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To: Members of the Maryland State Board of Education

From: Nancy S. Grasmick *Nancy*

Re: Maryland School Assessment Scores and Adequate Yearly Progress Release

Date: July 19, 2010

Summary of Maryland School Assessment (MSA) Results

I wanted to review for you some of the key findings in the 2010 results. We are very gratified by the performance of our students in all of the reported grades, three through eight. The strong improvements we have seen since 2003, the first year of the assessment, have continued into 2010. Several important facts emerged from this year's results:

The Results

- **Scores stabilize and show progress.** Since 2003, Maryland students have made great improvements in performance on the MSAs. They have improved 25 points in elementary reading and 26.5 points in elementary math. Improvement in middle school is at 23 points in reading and 33 points in mathematics. As many school systems have already reached and are maintaining high scores, it is less likely the state will continue to see significant gains in scores. Therefore, while scores were generally up this year in both content areas and levels (elementary and middle) the gains are smaller than had been seen in the earlier years of the MSA program. The 2010 gains were higher in elementary mathematics and in reading and mathematics at the middle school level. The gains were particularly evident across the historically lower performing subgroups.
- **Race gaps closing.** With few exceptions, racial groups continue to improve performance, with African American students and Hispanic students posting the greatest gains, especially in middle school.
- **Services groups improving.** Some of the more significant improvements this year were in the FARMs, ELL and Special Education subgroups.

Contributing Factors

- **State policies and initiatives contributing to success.** The patterns of results continue to indicate that initiatives such as full day kindergarten, emphasis on highly qualified teachers, NCLB and Thornton funding have had positive impacts on student performance.
- **State curriculum yielding results.** With the introduction of the Voluntary State Curriculum in 2003, teachers had for the first time clear grade-by-grade descriptions of content expectations for students in reading and mathematics. The improvements seen at all grades indicate that the curriculum has been successful in helping teachers more clearly the content that should be integrated into their lessons.
- **Early learning fuels success in upper grades.** As Maryland implemented the Voluntary State Curriculum, it also implemented early learning reforms, including a school readiness measure (the Maryland Model for School Readiness). Results in upper grades indicate that the learning foundations help students continue to be successful as they go into middle and high school levels.

Data Tables

Since 2003, state MSA scores have been steadily rising to levels where it is increasingly difficult to show significant improvement. With high percentages of students scoring proficient or better on the assessments, the increments of improvement are now smaller than in the past when there was more opportunity for larger gains. Twenty-one school systems already have achieved scores at or above 80% in elementary reading, 21 in elementary math, 19 in middle school reading and 10 in middle school math. State improvements are now dependent on the lower performing local school systems making significant progress, and on all systems making significant progress with the most challenging populations of students. Many of these students attend schools in the two lower performing school systems. These school systems serve 40 percent of all students in poverty, 29 percent of all students with disabilities and 38 percent of all ELL students.

The 2010 MSA results show evidence of continuing high performance combined with the appearance of that anticipated stabilization of results that is more pronounced in reading.

	2010 % Proficient	2009 % Proficient	2003% Proficient	2009- 2010 Growth	2003- 2010 Growth
Elementary					
Reading	86.9	87.0	62.0	-0.1	+24.9
Mathematics	86.5	84.9	60.0	+1.6	+26.5
Middle					
Reading	82.8	81.8	59.9	+1.0	+22.9
Mathematics	72.6	71.2	39.6	+1.4	+33.0

Annual targets. The goal of NCLB was to have every student proficient in reading and mathematics by 2014, and targets were set back in 2003 in order to “pace” schools to meet that target. Each year the target (referred to as the Annual Measureable Objective, or AMO) increases to ensure schools progress toward meeting the 2014 goal. Therefore the closer we come to 2014, the harder it becomes for a school to meet these targets for all subgroups. Schools not meeting the AMO target for all subgroups in any given year are designated as having “not met” the Adequate Yearly Progress requirement.

We are celebrating that ten elementary and middle schools exited School Improvement in 2010. However, this year there was an increase in the numbers of schools not meeting AYP. Seventy percent of elementary and middle schools met AYP in 2010, down from 76.5 percent in 2009. There are currently 175 schools in School Improvement, an increase of 17 from 2009. We were pleased to see that 119 (88 percent) of the 136 schools that did not meet AYP in 2009 for the first time did meet AYP in 2010, keeping them from entering School Improvement. This indicates that the local attention category that allows time for local intervention is an effective option to assist schools that are beginning to show signs of difficulty meeting the targets. One-hundred eighty-one schools entered the local attention category in 2010 because they missed AYP for the first time. This was an increase of 45 from last year. These 181 schools can avoid School Improvement if they make AYP in 2011.

Many schools are struggling with their special education subgroup. Of the 109 schools that missed AYP because of only one subgroup, 84 (77 percent) failed to make AYP solely because of their special education subgroup. This accounts for 25 percent of all of the schools not meeting the AYP standard.

A more detailed discussion of the MSA and AYP results will take place at the Board Meeting. MSDE staff is engaged in ongoing analyses as we add high school and system-level AYP data to complete our AYP picture for 2010.

Public release. As per past practice, detailed statewide, system, and local school MSA and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data will be posted Tuesday, July 20, 4 PM on the Maryland State Department of Education’s report card Web site, www.mdreportcard.org.

Also administered in 2010, but not reported at the July meeting are required science assessments at grades 5 and 8. Results of those assessments will be released later this summer.

ACTION:

For information only

NSG:law