

Maryland's Public Charter School Program

Providing High Quality Choices in Public Education



A Message from the State Superintendent



Dear Friends of Maryland Public Education:

For the fourth year in a row, charter school growth continues to climb — both in the number of schools that are opening and the number of children who are attending.

Our public education system has experienced many successes in the year since we presented you with the 2007 Annual Charter School Update. In January 2009, Education Week, a nationally acclaimed educational publication, ranked Maryland's public school system Number One in the Nation. That includes the 34 schools that currently comprise our charter school program.

In the face of economic hardship across the country and throughout the State, our educational system continues to thrive. We are not immune to the obstacles that a challenged fiscal climate produces, but are well-positioned to overcome them. It is more important than ever that we explore innovative, efficient, and effective ways to meet the unique needs of our children and their families — charter schooling is one way that is happening.

Thank you for your on-going commitment to innovation and excellence. Our persistence is paying off: with a solid foundation in place, we are confident that the best is yet to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy S. Grasmick". The signature is fluid and cursive, matching the name printed below it.

Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

Frequently Asked Questions about Charter Schools & Choice



How long has there been a public charter school program in Maryland?

The Maryland General Assembly enacted Maryland's charter school law in 2003. This current school year (2008-2009) marks the sixth year of Maryland's public charter school program. However, Frederick County Public Schools approved a charter for Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School one year prior to the law's passage.

Are charter schools private schools?

No. Charter schools are public schools. They are open to all students on a space available basis and exist as part of the local school system in which it is located. Charter schools are funded with public taxpayer dollars, just as traditional public schools are. Charter schools must administer the Maryland School Assessments and the High School Assessments. They are subject to the provisions of No Child Left Behind and must ensure that all teachers are highly qualified.

What makes charter schools different from traditional schools?

Charter schools receive flexibility in scheduling, staffing, program offerings, resource allocations, and grade configurations. However, in exchange for this flexibility they are subject to increased accountability. Success must be demonstrated through academic achievement, parental satisfaction, enrollment, fiscal responsibility, and attendance. Otherwise, local boards of education may revoke a charter or deny its renewal.

How is a charter school started?

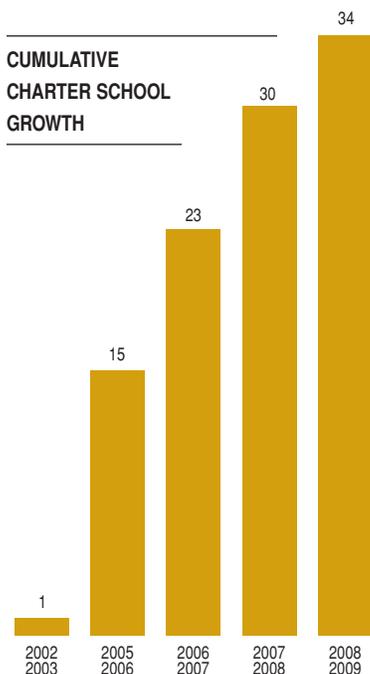
The first step in the charter school process is the completion of a rigorous application to the local board of education in which the charter school is located. Applications may be submitted by staff of a public school, parents/guardians of a student attending a school in the county, a nonsectarian nonprofit entity, a nonsectarian institution of higher education. Once the application is completed and submitted, the local board of education will conduct a review of the application and make a determination as to whether or not the application is approved or denied. If approved, the board of education engages in charter negotiations with the applicants to further refine operational and academic details of the charter school program. For more information on how to start a charter school, contact the Office of Innovations at 410-767-3677 or charterschools@msde.state.md.us



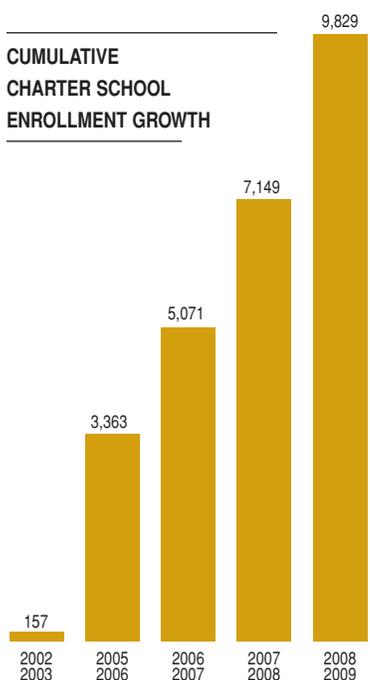
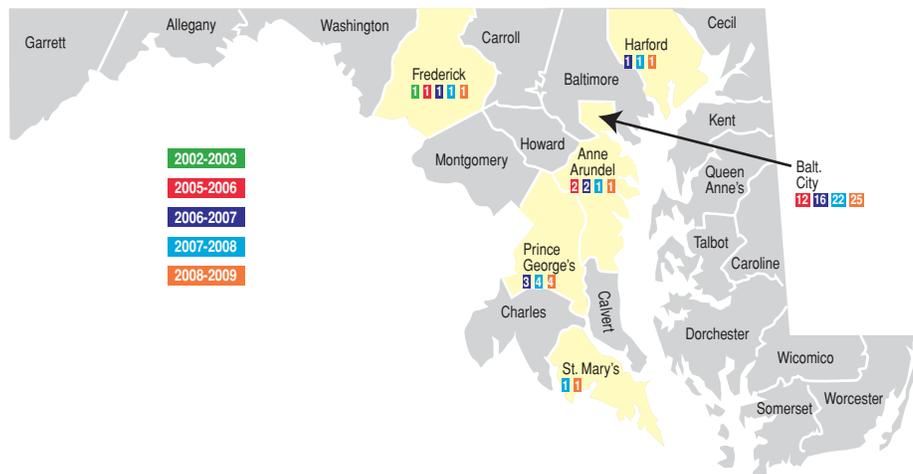
Charter School Growth Charts

“[Empowerment Academy] has given me and my grandson the chance to send him to a school that is different than his zone school. My grandson has a lot of people here that care about him and he is not getting in as much trouble as he used to at his zone school. He is working hard and feels good about himself, and loves going to school everyday.”

— Parent, Empowerment Academy



◀ Choice Is Sprouting Up...



◀ And Enrollment Is Following Suit

A Wide Range in Size, A Wide Range in Focus.

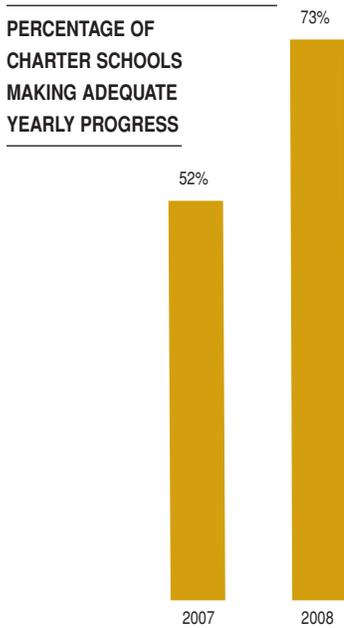
- Enrollment totals among charter schools range from a low of 102 students at **Independence School** Local I in Baltimore City to a high of 548 students at **Hampstead Hill** in Baltimore City.
- Bluford Drew Jemison Academy** is a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) school that prepares 259 male students in grades 6 and 7 to pursue rigorous educational opportunities in high schools of their choice.
- The Green School** in Baltimore enrolls 108 students in kindergarten through grade 4 and uses the environment as the context for learning. Children use the school’s surroundings and community to learn and develop skills in reading, science, math, and social studies.
- Monocacy Valley Montessori** in Frederick County and **Baltimore Montessori** in Baltimore City are the only two public Montessori schools in Maryland. Montessori uses a whole-child, love of learning, multi-age classrooms approach to provide maximum opportunities for developing social and academic skills and modeling respectful behavior.

“We chose EXCEL Academy because we wanted our child to receive quality instruction in a small classroom setting. We also felt that the school climate and culture reflected our own values and beliefs about education. The curriculum and school-based management system were other important factors that led to our decision to enroll our child in EXCEL Academy.” — Parent, Excel Academy

How Enrollment Stacks Up...by School

New/ Conversion	County/School	Grade Levels	2008-2009		
			Male	Female	Total
	Anne Arundel County				
New	Chesapeake Science Point	6-8	119	80	199
	Baltimore County				
New	Imagine Discovery Charter School	PK-4	236	229	465
	Baltimore City				
New	Afya Public Charter School	6	47	66	113
Conversion	Baltimore Freedom Academy	6-7, 9-12	221	311	532
New	Baltimore International Academy	K-6	178	189	367
New	Baltimore Montessori	PK-4	94	78	172
New	Bluford Drew Jamison Math/Science Technology Academy (BDJ-MSTA)	6-8	258	1	259
New	City Neighbors	K-8	110	88	198
Conversion	City Springs	PK-8	275	287	562
Conversion	Collington Square School	PK-8	244	258	502
Conversion	ConneXions Community Leadership Academy	6-11	110	129	239
New	Coppin Academy	9-12	119	198	317
Conversion	Dr. Raynor Browne	PK-8	116	137	253
Conversion	Hampstead Hill Academy	PK-8	274	274	548
Conversion	Independence School Local I	9-12	60	42	102
New	Inner Harbor East Academy	PK-6	128	139	267
Conversion	KIPP Ujima Village Academy	5-8	160	183	343
New	Maryland Academy of Technology and Health Sciences (MATHS)	6-10	185	181	366
Conversion	Midtown Academy	K-8	90	90	180
New	Northwood Appold Community Academy	K-7	123	125	248
New	Patterson Park Public Charter School	PK-7	271	255	526
Conversion	Rosemont Elementary/Middle School #63	PK-8	201	251	452
New	Southwest Baltimore Charter School	K-4	97	104	201
Conversion	The Crossroads School	6-8	70	80	150
Conversion	The Empowerment Academy	PK-8	103	113	216
New	The Green School of Baltimore	K-4	53	55	108
Conversion	Wolfe Street Academy	PK-5	90	92	182
	Frederick County				
New	Monocacy Valley Montessori	PK-8	138	155	293
	Harford County				
New	Restoration Academy Charter School Prince George's	6-12	50	29	79
New	EXCEL Academy	K-8	146	135	281
New	Imagine-Foundations	K-8	125	106	231
New	Lincoln Public Charter School	K-8	181	158	339
New	Turning Point Academy	K-6	162	165	327
	St. Mary's County				
New	Chesapeake Public Charter School	K-8	104	108	212
Total for All Charter Schools			4938	4891	9829

The Maryland School Assessments:



◀ *How Are Charter School Students and Schools Performing?*

The Number of Schools Opening Isn't the Only Growth Maryland's Charter School Program Is Experiencing... **There Is BIG Growth in Performance, Too!**

- In 2007, 52 Percent of Schools Made Adequate Yearly Progress Under NCLB
- In 2008, 73 Percent of Schools Made Adequate Yearly Progress Under NCLB

Improvement Alert

The table below identifies the schools identified for school improvement, or that are at risk of moving into improvement. MSDE is working closely with each school to develop targeted interventions and supports that will reverse the under-performance trend and move these schools out of improvement or alert status.

"I like the teachers, because they are nice and they help you to learn new things. They give us work that is fun and that makes you think."
— 3rd Grade Student, Empowerment Academy

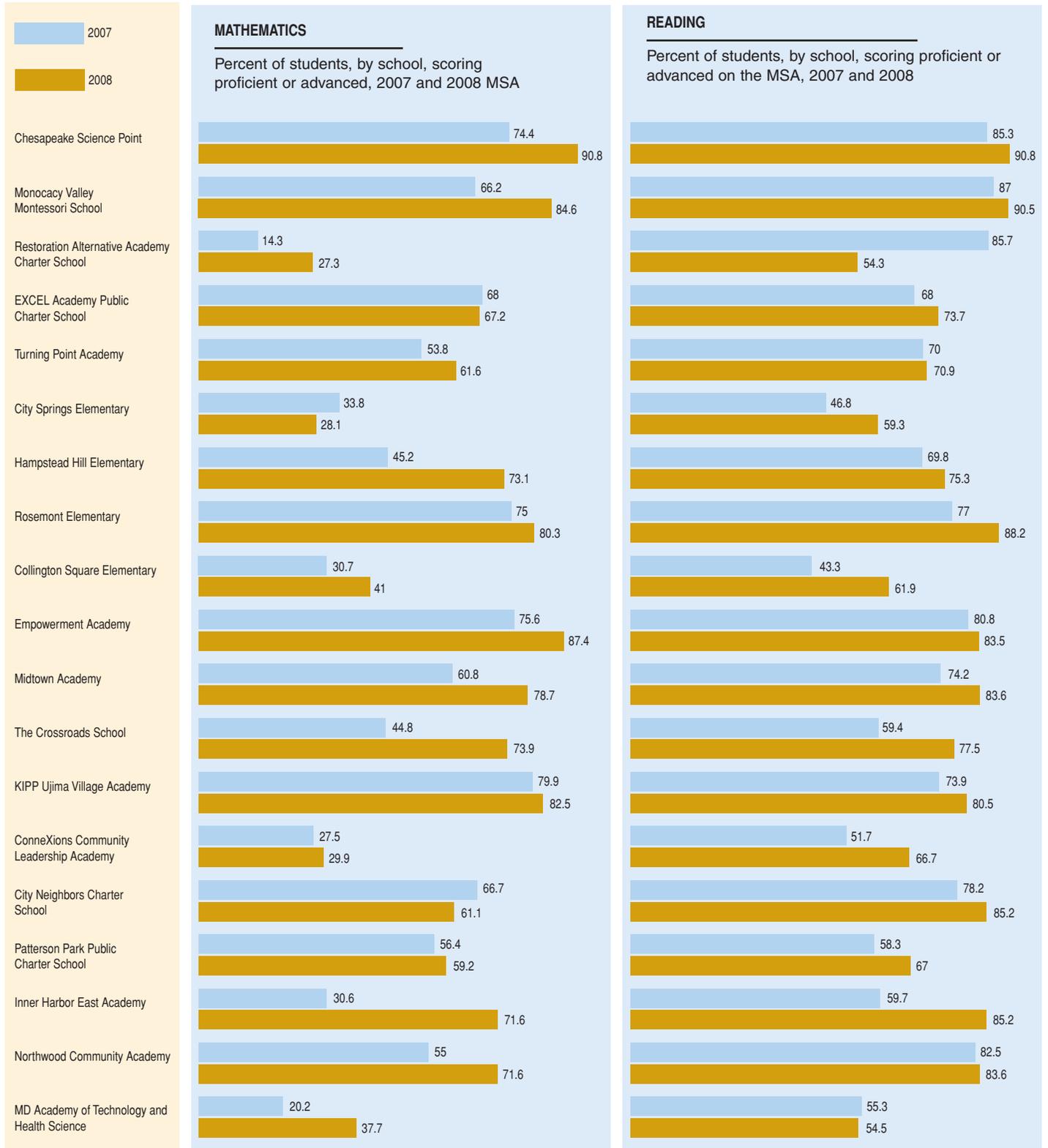
School Name	Improvement Status 2008-09
City Springs Elementary	Year 2
Collington Square Elementary	Restructuring-Implementation
Dr. Rayner Browne Elementary	Year 1
Hampstead Hill Academy	Year 1
MD Academy of Technology and Health Sciences	Year 1
Lincoln Charter School	Alert
City Neighbors Charter School	Alert
ConneXiones Community Leadership Academy	Year 2

"This year our professional development focus is on differentiation and rigor. We are receiving training in effective differentiation and materials that support its implementation are provided. We are also receiving training on academic rigor to ensure all of our students are challenged appropriately. This is impacting student performance because students are using more critical thinking skills, making applications that are thoughtful, and working hard to meet the established expectations."

— Teacher, Empowerment Academy

The Maryland School Assessments:

How Are Charter School Students and Schools Performing?



“Parent participation and monthly parent council meetings are critical to our success. Community partnerships also provide ongoing support.”

— Administrator, Northwood Appold Community Academy

The Maryland School Assessments:

FOCUS ON READING AND MATH IN GRADES 3, 5, 8, AND 10

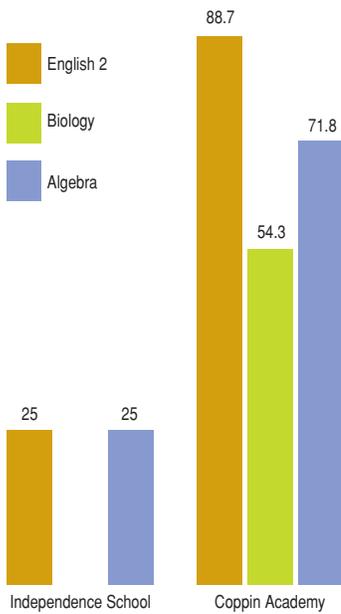
*Percent of students, by school,
scoring proficient or advanced
on the MSA, 2008*



2008	Reading				Math			
	3	5	8	Eng 2	3	5	8	Algebra
Independence Sch				25.0				25.0
Chesapeake Science Pt			91.5					
Monocacy Valley	88.6	87.5	83.3		88.6	71.9	75.0	
Restoration Aca			51.9				22.2	
Lincoln Public	45.7				42.9			
EXCEL Academy	59.3	72.7			59.3	63.6		
Imagine Fdtn	88.5				76.9			
Turning Point Aca	63.6				54.5			
Chesapeake Charter School	91.3	94.7			95.7	89.5		
City Springs	56.3	47.6	70.3		40.8	31.0	43.2	
General Wolfe	62.5	94.1			60.0	94.1		
Dr. Raynor Browne	53.6	70.4			64.3	63.0		
Hampstead Hill	83.6	73.8	55.6		94.5	57.1	51.1	
Rosemont	79.2	95.2	57.1		83.0	83.3	32.1	
Collington Square	42.4	75.0	41.2		27.7	34.1	17.6	
Empowerment	95.2	70.0			95.2	85.0		
Midtown Aca	81.0	90.5	61.9		85.7	90.5	52.4	
The Crossroads School			69.8				67.4	
KIPP Ujima Village Aca		66.4	85.5			65.4	96.4	
ConneXiones Community			59.0				33.3	
City Neighbors	81.8	81.8			77.3	59.1		
Patterson Park	57.8	77.8			54.7	62.2		
Southwest Baltimore	72.5				82.5			
Inner Harbor East	74.3	94.4			65.7	61.1		
Coppin Academy				71.2				88.7
Northwood Appold	78.4				86.5			
MATHS		55.1				37.2		
The Green School	93.8				87.5			
Bluford Drew Jemison Aca								
Baltimore International	57.1	73.3			66.7	73.3		

“The high standard for academic excellence has impacted the attitude and behavior of Rosemont Academy students. Many of the students model behavior in the community that exudes what is expected in the school. Working in partnership with Rosemont has allowed us to celebrate their accomplishments and partner in programs that would impact the community. It is a great place to be!” — *District Staff, Baltimore City Public Schools*

The High School Assessments:



*Independence School did not administer the Biology HSA in 2007-2008

How Are Charter School Students and Schools Performing?

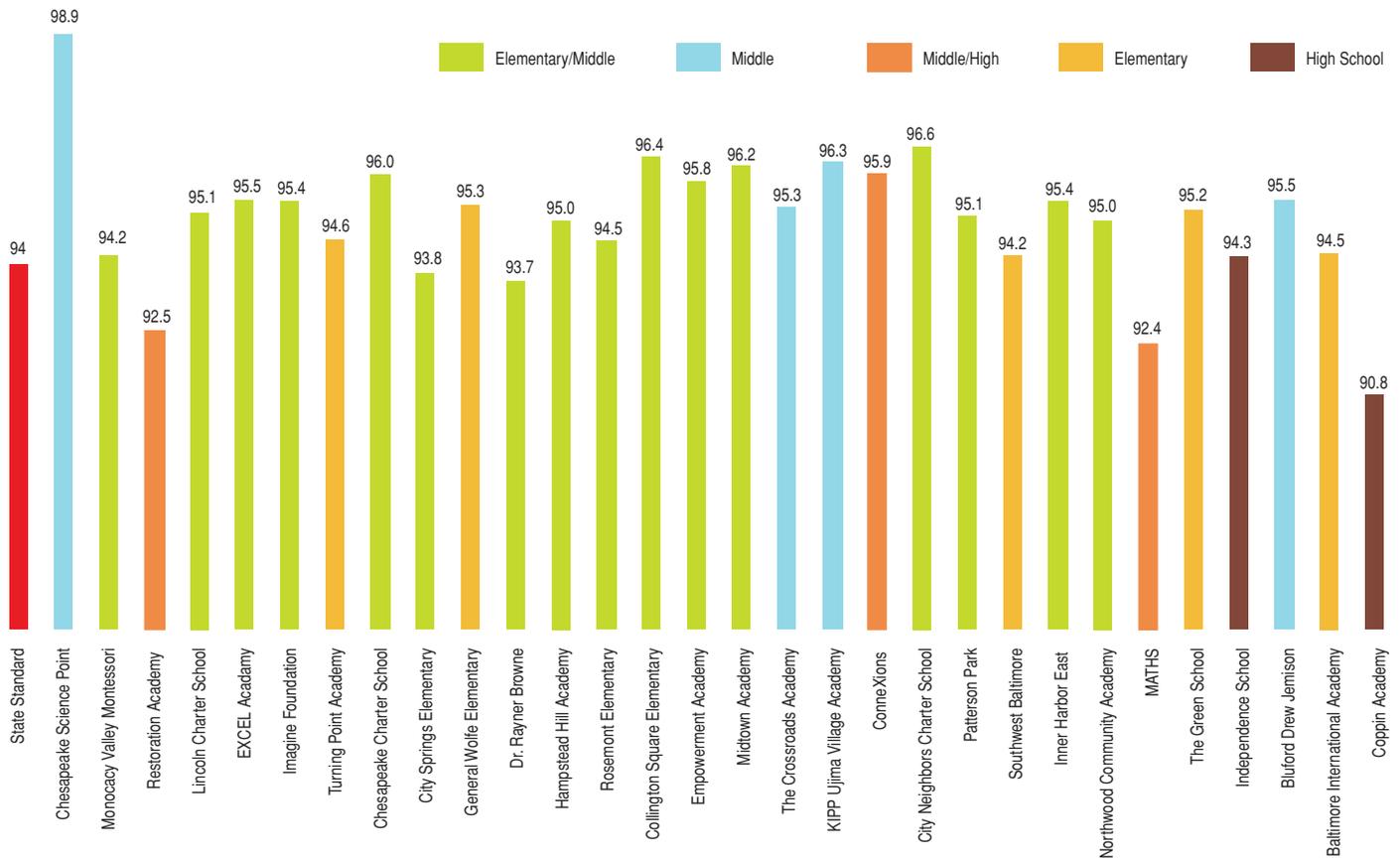
The High School Assessments, HSAs, are four exams offered in algebra/data analysis, biology, government, and English. All students who entered 9th grade in or after 2005 must take and pass the HSAs in order to graduate upon successful completion of the HSA course. This also applies to middle school students taking a high-school-level HSA course.

Two public charter schools administered the HSAs in 2007-2008:

- Independence School: Eight students took the Algebra and English 2 assessments
- Coppin Academy: Seventy-one (71) took the Algebra and English 2 assessments; 70 students took the Biology assessment

Attendance

Attendance rates are used in the calculation to determine whether or not Adequate Yearly Progress was made. The 2007-2008 attendance rates of the 23 public charter schools are reported in the following three graphs. The standard for attendance in Maryland public schools is 94 percent.



Quality Counts

Three schools are highlighted for the performance of their overall student population as well as the performance of their subgroup populations. Performance for subgroup populations in many cases also exceeded the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs).

Each of these schools responded to a survey regarding the extent to which three overarching Indicators of Quality were present in their school, how the indicators are operationalized, and the impact they have on student and teacher performance. MSDE will investigate the specific practices that these schools are employing further to identify replication potential in other schools throughout the state, charter and traditional alike.

Schools Were Surveyed on the Presence of the Following Indicators of Quality:

1. Sustain a culture and infrastructure of continuous improvement that serves to maintain the long term success of the school
2. Launch and sustain effective educational innovations and the promising practices of school reform
3. Maintain shared understandings and commitment to provide positive learning environments and experiences through the engagement of all students, parents, staff and community

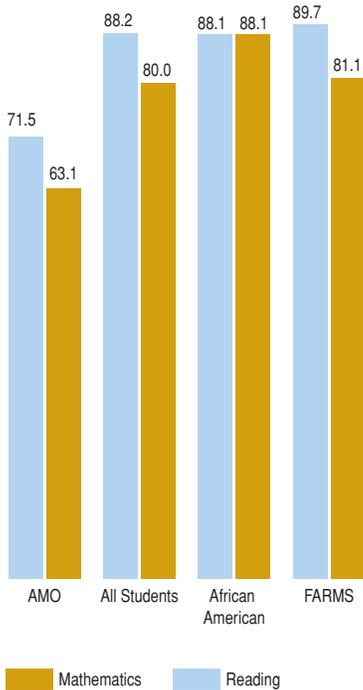
Highlights of the responses from each school are provided on the following pages, but several common themes emerged:

- Data are used regularly to drive instructional decision-making
- Teaching and learning are the foundation from which all efforts stem
- Incentives are used to promote high attendance and improved performance
- Parent and family engagement is central to the schools' operation
- Schools work hard to create an inviting and productive climate for their students, teachers, parents, and larger school community



“The school provides a safe haven for the students and a foundation of possibilities in our community. The school provides gardening projects to beautify the neighborhood.”

— *Community Member, Rosemont Academy*



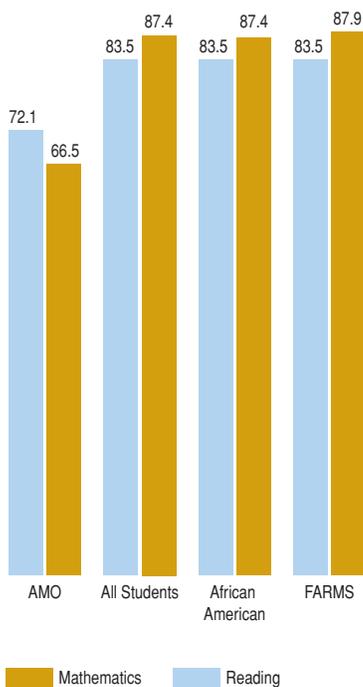
◀ Rosemont Elementary, BCPSS

“We initially made the choice to send our child to Rosemont out of convenience; however, the education, the resources, the teachers, and the administrators have kept this school the only choice for us.” — Parent, Rosemont Elementary.

How Are the Indicators of Quality Employed in Rosemont?

Highlights of Staff Responses

Indicator of Quality	Rosemont Staff Response
1. Sustain a culture and infrastructure of continuous improvement that serves to maintain the long term success of the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative planning and professional development: Action plans for how instruction will be differentiated to accommodate data-driven findings are developed by teachers and administrators collaboratively. Instructionally-centered faculty meetings and teacher journals are used to develop, promote, and support exceptional teaching. • Instructional Leadership: School administrators conduct learning walks regularly throughout the day to monitor instruction and evaluate learning.



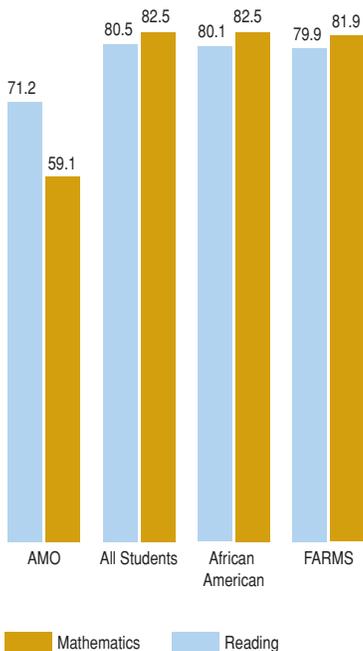
◀ Empowerment Academy, BCPSS

“This year my classes are small, there are only 11 people in my Math, Language Arts, Science and Social Studies classes. It is better this way, because the classes are really small, there are less distractions, and you get more time with the teacher. I think this is my best year so far.” — Student, Empowerment Academy

How Are the Indicators of Quality Employed in Empowerment Academy?

Highlights of Staff Responses

Indicator of Quality	Empowerment Staff Response
2. Launch and sustain effective educational innovations and the promising practices of school reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance and performance incentives: Parents are required to have their children in attendance daily and on time as part of their parental contract. Both students and staff are rewarded for perfect attendance and great performance. • Character education and literacy through arts program: These programs are widely supported by families and partners. Skills and knowledge that can be applied lifelong are developed through this approach.

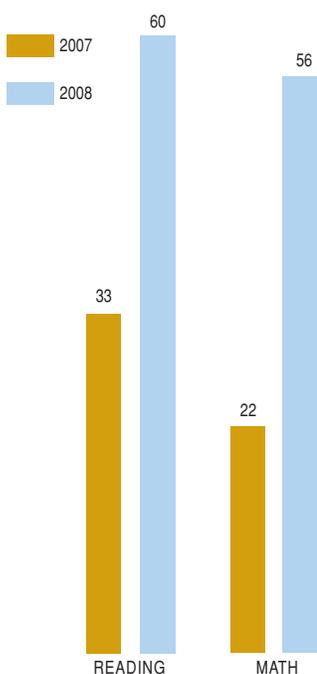


◀ KIPP Ujima Village Academy, BCPSS

How Are the Indicators of Quality Employed in KIPP Ujima?

Highlights of Staff Responses

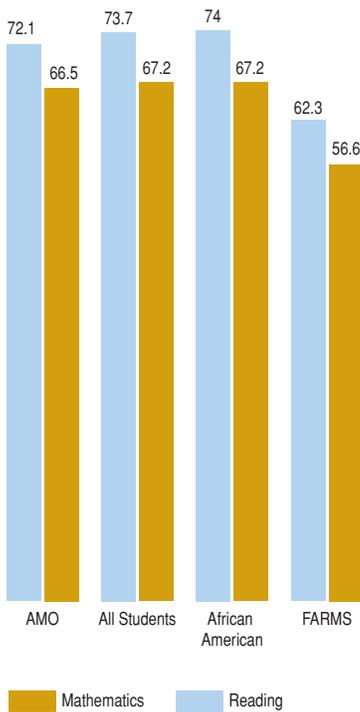
Indicators of Quality	KIPP Ujima Staff Response
<p>2. Launch and sustain effective educational innovations and the promising practices of school reform</p>	<p>Five pillars of KIPP Ujima:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Expectations: all students are expected to achieve and ultimately enter college. • More Time on Task: all students attend school for at least 9.25 hours daily during the regular school year, at least 6.5 hours for three weeks in the summer, and 3.5 hours on Saturdays throughout the year. • Choice and Commitment: all students, parents, and staff choose the school and make a commitment to meet its high expectations. • Power to Lead: the school has the power to staff, budget, and teach according to the students' needs. • Focus on Results: KIPP Ujima measures success based on actual student achievement, and ultimately based on how many students graduate from college.



◀ Northwood Appold Community Academy, BCPSS

“I heard about the opening of the school from members of the church. After reading informational brochures that were provided to me, I knew that NACA was the change I was looking for my son. Character development and learning the aspects of freedom and democracy were big issues for me.” — Parent, NACA

Indicators of Quality	NACA Staff Response
<p>3. Maintain shared understandings and commitment to provide positive learning environments and experiences through the engagement of all students, parents, staff and community</p>	<p>Parents are encouraged to volunteer in ways that support the students, staff, parents and the community. Parents are asked to be involved in many aspects of the school's day-to-day operations such as monitoring students, supporting home study activities, participating in care giving efforts that are extended to the community, school/ family events, school maintenance, student praise and encouragement as well as other similar activities.</p>



◀ Excel Academy, BCPSS

“I like EXCEL Academy because there are fun activities to help me learn faster and better. I feel that the school meets my needs by preparing me for the 7th grade next year. I think it’s great that the school has extracurricular activities for me to join such as the G.O.L.D. Team and chorus. I also like the school because the teachers are friendly and kind.” — Student, Excel Academy

A Teacher’s Perspective on Improvement at EXCEL:

There are several factors that have contributed to the improved performance of EXCEL’s students:

1. We adhere to teaching the standards as presented in the Voluntary State Curriculum, but we pace the instruction in such a way that we allow our students more time on challenging skills. This allows for mastery of skills and not merely exposure.
2. We teach math skills sequentially. Prerequisite skills are taught prior to higher level skills. This aids greatly in mastery of skills.
3. Teachers make use of small group instruction so struggling students can be given more time with challenging skills.
4. We enjoy a high level of parental involvement in the school. We have a very active PTA which sponsors academic as well as recreational programs for the students. Our PTA encourages literacy by sponsoring two book fairs a year and provides free classroom books to teachers.
5. At EXCEL Academy, our classroom sizes do not exceed 15 students for kindergarten, 20 in the primary grades and 25 in the intermediate grades. Smaller class sizes help to ensure that the academic needs of all students are met.
6. We have initiated the Commonwealth Foundation’s after-school tutorial program which meets four days a week. This provides additional remediation of math and reading skills for students in need.
7. Teachers participate in shared planning to ensure quality instruction, pacing, and that all standards are taught.

Support and Assistance: MSDE Responds to the Data



The Office of School Innovations

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) offers public charter school program support and assistance to both local school systems and charter applicants and operators.

The scope of the support provided by The Office of School Innovations has broadened with the growth of the charter school program. While this office continues to provide assistance in the operational aspects of charter school development and implementation, **it continues to provide expanded support in 2009 to include an intensive instructional and programmatic focus as well.**

- School Improvement Training and Strategic Planning Assistance
- On-site visits, in partnership with state, district and school staff, to assess academic rigor and school climate improvement and alignment opportunities
- Coordination of Charter School Stakeholder Committee to identify common needs, share effective practices, and inform MSDE involvement and support
- Executive Development and Coaching Services
- Administration of Federal Charter School Grant Program

To learn more about the Charter School Program in Maryland and the Support and Assistance that is available:

Call: 410-767-3677

Email: charterschools@msde.state.md.us

Visit our Website:

http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/charter_schools/

The Federal Charter School Grant Program

In June 2007, MSDE was one of 10 states awarded a competitive three-year \$18.2 million federal grant through the U.S. Department of Education's Public Charter School Program. This grant will support the Planning and Design and Implementation categories — **with a strong emphasis on program quality, accountability, and evaluation.**

Federal Grant Award Amounts by Category

Sub-grants Available:	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Planning and Design	\$1.5 million	\$1.5 million	\$1.5 million
Implementation	\$3.2 million	\$4.0 million	\$4.8 million
Priority Grants	\$150,000	\$300,000	\$300,000

Description of Grant Awards

Planning & Design Grant - This grant is awarded upon approval of the grant application. Planning and Design funds may be used to further develop or refine desired educational outcomes, solidify methods for measuring progress towards achieving the identified outcomes, develop or refine the professional development programs for teachers and other staff who will work in the charter school, and to provide outreach to the families and communities that the school intends to serve.

Implementation Grant – This grant is awarded upon official opening of the school. Implementation funds may be used for the acquisition of required equipment, educational supplies and materials, curriculum materials, and other initial operational costs that cannot be obtained with State or local sources.

Looking Ahead: The Future Growth of Public Charter Schools

In addition to the 34 public charter schools operating in 2008-2009, nine (9) are scheduled to open in 2009-2010 and two (2) in 2010-2011. A breakdown of the schools that will open, along with the grade levels they plan to serve, is provided in the table below.



New/ Conversion	County/ School Name	Projected Opening	Projected Grades Served	Projected Enrollment
Baltimore City				
New	Baltimore Antioch Diploma Plus High	2009-10	9-12	200
New	Baltimore Community High School	2009-10	9-12	200
New	Baltimore Leadership School For Young Women	2009-10	6-12	120
New	Baltimore Liberation Diploma Plus High School	2009-10	9 – 12	200
New	Bluford Drew Jemison STEM Academy (West Campus)	2009-10	6-12	130
New	City Neighbors Hamilton	2009-10	K-3	88
New	KIPP Harmony	2009-10	K	110
New	Northwood Appold Community Academy II	2009-10	6-12	160
New	City Neighbors High School	2010-11	9	80
Anne Arundel				
New	Monarch Academy	2009-10	K,1, 2	195
Prince George's				
New	Sojourner Truth	2010-11	5-6	184

Complete contact information for each of the existing public charter schools and those proposed is available at http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/charter_schools/

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