards should be tied to the performance of all students.</p>	<p>The state must widen the focus of accountability from low-performing schools to all schools.</p> <p>Every school should have improvement targets.</p> <p>Based on the progress of all students toward short-term targets and state standards, each school should receive a rating that describes its performance.</p> <p>The state must make every school accountable for the performance of every child. Performance designations and rewards should be tied to the performance of all students.</p>	<p>The state must establish a single accountability system for all local school systems and public schools.</p> <p>The state must create adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets for all schools and school systems. The AYP must require all students to improve and, in 12 years, to perform at the state-defined "proficient" level in reading and math.</p> <p>Schools not making AYP for 2 consecutive years must provide "public school choice." After three consecutive years, the state must provide school choice plus supplemental services.</p> <p>If schools do not make AYP in the fourth year, districts must take corrective actions. If the schools fail to improve in the fifth year, the district must plan for alternative governance (e.g., state takeover [reconstitution], private management, or charter schools).</p> <p>To make schools accountable for the performance of every child, by 2002-2003, states must issue report cards that disaggregate data by race, income, gender, and disability.</p>
Teacher Preparation/ Professional Development	<p>The state must ensure that all teachers are highly qualified (i.e., certify only those teachers who can demonstrate high-level knowledge and teaching skills).</p> <p>The state should develop a statewide strategy to recruit and retain high-quality teachers.</p> <p>The state must ensure that the highest quality teachers and principals work in the lowest performing schools.</p> <p>The state and school systems should establish a pay differential for high-need geographic areas.</p> <p>The state must shift principals' focus from administration to instruction.</p>	<p>The state must ensure that all teachers are highly qualified (i.e., certify only those teachers who can demonstrate high-level knowledge and teaching skills).</p> <p>The state should develop a statewide strategy to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. The state must ensure that the highest quality teachers and principals work in the lowest performing schools.</p> <p>The state and school systems should establish a pay differential for high-need geographic and subject areas.</p> <p>School systems should provide teachers serious opportunities for advancement that allow them to remain in the classroom.</p>	<p>The state must ensure that all teachers are "highly qualified" by the end of the 2005-2006 school year, meaning that they are certified and pass a rigorous test of subject knowledge and teaching skills.</p> <p>By December 2004, all teachers' aides must have: 1) completed at least 2 years of study at a college or university; or 2) obtained an associate's or higher degree; or 3) met a rigorous standard of quality established at the local level, which includes an assessment of skill in math, reading, and writing.</p>
Funding	MSDE and education advocates must demand full funding of existing reform plans (e.g., <i>Every Child Achieving</i> and the report of the Thornton Commission).	No provision	Increase federal funding for Title I and other ESEA programs to support high achievement among all students.

School Recognition Program by free and reduced-price meals



School Recognition

Maryland's School Performance Recognition Program celebrates the work of schools making sustained progress toward state standards and provides incentives for these schools to continue their efforts. Last year, the Department recognized the accomplishments of 354 elementary and middle schools, 61 of which shared in \$2.75 million for making significant improvements over 2-3 years. Another 293 schools received certificates of recognition for making one-year gains. The percentage of high-poverty schools (50% or higher FARM rate) recognized has risen dramatically since the program began.

Achievement

As 2001 drew to a close, Congress completed the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (see page 6), which requires, in part, state tests in every grade, 3-8, and in high school. While the law dovetails with much of what Maryland's assessment system already does, it includes requirements that will change the face of testing in schools across the country. To comply with ESEA, Maryland will refine its assessment package, making changes in what tests include; how they are designed, administered, and scored; and how results are reported (see page 1).

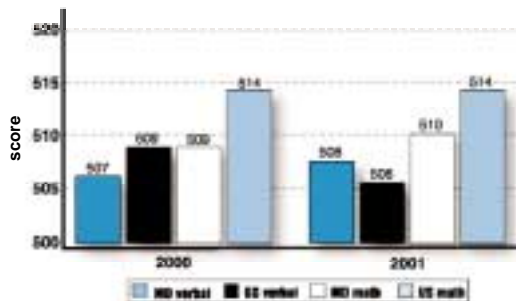
Of course, while MSPAP is Maryland's highest profile measure of student achievement, it is by no means the only one. The state uses a variety of assessments to gauge student and school performance and improve instruction accordingly.

SAT

SAT participation and achievement increased last year. Students posted a one-point gain on both the verbal and math portions of the test. Over the last 10 years, math scores have risen nine points — though they still lag behind the national average — and verbal scores three points.

Among states with a 65% or greater participation rate, Maryland ranked 4th in the country in math achievement and 6th in verbal. African-American students made up 28% of the public school test takers — a number that continues to rise — and their math and verbal scores improved by one point apiece.

SAT Verbal and Math Maryland vs. Nation



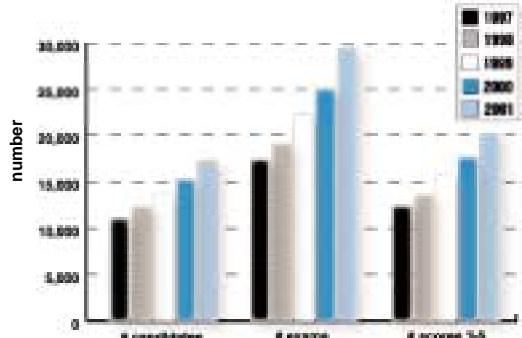
Advanced Placement

Student participation in the Advanced Placement (AP) exams has risen dramatically in recent years — 11.4% more students took an AP exam last year, when compared with the year before — without decreasing the scores.

The number of African-American AP test takers in Maryland has risen even more sharply than the total population — up 17.2% last year — and they were more than twice as likely to score well (a grade of 3-5 on a 5-point scale) as African-American students nationally.

The number of Latino students taking an AP exam increased more than 15% last year, better than the 14.2% national rise. The number of Asian students taking the exam jumped 11.7% last year, topping the national increase of 8.2%.

Maryland AP Trends

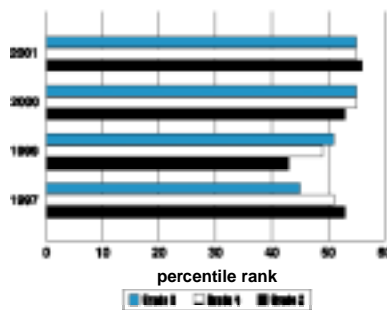


CTBS

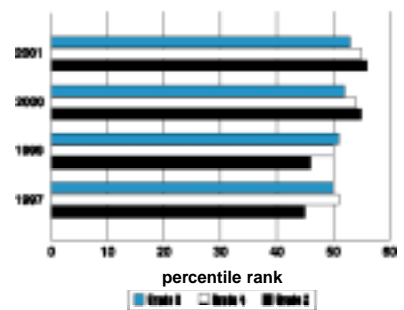
The Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) — a national standardized exam given to students in grades 2, 4, and 6 — assesses how well students do in basic reading, language, and math. Whereas MSPAP is designed to test schools, CTBS tests individual students.

Maryland's CTBS scores for all grades have been rising since 1997, but the increase is most pronounced in the 2nd grade. Second graders' reading scores placed them in the 45th percentile in 1997, and their language usage scores came in at the 39th percentile. By 2000, in both reading and language usage, Maryland 2nd graders had climbed to the 55th percentile. Students in grades 4 and 6, however, have posted more modest gains, and math performance has flattened out across the board.

CTBS Math



CTBS Reading



NAEP

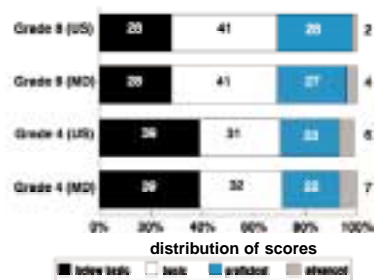
The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card, is the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subjects. Assessments have been conducted periodically in eight content areas since 1969.

Since 1990, NAEP assessments have also been conducted on the state level. NAEP does not provide scores for individual students or schools; instead, it offers results regarding subject-matter achievement, instructional experiences, and school environment for populations of students (e.g., 4th graders) and subgroups of those populations (e.g., female students, Hispanic students). NAEP results are based on a sample of these students, and scale scores are converted into proficiency levels — below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced — to make achievement comparisons easier.

In 1998, NAEP assessed reading at grades 4 and 8. In 2000, grades 4 and 8 math and science were assessed.

On all three assessments and for both grades tested, Maryland's results were no different (statistically speaking) than the national average. By the same token, the percentage of students at or above basic has increased in all subjects and at all grades for which Maryland has trend data.

NAEP Reading, 1998



Continued on page 8

Analyzing Your School Performance Data

Interpreting school performance data got a little easier this year with some new features on MSDE's school improvement Web site, www.mdk12.org.


"Analyzing Your MSPAP Data" — <http://www.mdk12.org/data/worksheets/index.asp> — takes you on a guided tour of your test results, asking questions about your performance; graphing your data to help answer those questions; posing questions for reflection; and providing a set of data analysis worksheets to guide your improvement team.

Questions posed — and answered — for each school include:

- Did we meet state standards this year? Are we making progress toward them?
- Are there disparities in group performance?
- What is the distribution of scores on individual outcomes? How does our performance compare across outcomes?
- How did absenteeism affect our scores?
- Which schools similar to ours outscored us?

- Which schools have been most successful with specified student populations?
- How do we compare with high-performing schools based on the SPI?
- How do we compare to selected schools? To county and state averages?
- Before tackling these questions, you may want some background on the way data are displayed on the site. So MSDE and University of Maryland psychometricians explain (in Browser or RealPlayer) how to read and interpret bar, stacked bar, line, and box-and-whisker graphs.

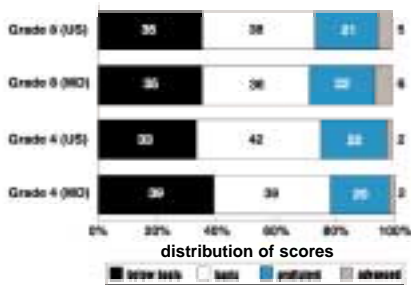
Of course, analyzing the data is only Step 2 in a 10-step school improvement process. From there, the site takes you through the rest of the process — identifying questions the data raise, prioritizing instructional needs, engaging staff in data analysis, and presenting the data to stakeholder groups.

Each step of the way are workshops and practice activities that allow you to compare your work to that of online experts, and words of advice from school and school system staff. 

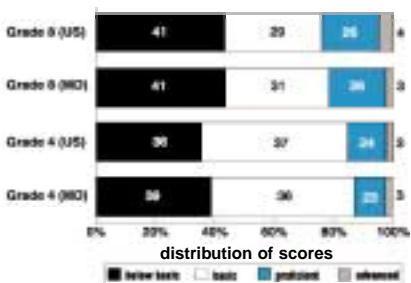
NAEP

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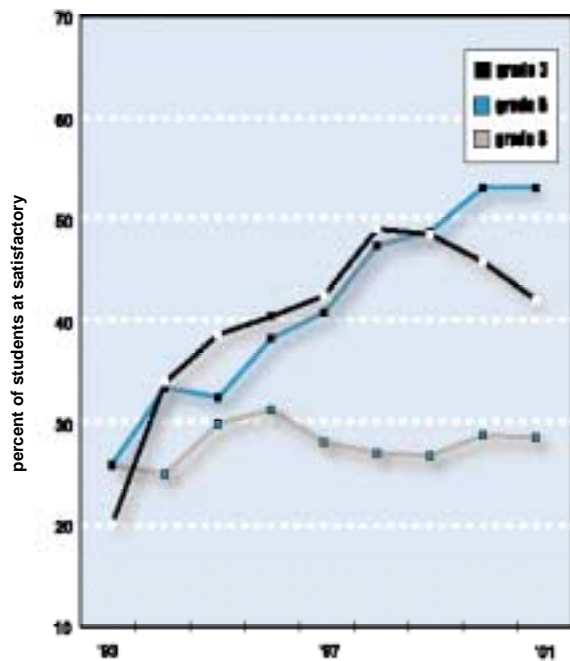
NAEP Math, 2000



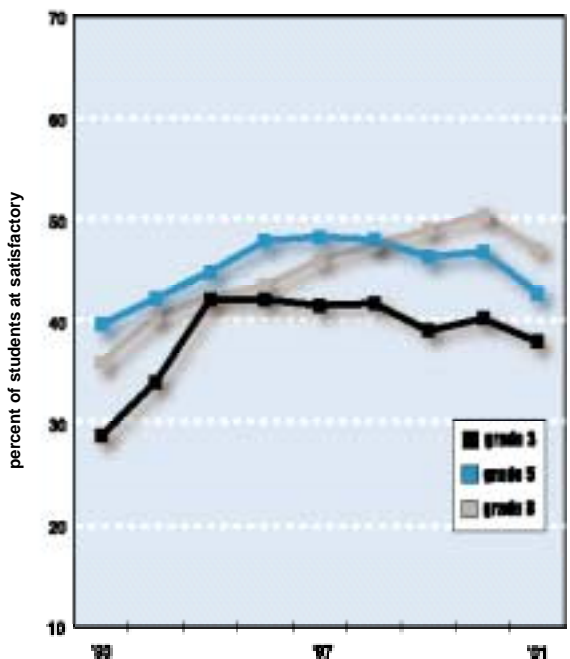
NAEP Science, 1998



MSPAP Reading



MSPAP Math



Maryland Classroom

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