



## BUILDING the Bridge

State of Education 2004

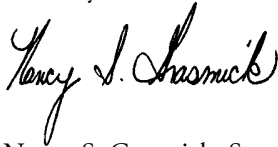
Dear Friends of Maryland Public Education:

Maryland's second phase of school reform, Achievement Matters Most, is beginning to take hold in communities, schools, and classrooms throughout the state. Working together, teachers, parents, and administrators are providing for children a positive and safe environment. Businesses and community members are giving their support to schools, and the work is paying off for every one of us.

The state has in place a new series of assessments, which collect data required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act, and has developed tools to help students, teachers and parents. Our Voluntary State Curriculum has been released and is being piloted throughout the state. We have strengthened requirements for Maryland teachers and have developed new pathways to certification.

We are just beginning this journey. This brief publication will provide you with a snapshot of Maryland's public schools. There is much to celebrate, but there is no time to rest. Our goal is to improve graduation rates, increase test scores, and bolster achievement in every school in the state. All children can and must learn, no matter what their individual circumstance is. The Maryland State Department of Education is determined to help make that happen.

Sincerely,



Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools



**ALL CHILDREN CAN**  
**and must LEARN**

## Enrollment

**D**iversity is a hallmark of the Maryland public school system. During the 2002-2003 school year, a record 866,745 students enrolled in public schools across the state's 24 systems. The number of Hispanic students has jumped markedly, by nearly 10,000 in the past two years, and Hispanics now represent nearly 6 percent of state enrollment. Asian and Pacific Island students represent 4.7 percent, and their number has steadily increased. African American students make up 37.5 percent of enrollment, while White students represent 51.5 percent.

## Graduation

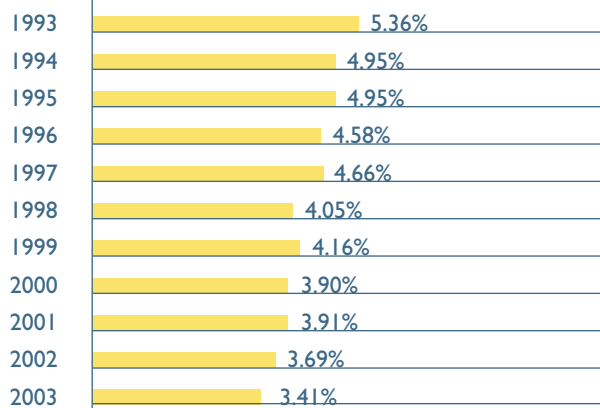
Maryland's graduation rates continue to improve. The percentage of 12th graders who graduate rose from 79 percent in 1996 to 84.7 percent in 2003 — a record number. Moreover, the percentage of entering ninth graders who continue school through graduation has risen to 74.8%.

The annual dropout rate for grades 9-12 fell again in 2003, to a new record low of 3.41 percent. The dropout rate for African Americans has fallen the most dramatically. In 1993, it was 9.31 percent; today it is 4.87 percent.

**Nearly a Half-Billion Dollars in Scholarships** was offered to Maryland public school graduates in 2003.

## Maryland Students are STAYING in School

**Dropout Rate, Grades 9-12,  
All Students**



Maryland last spring became one of the first states in the nation — the first in the mid-Atlantic — to receive full approval of its plan to strengthen educational achievement throughout the state. U.S. Education Secretary Rod Paige joined Maryland Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., in announcing approval of the state's plan, which met the tough criteria set by the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

The plan instituted the new Maryland School Assessment (MSA), the state's testing program that replaced MSPAP. The MSA tests students in reading and math skills; with students in third, fifth, eighth and tenth grades taking the test in 2003. Students in grades three through eight, as well as ten, took it this year. The MSA

provides both individual and school scores, and allows parents and students to review progress against national norms. Parents will receive scores for third, fifth, eighth, and tenth graders in spring 2004 and scores for fourth, sixth, and seventh graders after performance standards are set in summer 2004.

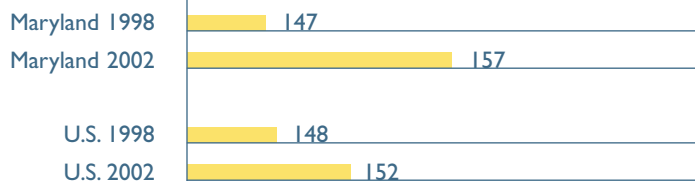
## Improving Reading

The Maryland State Department of Education in 2003 received a \$66 million, six-year federal grant aimed at improving achievement in reading through the use of scientifically proven instructional methods. The grant, the largest in MSDE's history, will launch state-of-the art reading programs for students in kindergarten through grade 3 in selected schools across the state.

# We are Meeting the CHALLENGES of No Child Left Behind



## Writing Improvement: Grade 8



Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2003

Maryland SAT scores increased by two points on the verbal section and two points on the math last year, even as the number of test takers in the state increased by 5 percent. That ranked the state's students first in verbal scores and in a first place tie in math among the eight states of the middle states region.

There were other positive signs for Maryland students last year. Maryland

writing improved at one of the fastest rates in the nation, according to the latest figures from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The state's eighth grade scale score jumped 10 points over the previous four years. This was the third largest improvement by students in any state. The eighth grade score tied for sixth highest in the nation, while the fourth grade scale score tied for tenth nationally.

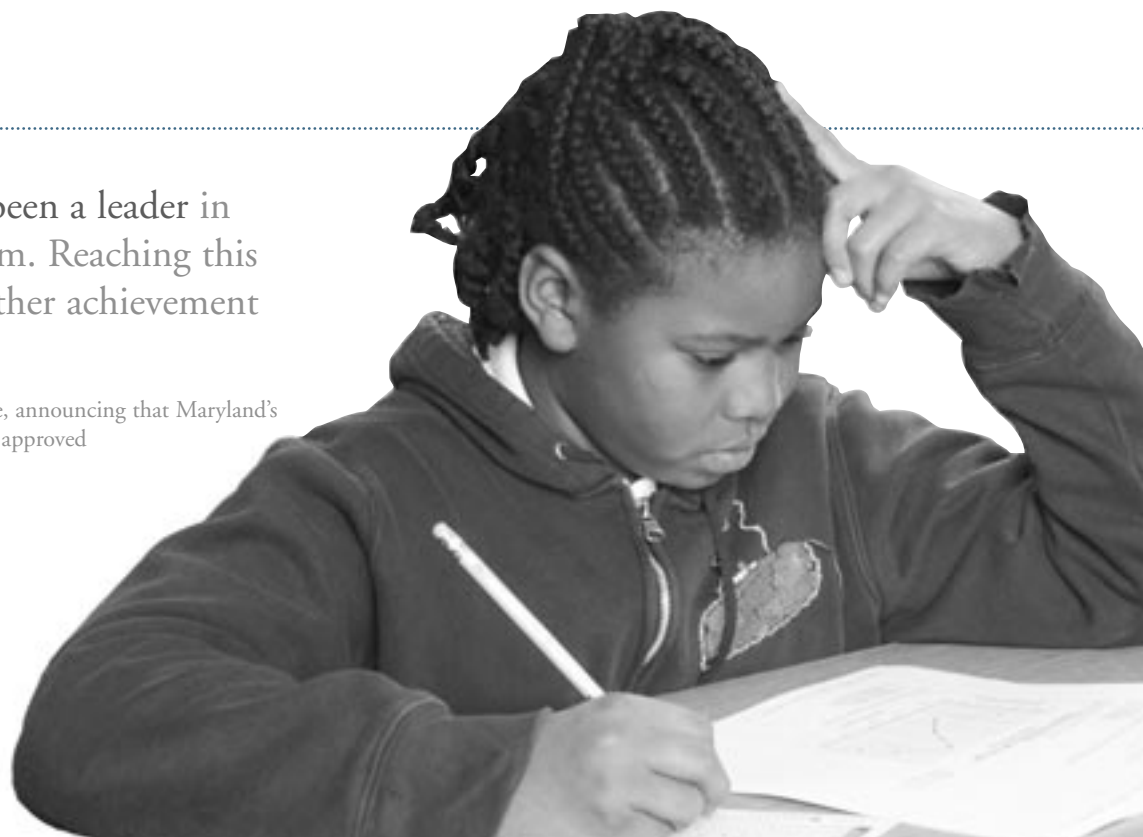
Maryland earned its fourth straight "A" in standards and accountability from *Education Week*. Only one other state—New York—has maintained this standard of excellence.

*Education Week*, January 8, 2004

## Students' SCORES are INCREASING

"Maryland has long been a leader in standards-based reform. Reaching this new milestone is another achievement and a step forward."

U.S. Education Secretary Rod Paige, announcing that Maryland's plan to raise achievement had been approved



**D**edicated teachers throughout Maryland joined together last year to draft a Voluntary State Curriculum that defines grade-level expectations for student skills and knowledge in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade in reading/English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The reading/language arts and math portions of the curriculum were reviewed by national experts from Achieve, Inc., and benchmarked against some of the best national and international standards. Achieve said Maryland's plan has a "clear and logical structure" and acknowledged its "teacher-friendly format."

## Maryland School Performance Report

on the Web at [www.mdreportcard.org](http://www.mdreportcard.org)

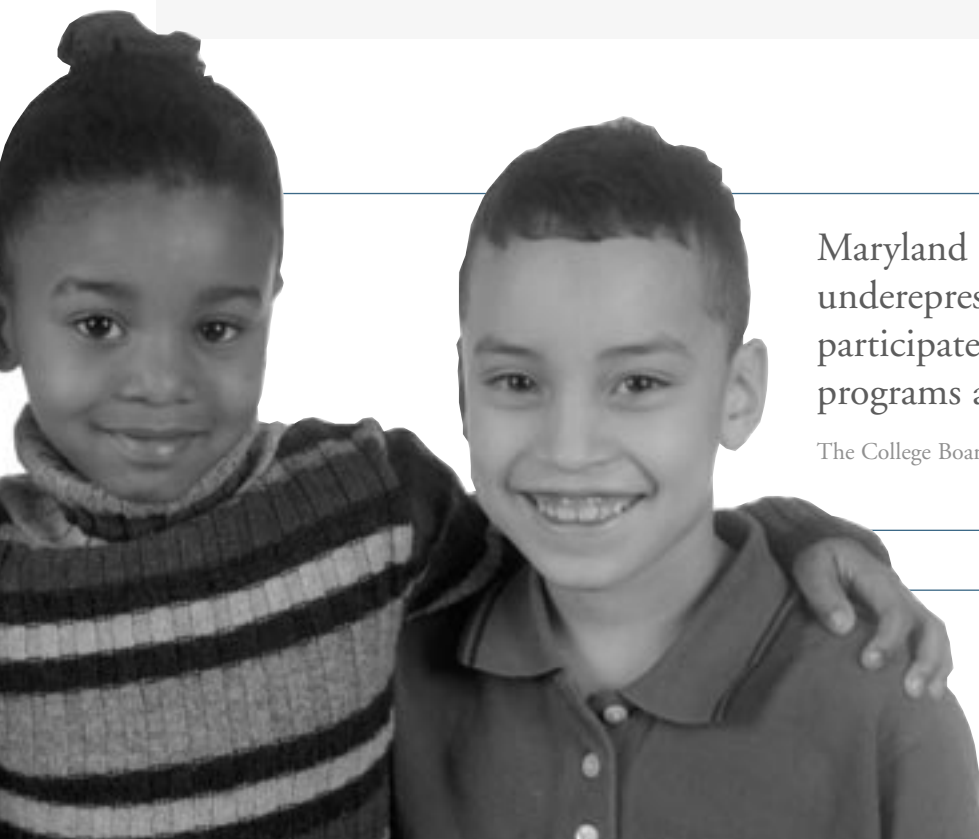
## Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum

on the Web at [www.mdk12.org](http://www.mdk12.org)

## Maryland State Department of Education

on the Web at [www.marylandpublicschools.org](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org)

# VOLUNTARY State CURRICULUM will IMPROVE PERFORMANCE



Maryland students, including traditionally underrepresented minority students, participate in Advanced Placement programs at the highest rate in the nation.

The College Board



The troubling gap in academic achievement between African-American and Hispanic students and that of Asian and White students persists throughout the nation. In Maryland, a concerted effort is underway to reverse this course. For example, MSDE, through its work with the Maryland K-16 Partnership, late last year launched the Task Force on the Education of African-American Males. The task force, co-chaired by Dunbar Brooks, a member of the Maryland State Board of Education, and Orlan Johnson, a member of the University System of Maryland Board of Regents, includes more than 40 education, business, and community leaders. It continues the work started by the Achievement Initiative for Maryland Minority Students (AIMMS), which

produced reports in 1998 and 2001.

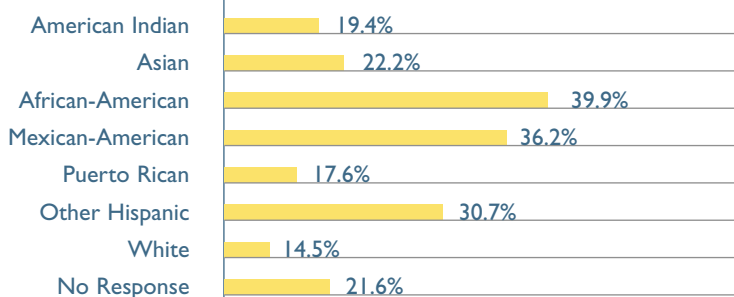
MSDE also has taken a leadership role with the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture to develop a new curriculum designed to spark interest in the significant contributions and impact of African Americans citizens in this state and beyond. The learning resource is scheduled to be piloted in the summer and fall of 2004.

Work like this is important and must continue. At the same time, there are signs that improvement in learning is taking place. More African-American students in Maryland are taking the rigorous Advanced Placement courses and doing better on the exams than ever before.

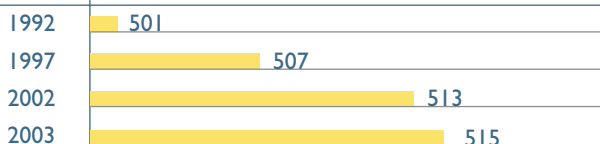


## Maryland's goal is Success for ALL Children

**Percentage Improvement in Number of AP Exams Taken by Members of Ethnic Groups Between 2002-2003**



**Maryland SAT Math**



Source: The College Board

Schools cannot improve without the support of entire communities. Last November, MSDE took a bold step in a positive direction by launching Maryland's Parent Advisory Council (M-PAC), a statewide group that will advise the superintendent and the State Board on parent involvement issues. M-PAC is modeled on the Visionary Panel for Better Schools, which launched the "Achievement Matters Most" reform program. MSDE is looking for M-PAC to lay the groundwork for major policy changes and initiatives involving parents.

Esther Parker, president of the Maryland PTA, was tapped as the organization's leader. M-PAC is comprised of a Main Advisory Council and three sub-committees focusing on Nontraditional Communications, Parent Involvement, and Education Policy.

Over 150 parents and advocates are meeting across the State on a regular basis conducting meetings, research and analysis, and obtaining input from outside experts.

Their preliminary report is due late fall 2004.

## EDUCATORS and PARENTS are Joining TOGETHER





MSDE late in 2002 launched “Take 15 for the Family,” a public awareness campaign designed to spark interest in the importance of family involvement in education. Since that time, resources outlining ways for parents to become more involved in their children’s education have been distributed to hundreds of childcare providers, public libraries, Head Start centers, and other outlets, as well as to 1,400 public schools.

Each month, MSDE provides tips to help parents become more involved in their children’s learning and development. Partnerships with the media have helped bring this program to the attention of millions of Marylanders.



## “TAKE 15” ENCOURAGES FAMILIES to learn TOGETHER

### Parent Involvement Survey: Levels of parent involvement in school community



The National School Public Relations Association recognized “Take 15 for the Family” with a Golden Achievement Award in 2003.

Maryland's school systems, starting next year, are scheduled to offer full-day kindergarten to all students and pre-kindergarten to all children from economically disadvantaged households. The plan makes Maryland one of a handful of states at the national vanguard in providing a more meaningful academic experience for young children.

The benefits of early childhood education are clear in both national and local studies: Students who get a head start in learning are more apt to remain ahead as they continue their education. For example, the National Center for Education Statistics, in a 2001 study, reported that even when social and

academic backgrounds are taken into account, children who attend full-day kindergarten outperform their peers in both mathematics and literacy. Montgomery County, which has instituted many full-day kindergarten classes, found that students in full-day programs outperformed their counterparts in half-day programs.

## Maryland's Groundbreaking PLAN for EARLY LEARNING

When children's social and academic background are taken into account, those "who attend full-day kindergarten outperform their peers significantly" in both mathematics and literacy.

Lee, Burkam, Honigman and Meisels, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 2001



**M**aryland's Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act is a bold, nationally recognized initiative that will bring both adequacy and equity to school funding across the state's 24 local systems. Incorporating many of the recommendations from the Thornton Commission, the Act dovetails with the goals of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Once Bridge to Excellence is fully implemented in 2008, Maryland schools will receive an additional \$1.2 billion in annual funding, with the extra funding targeted at economically disadvantaged systems.

The Bridge to Excellence Act goes far beyond its critical funding features. It also requires school systems to develop

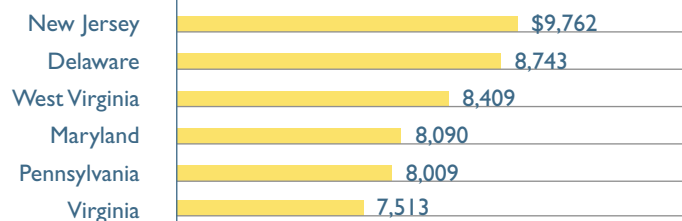
five-year Master Plans, detailing how each system will close the achievement gap and reach other educational goals, and it provides the State Board with oversight in these areas. It also sets in place the full-day kindergarten mandate for schools across Maryland.

“The small state of Maryland offers some big lessons for California on what it takes to overhaul a school funding machine.”

Deb Kollars, *The Sacramento Bee*, December 15, 2003

## ALL STUDENTS WILL benefit from The Bridge to Excellence

### Education Spending Per Student Mid-Atlantic Region, 2001



Note: Totals are adjusted for regional cost differences

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