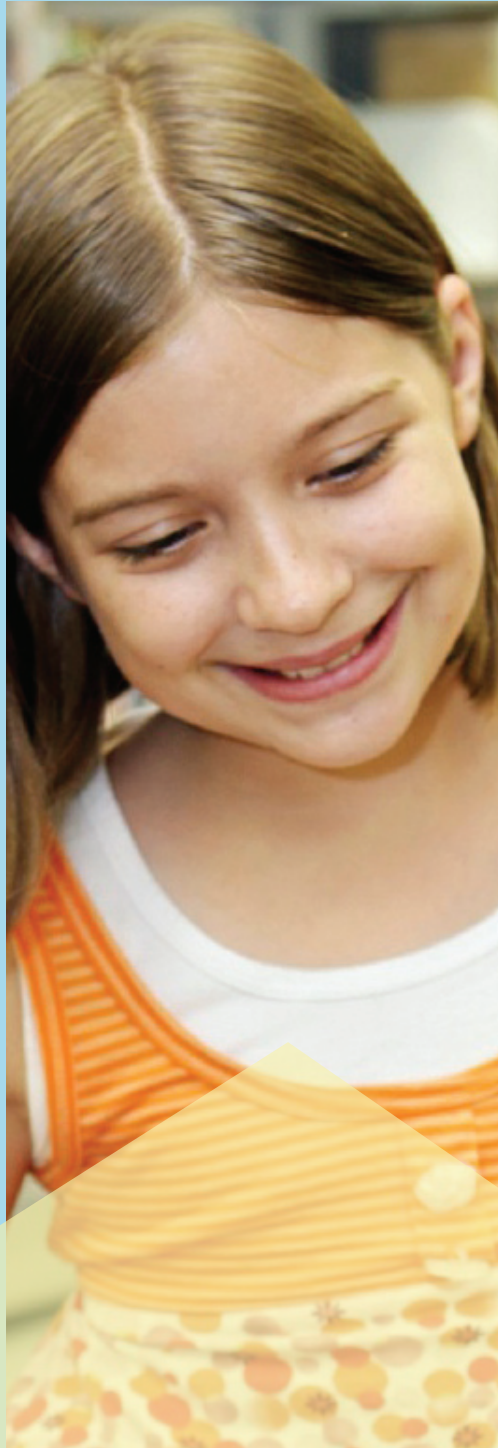


An Investment That
Pays Important Dividends



Our Blue Chip Investment



“Though Maryland is clearly doing some things right, State Schools Superintendent Nancy S. Grasmick was wise to caution that school reform doesn’t happen overnight. It is a process that requires years of sustained commitment.”

*Baltimore Sun Editorial,
January 8, 2009*

Dear Friends of Maryland Public Education:

Looking for something to celebrate? Maryland’s education system has been ranked as number one in the nation!

Education Week, the nation’s premier publication covering preK-12 education, measured the nation’s states on a multitude of factors. The publication’s research arm coordinates this massive study, taking into account everything from preschool curriculum and enrollment to college preparation, from fourth-grade reading and mathematics performance to school finance. The result of this exhaustive study: the researchers determined there is no better state education system than the one we have right here.

A few weeks later, the College Board reported that Maryland student performance on the rigorous Advanced Placement exam, also ranked as the nation’s best.

This is good news for all Marylanders. Our State and our Nation confront the most difficult economy in generations. Unemployment has risen throughout the country, and we face a variety of challenges at home and abroad.

There is no single answer to the questions we face, but there is a single pathway to those answers. Maryland needs to continue to support its education system and continue to improve its schools. The state benefits greatly from the nonpartisan leadership provided by the Maryland State Department of Education. From better schools come better prepared graduates, and stronger graduates will help our State emerge from the economic downturn quickly and stronger than ever.

This publication summarizes some of the many wonderful achievements taking place in Maryland’s schools. It also looks at the challenges that face us in the coming years. We welcome and appreciate your continued support as we work to strengthen every classroom and every school on behalf of all of our students.

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 School

Many Trends Evolving Classrooms

Enrollment

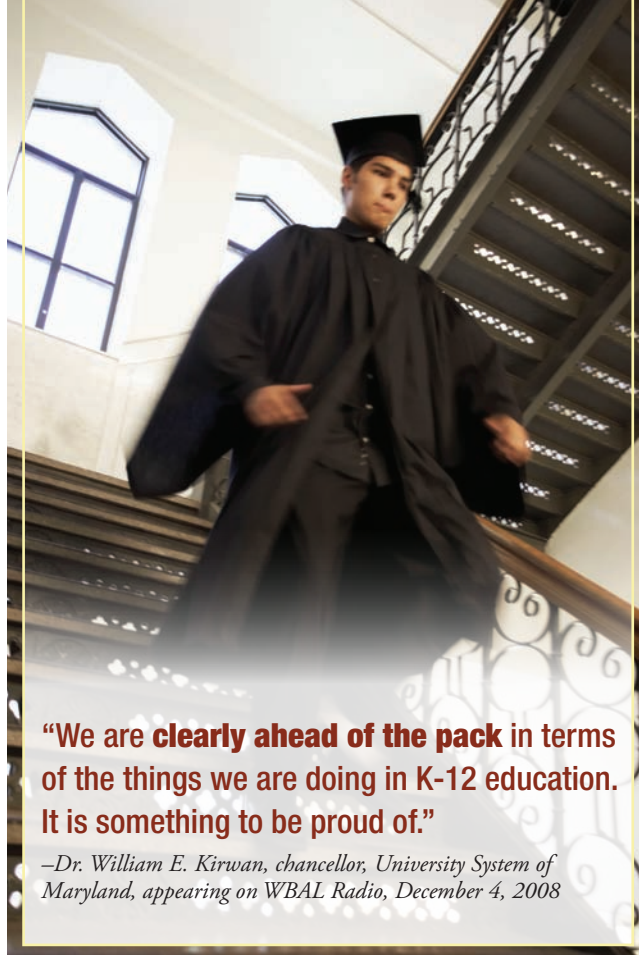
MARYLAND CLASSROOMS reflect the strength of our state's diversity. Maryland has a minority-majority enrollment, and more than 150 languages are spoken in our classrooms. According to 2008 enrollment data, White students make up 46.1 percent of the state's enrollment, followed by African American students (38.0 percent); Hispanic (9.5 percent); Asian/Pacific Islander (5.9 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 nearly 10,000 students in the past year alone to 80,445. The Asian and Pacific Island student population also has grown dramatically over that same period, nearly doubling from 27,503 to almost 50,000.

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 graduated rose from 79 percent in 1996 to 85.1 percent in 2008. Among subgroups, African American graduation has increased to 29 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, 77.6 percent.

College remains the primary choice for Maryland high school graduates. Nearly 90 percent of students plan to attend college or a specialized career school, either full- or part-time. With the recent reports showing Maryland students are well prepared for higher education, this should be received as very good news.



“We are clearly ahead of the pack in terms of the things we are doing in K-12 education. It is something to be proud of.”

—Dr. William E. Kirwan, chancellor, University System of Maryland, appearing on WBAL Radio, December 4, 2008

Graduation Rate by Race

	2002	2007
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

Report Card

For the third straight year, Maryland schools do a better job of graduating Asian students than any other state in the nation. **Maryland ranks third in Hispanic graduation** and eighth in African American graduation.

—Information from “Diplomas Count,” a special report in Education Week, June 2008



Improvement Throughout the State

STRONG, CONSISTENT educational standards in Maryland, combined with outstanding instruction, have led to improvements in achievement in every corner of our state. The Maryland State Department of Education embraced standards-based school reform more than a decade ago, and schools in all 24 systems have instituted a more consistent curriculum and more focused instruction. This massive effort has paid off over and over again: student assessment results have been improving every year, in every system, and at virtually every grade level and demographic category. Not for one year or two years, but for five straight years.

The Maryland School Assessment (MSA) program is required under the federal No Child Left Behind Act to track reading and math in grades 3-8, as well as science in grades 5 and 8. School systems, working with assistance from the Maryland State Department of Education, have put a fresh focus on improving instruction. The result has been steady improvement that is literally changing Maryland schools for the better.

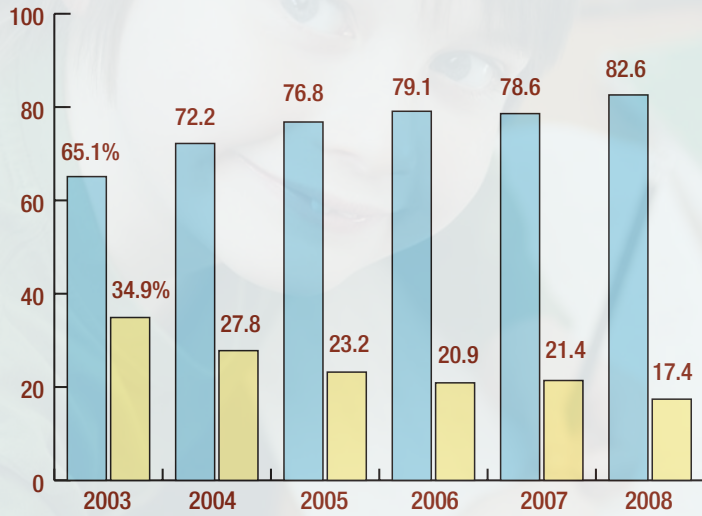
Maryland's across-the-board improvement once again caught national attention. *Education Week*, the nation's leading newspaper covering K-12 education, has long held our state's programs in high regard. This year, for the first time, it ranked Maryland as the number one system in the nation.

The newspaper came to its conclusion after an exhaustive study of all 50 states and the District of Columbia on a variety of measures, including alignment of curriculum, K-12 achievement, state policy, preparation of students for higher education and the workforce, and overall quality. The researchers found that no system had higher overall marks across-the-board than Maryland.

“The drastic, across-the-board improvements in the performance of Maryland students on state standardized achievement tests are encouraging on many levels. They continue a steady, five-year rise in test scores statewide. The gap between white and black students’ scores has halved since 2003... And the biggest gains were in Baltimore City and Prince George’s County, both jurisdictions with large poor and minority student populations.”

—Baltimore Sun *Editorial*, July 16, 2008

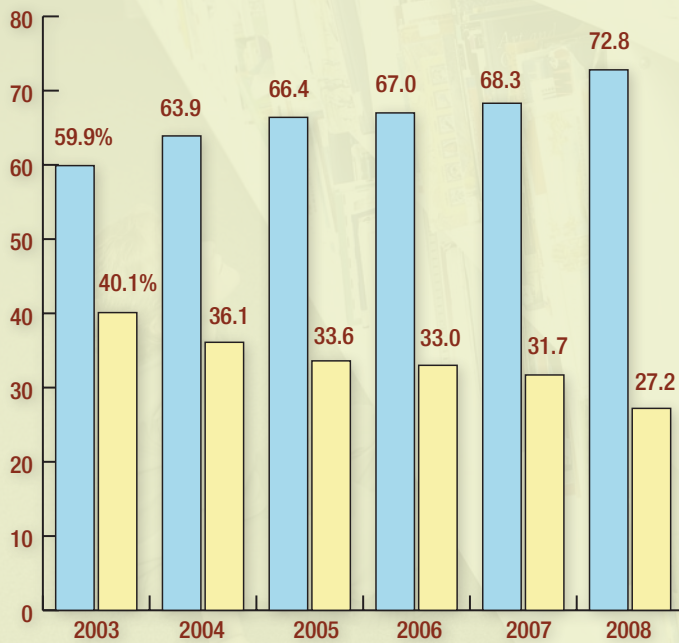
**MSA Proficiency Levels:
Grade 3 Mathematics**



Source: Maryland State Department of Education

■ Proficient and Advanced
■ Basic

**MSA Proficiency Levels:
Grade 8 Reading**



Source: Maryland State Department of Education

The number one ranking “is tremendous news for the state of Maryland. It is a great tribute to the students, teachers, and parents who, in response to the increased investments made by all Marylanders, continue to achieve at unprecedented levels.”

—Gov. Martin O’Malley, reacting to Education Week’s “Quality Counts” report, in the Washington Post, January 7, 2009



Report Card

Top State School Systems

State	Points
1/ Maryland	84.7
2/ Massachusetts	84.6
3/ New York	84.1
4/ Virginia	83.2
5/ New Jersey	81.9

Source: Education Week, *Quality Counts 2009*, January 7, 2009

Helping Our Graduates Prepare for the Next Step

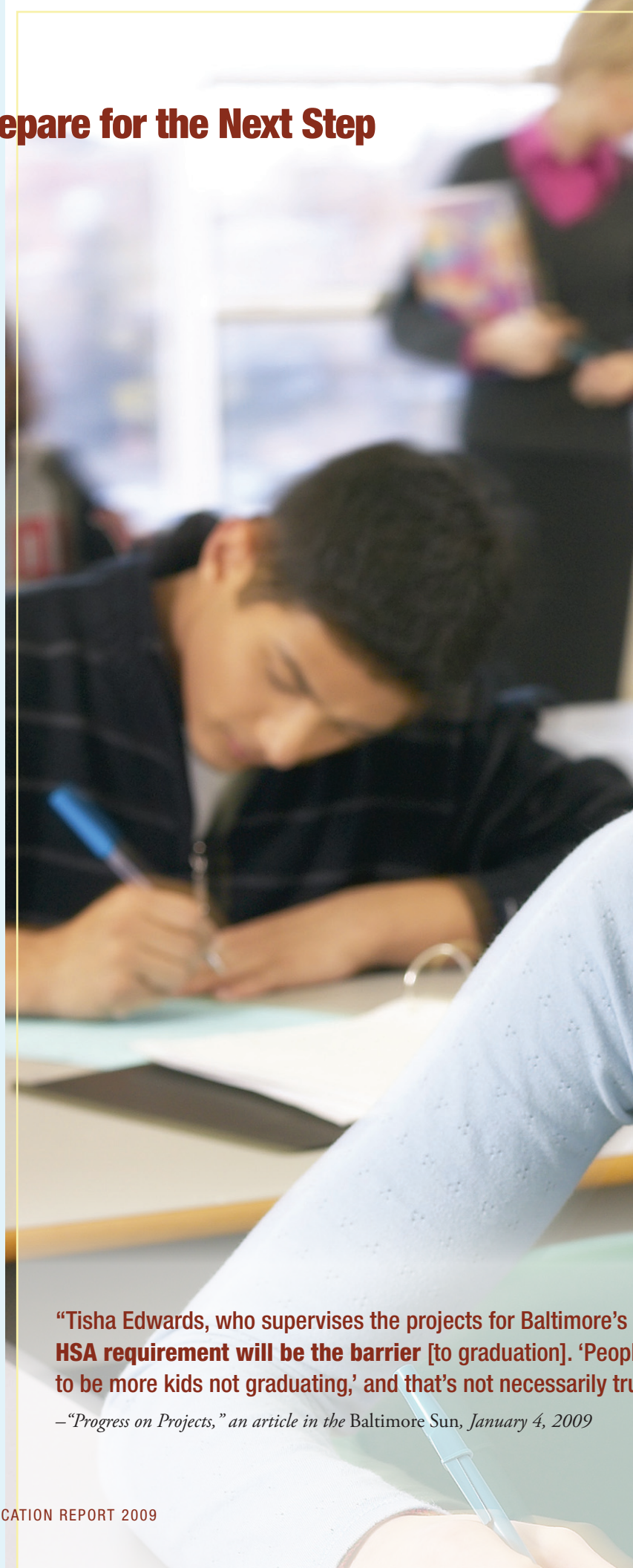
WITH SEVERAL months to go before graduation, the Class of 2009 is making its mark. This will be the first year for which passing High School Assessments (HSAs) in algebra, biology, English, and government is a graduation requirement. The good news is, more than 90 percent of this year's graduating class who had taken all four tests had already met the requirement by the end of their junior year.

Most of the Maryland graduation requirements haven't changed. Students must continue to earn passing grades on their coursework, gain the appropriate number of credits, and meet attendance standards to be eligible for graduation. But the State Board of Education several years ago put into place the important HSA program, joining half of the nation in raising the expectations for students.

The four HSAs are considered foundational for students. Without an understanding of these cornerstone subjects, students will find it next to impossible to succeed in the courses that follow and, in turn, the workforce or in higher education. They raise the bar only slightly, replacing the eighth-grade level Maryland Functional Tests—which were required for graduation through 2004—with ninth and 10th grade exams. Yet supporters ranging from the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education to the University System of Maryland believe that this marks a critical change for the better.

Nothing covered on the HSAs is new to students or their teachers. The tests cover academic material mandated statewide through the Maryland Content Standards, which have been in place since 1996. Indeed, the State Board has been studying the implementation of a new graduation assessment since the 1980s.

Maryland schools are among the very best in the nation at preparing students for college, according to a recently released report. "Measuring Up: 2008," by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, ranked Maryland among the top six states in the nation for readying students for postsecondary work.



“Tisha Edwards, who supervises the projects for Baltimore’s HSA requirement will be the barrier [to graduation]. ‘People to be more kids not graduating,’ and that’s not necessarily true

—“Progress on Projects,” an article in the Baltimore Sun, January 4, 2009



school system ... **does not expect that the**
le thought, 'Oh, with these tests there were going
e,' she said."

Finding a Student's Right Path to Graduation

MARYLAND HAS provided students with many options for meeting the new High School Assessment (HSA) requirements. The path they choose is based on their individual circumstances.

The vast majority of Maryland students are taking the traditional route: passing the HSAs in algebra, biology, English, and government. Students have up to five times each year to take and pass the exams. For those who have more difficulty in one subject or another, they can meet the requirement by reaching a combined score on the four tests that equals or surpasses the combined passing scores on each of the assessments. For students for whom a traditional test can pose special difficulties, Maryland has instituted the rigorous Bridge Plan for Academic Validation.

The Bridge Plan—developed in collaboration with local educators—allows students to meet the assessment requirement through projects designed to assess subject knowledge. The Plan combines recommendations from both the Task Force on Comparable Testing Methods and the Task Force for Review of High School Assessment Options. Early results show that the Bridge Plan projects are an effective educational tool, and students are using them as intended to meet the graduation requirement.

A limited number of seniors will be eligible for a waiver from the HSA requirement under a plan approved by the State Board in December 2008. Students who have completed courses, met attendance requirements, taken the assessments but failed one or more of them, may have the HSA requirement waived if the student was prevented from fulfilling the requirement through no fault of their own. Certain English language learners, transfer students, and a few others would fall into this category. Principals may recommend waivers or families may request them. Local superintendents will either grant or deny the waiver, and denials may be appealed to the State Superintendent.

Report Card

Maryland received an **A-** in college preparation and ranks as **the top state in student performance on rigorous national exams.**

—Information from "Measuring Up: 2008," by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, December 2008

Striving for Excellence

MARYLAND EDUCATIONAL improvement is evident in the success of the High School Assessment program, but it is also illuminated in the upper end of the testing spectrum. Maryland now ranks number one in the nation in its achievement on the rigorous Advanced Placement (AP) exams.


A higher percentage of Maryland seniors scored at the college mastery level (scores 3-5) than any other state in the nation. Nearly a quarter (23.4 percent) of Maryland's seniors last year scored in that range. That is nearly a full percentage point increase over 2007 figures and compares to a 15.2 percent national average.

The College Board, which administers the AP exams, says that "true equity is not achieved until the demographics of AP participation and performance reflect the demographics of the nation." On this score, Maryland also is making great progress. Hispanic students make up 6.1 percent of Maryland's population, but Hispanic students represented 6.9 percent of the seniors scoring in the College Mastery range. Moreover, 9 percent of the students scoring 3 or better on an AP exam were African American, the third highest total of any state in the nation, and nearly a full percentage point better than 2007's tally.

The AP success is just one example of the effect of higher standards on overall achievement in the state. Among the others:

- Scores on the increasingly popular ACT exam for 2008 hit 22.0 in Maryland, up from 21.6 in 2007 and 21.4 in 2005. That's well above the national average of 21.1, which fell between 2007 and 2008.
- Scores on the SAT reasoning test held steady in 2008, despite continued high numbers of students involved in the program. Writing scores rose one point to 497, reading scores dropped one point to 499, and mathematics stayed the same at 502. The Maryland composite score ranked fifth among states where at least 65 percent of high school seniors took the test.





“Leading the nation ... represents a significant achievement for Maryland schools and their students. Under the leadership of Dr. Grasmick, the Advanced Placement program has grown throughout Maryland, and students are entering college better prepared to be successful.”

—College Board President Gaston Caperton, February 4, 2009

Report Card

*States with the Greatest Percentage
Of Seniors Scoring 3+ on an AP Exam*

State	Percentage
1/ Maryland	23.4
2/ New York	23.3
3/ Virginia	21.3
4/ Connecticut	21.0
5/ Massachusetts	20.8

*Source: The College Board, “AP Report to the Nation,”
February 4, 2009*

Great Educators Mean Better Schools

LAST YEAR, 302 Maryland educators became Nationally Board Certified Teachers, a new state record and one of the largest tallies in the nation. That was a 75 percent increase over the number receiving National Board recognition in 2007.

Attracting great teachers to our classrooms is key to the continued success of Maryland's schools, and National Board Certification is one way of assuring that our students have access to the educators they deserve. Finding outstanding educators can be a difficult proposition: the state has suffered from a teacher shortage for more than a decade and the State Board also has highlighted principal shortages over the past few years. Our schools need between 6,000 and 8,000 new teachers every year and Maryland colleges and universities graduate fewer than 3,000.

The Maryland State Department of Education encourages National Board Certification, as one of its many programs to strengthen the staff at our schools. In addition:

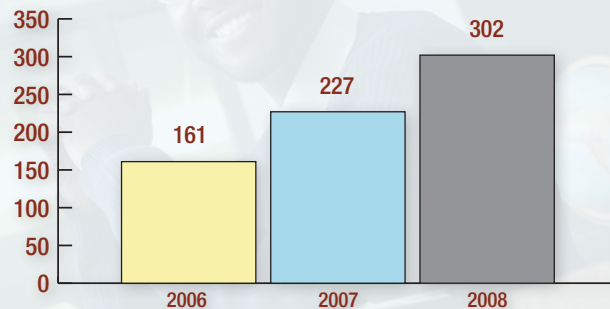
- Maryland held its first statewide Teacher Fair last April, in conjunction with local school systems. The event drew hundreds of prospective teachers to the Sheraton City Center in Baltimore.
- More than 1,000 principals have completed the Maryland Principals Academy over the past seven years. MSDE has a division for leadership development to strengthen the principalship.
- MSDE for many years has encouraged the development of nontraditional teacher certification programs, such as Troops to Teachers and the Resident Teacher program. An increasing number of teachers are entering the classroom through this avenue.

Maryland will continue to work to find new ways to attract the best and brightest to our classrooms. Our students deserve no less.

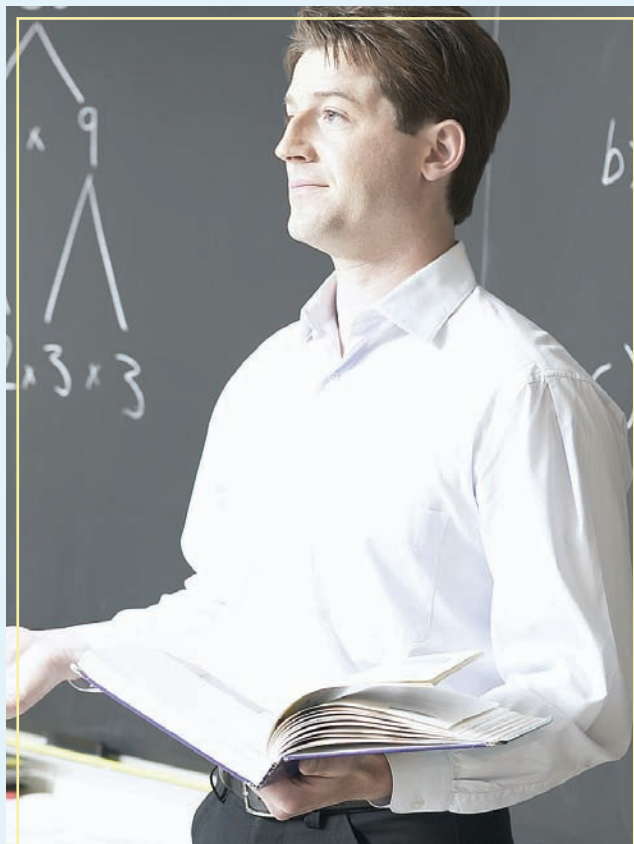
“Nancy S. Grasmick, Maryland State Superintendent of Schools, agreed [that more research on teacher incentives is necessary]. ‘The decisions we make to strengthen schools should not be made by speculation or unproven theory, but on data.’ President-elect Barack Obama is likely to nod when he hears that.”

—Jay Mathews, columnist, Washington Post, November 12, 2008

Nationally Board Certified Teachers in Maryland



Source: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards



Report Card

Maryland ranks in the top 15 in the nation in the number of Nationally Board Certified Teachers.

—Data from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, December 2008

Early Learning's Payoff

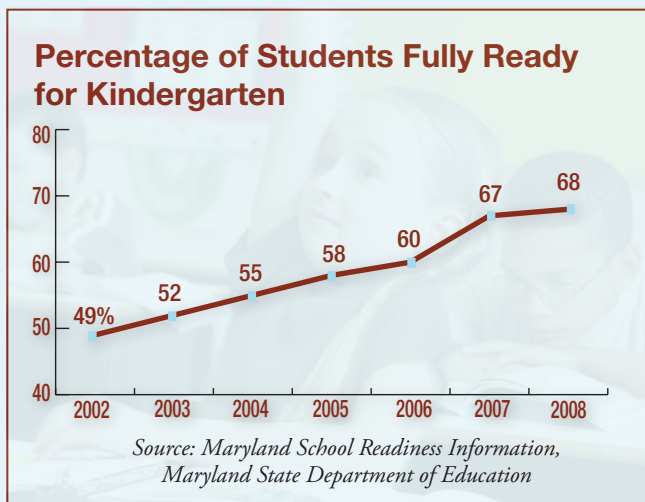
TO GET a good education, students need a good start. Maryland takes this charge very seriously.

Full-day kindergarten has been in place in Maryland public schools for two years, and teachers tell us the results are already apparent in the elementary school classrooms. In addition, the state last year unveiled a preschool curriculum aligned with our Voluntary State Curriculum, which should fuel more improvement in the coming years.

Maryland has the nation's most complete early childhood development systems. All early learning programs have been under the administration of the Maryland State Department of Education since 2005, bringing under one roof childcare certification, prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, preschool special education, and our state's Infants and Toddlers Program. MSDE 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. To help parents, MSDE recently put online the inspection reports of childcare facilities.

This massive effort is paying off, as more kindergartners are entering the classroom ready to perform. Maryland assesses kindergartners when they begin school, looking at everything from social and personal development to language and math readiness. When the State began this process in 2001-2002, fewer than half the students were fully ready for kindergarten. In 2007-2008, nearly 7 in 10 (68 percent) were completely prepared.

The academic jump start these students receive will pay off throughout their educational career and well beyond.



“More children entering kindergarten ready to learn”

—Headline from the Cumberland Times-News April 7, 2008



Report Card:

Maryland ranks **10th** in the nation in preschool access for four-year-olds.

Source: National Institute of Early Education Research, March 19, 2008

Building a Safe and Healthy Learning Environment

When students don't feel safe, learning is a constant struggle.

THE MARYLAND State Department of Education last spring joined Rep. Elijah E. Cummings to sponsor the “Summit on School Safety Solutions,” attracting more than 300 experts, educators, and student leaders to UMBC. Among those in attendance were Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown, Rep. C.A. “Dutch” Ruppberger, and Rep. John Sarbanes, all joining in to discuss ways to stem student violence. Rep. Cummings and MSDE followed up with a student summit later in the year. An action group has been formed to continue the search for improved school safety.

MSDE has been involved with a variety of safety and health initiatives over the past several years. One of the most successful has been our support of the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program. Hundreds of educators have been trained in the program over the past several years and it has successfully improved the climate in a variety of schools. A recent report from the Advocates for Children and Youth found that school suspensions were down in Maryland during the 2007-2008 school year, and the report praised PBIS for helping in that effort.

Among the other programs at work in Maryland:

- MSDE in November joined Share Our Strength Executive Director Billy Shore and Governor O'Malley to announce the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland. MSDE is involved in three of the four initiatives: strengthening school breakfast, increasing enrollment in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and building the summer nutrition program.
- Maryland last fall launched the Jane Lawton Farm to School Lunch Program to bring more foods grown in the state to school cafeterias.
- MSDE received a \$243,129 federal grant last year to enhance nutrition training and physical fitness. Much of the Team Nutrition Training Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture was going to five Maryland systems in the form of mini-grants.
- MSDE last year unveiled “Character Education By Design: A Blueprint for Successful District and School Initiatives,” a how-to guide for enhancing school-based character education programs.

“It is up to us to bring out the best in our children; all of their wonderful gifts. The alternative is to do nothing and see the problem get worse.”

—Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, speaking at the “Summit on School Safety Solutions,” June 3, 2008



Parents Matter



“Taking on a task usually handled by PTAs and other parent groups, the Maryland Department of Education has launched an awards program to recognize parents who have made significant contributions to the schools in their community.”

*“Parents Role in Schools Earns Fresh Respect,”
Education Week, April 30, 2008*

MARYLAND, IN partnership with Comcast, last year launched the Parent Involvement Matters Award (PIMA), the nation’s first statewide award celebrating the volunteer work of parents and guardians. The program received national attention and for good reason: great Maryland schools always have wonderfully involved parents and parent groups. Without the support of parents and guardians at the school, in the community, and at home, there are limitations to student success.

Larry Walker, a parent at Mt. Hebron High School in Howard County, was named the first statewide PIMA honoree last April. Committed to strengthening academic achievement at the school, Walker had a lengthy resume of accomplishment.

As a member of the School Improvement Team, Walker organized community building activities and educational field trips. He was instrumental in implementing a Saturday morning mentoring and homework session for African American males. While serving as president of the Parents of African American Students, Walker reached out to the Asian and Hispanic parent populations and helped them form parent groups to work with the school’s Parent Teacher Student Association.

Walker’s work exemplifies the efforts taking place throughout our state. Twenty-two other local winners also were honored by MSDE and Comcast, and the volunteer action taking place in our schools is nothing short of amazing. For example:

- Kelli Nelson of Carroll County is a tireless advocate for children with disabilities. She has designed workshops for parents, school personnel, and other professionals to help them better understand and serve the needs of children with disabilities. She also has chaired or served on a variety of state and county boards, councils, and task forces and has testified before the General Assembly on matters concerning children with disabilities.
- Susanna Barrios at Patterson Park Public Charter School in Baltimore City spends every day at the school, translating documents for parents and providing a variety of translation services for meetings, clubs, and other activities. She has helped spark parental involvement among Spanish-speaking members in the community.
- Annette Jackson-Holly served as president of the Hyattsville Elementary School PTA in Prince George’s County and energized that organization. She organized a successful campaign to renovate the school’s gym, led the effort (and gained overwhelming parent support) to institute school uniforms, and helped establish an affordable after-care program for parents with multiple children.

A new round of parent volunteers will be honored this spring. Our schools are the envy of the nation, and parents have had a big role in this success.

The Nation's Most Decorated State School System?

NO ORGANIZATION keeps records on how many awards or citations the nation's state education systems receive, but it is doubtful any state has garnered more praise than Maryland. Over the past few years, Maryland has been recognized many times over by *Education Week*, the College Board, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, and many other organizations.

Among the other citations and commendations received by Maryland schools, students, and MSDE this past year:

- *Time Magazine for Kids*, the nation's leading periodical for school-aged youth, featured Maryland's unique comic book curriculum on its cover April 25, 2008.
- Maryland last year opened the nation's first statewide SEED School, a residential public school for at-risk youth sponsored by MSDE and based on the successful SEED School in Washington, DC. Hundreds of students applied for entrance into the school, and bestselling *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman profiled the lottery process in Maryland. "If you think that parents from the worst inner-city neighborhoods don't aspire for something better for their kids, a lottery like this will dispel that illusion real fast," he wrote.
- State Superintendent Grasmick last year was named to the nation's first industry focused education panel. The Education Council, sponsored by the National Association of Manufacturers, brings together two dozen top K-12 and postsecondary leaders to focus on expanding and enhancing the workforce.
- Six Maryland schools nominated for national recognition last year were named National Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education. The schools: Cresaptown Elementary in Allegany County, Broadneck Elementary in Anne Arundel County, Cecil Elementary in Baltimore City, Piney Ridge Elementary in Carroll County, Hickory Elementary in Harford County, and Hickory Elementary in Washington County.
- *The Daily Record* awarded MSDE's education partnership with Northrop Grumman as one of its Innovators of the Year. Northrop Grumman and MSDE have worked together on a series of initiatives to strengthen STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education.

- Maryland was one of just six states chosen for a unique federal accountability pilot project.
- State Superintendent Grasmick last year received the Civitas International Leader Award during a visit to Kazakhstan.

"Behind the good news of the significant improvement in test scores for Maryland students reported this week was even more good news. Minority and poor students made dramatic gains, the achievement gap narrowed, and no student's improvement came at the expense of another's. One could say that Maryland is close to the promise of 'leaving no child behind.'"

—Editorial in the Washington Post, July 16, 2008



Report Card:

Since 2002, overall achievement in Maryland **"grew at a moderate to large rate in both reading and math at nearly all grade levels analyzed."**

*Source: "Has Student Achievement Increased Since 2002?"
The Center on Education Policy, June 2008*

Paying Maryland Back with Interest

THESE ARE difficult financial times for the state and the nation. Everyone is watching their expenditures, and taxpayers have the right to expect that public funds are being spent wisely. When it comes to public education in Maryland, taxpayers have much to be proud of.

The Maryland General Assembly instituted the bold, visionary Bridge to Excellence Act (BTE) in 2002, which now brings an additional \$1.3 billion annually in state funds to local school systems. The law instituted many of the recommendations of the Thornton Commission, which looked at bringing both equity and adequacy to classrooms throughout the State. School systems have been able to use the funding in the areas they believed were most important. At the same time, they took part in a rigorous master planning process, preparing for the Maryland State Board of Education detailed reports on how the funding was used to enhance student performance and reduce gaps in achievement between racial and service subgroups.

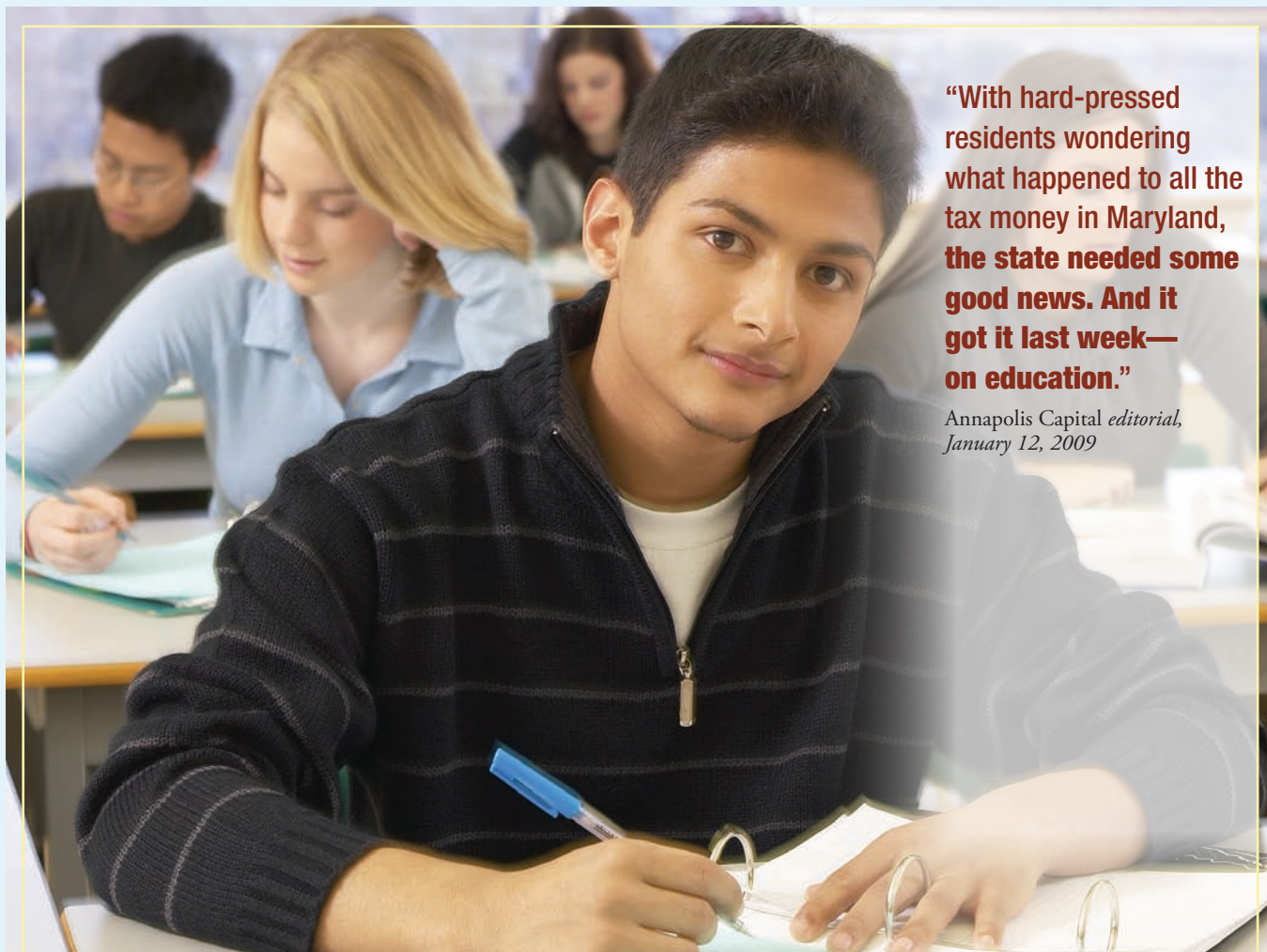
BTE is doing exactly what it set out to do, according to an independent report on the program by MGT of America. The report found that BTE has helped student proficiency levels

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 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 before being sent along to the State Board. The plans target specific local areas of need.

In other words, this has been money well spent.

Maryland education may rank number one, but we continue to have work to do. We know that every student can achieve great things. With a sustained commitment to our schools, we will reach that goal.



“With hard-pressed residents wondering what happened to all the tax money in Maryland, the state needed some good news. And it got it last week—on education.”

*Annapolis Capital editorial,
January 12, 2009*

Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

JoAnne L. Carter
Deputy State Superintendent
Office of Instruction and Academic Acceleration

Ronald A. Peiffer
Deputy State Superintendent
Office of Academic Policy

John E. Smeallie
Acting Deputy State Superintendent
Office of Administration

James H. DeGraffenreid, Jr.
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Maryland State Board of Education

Martin O'Malley
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Anthony Brown
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