HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (MCAP) PERFORMANCE

DATA AND KEY FINDINGS

2024-2025

PREPARED BY:
HCPS Office of Accountability

OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Executive Summary

Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) demonstrated strong and consistent improvement on the 2024–25 Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP). Across English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies, HCPS students continued to outperform state averages and peer districts. The district ranked sixth statewide in ELA and twelfth in mathematics, improving its position in both areas from the previous year.

State assessment results represent only one data point among many used to evaluate student learning. HCPS employs a balanced assessment system, which includes classroom assessments, teacher-created measures, curriculum-aligned diagnostics, and the i-Ready suite to capture growth and mastery more comprehensively. Local assessments provide immediate feedback for instruction, whereas state assessments supply accountability comparisons across districts and years.

Key Achievements

- **English Language Arts/Literacy:** Overall proficiency rose to 60.2%, a 3.5-point gain over 2023–24 (56.7%). HCPS advanced from seventh to sixth place statewide. Grade ten posted the largest increase (+8.7 points). Elementary and middle school ELA results reached their highest levels since Maryland adopted rigorous state assessments.
- **Mathematics:** Despite statewide concerns about assessment alignment, HCPS improved to a 43% elementary proficiency rate, its best since 2021–22, and recorded a 2.4-point gain in Algebra I. The district outperformed the state by 7.1 percentage points at the elementary level.
- **Science:** HCPS students scored above the state average at all levels: Grade 5 (31.4%), Grade 8 (35.1%), and High School Life Science MISA (48.7%), marking a 7.4-point increase in high school performance from 2023–24.
- **Social Studies:** Grade 8 proficiency (42.6%) exceeded the state average by 3.3 points. American Government results declined because of course-sequence changes that reduced the testing population from 2,940 to 157 students.
- **Student Groups:** HCPS outperformed the state average in most student groups and demonstrated consistent growth in achievement and rank over four years. The district continues to reduce performance gaps through targeted support, data-driven planning, and professional learning initiatives aligned with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Implications

State assessments should be interpreted within the broader context of district data and instructional initiatives. Variability in course sequencing, participation, and state scoring thresholds limits year-to-year and cross-district comparability. Accordingly, results inform, but do not solely determine, decisions about curriculum, staffing, and intervention.

Sustained progress on MCAP reflects HCPS's system-level commitment to instructional excellence and resource alignment. Gains in ELA and science illustrate the impact of coherent curriculum implementation, literacy interventions, and professional collaboration. Mathematics results highlight both student resilience and the urgency of state-level assessment reform. Overall, these findings affirm that trust-based leadership, evidence-driven decision making, and cross-department collaboration are producing meaningful academic gains for students throughout Harford County.

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BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION

- Each student will attain academic and personal success in a safe and caring environment that honors the diversity of our students and staff.

VISION

- We will inspire and prepare each student to achieve success in college and career.

CORE VALUES

- We empower each student to achieve academic excellence.
- We create reciprocal relationships with families and members of the community.
- We attract and retain highly skilled personnel.
- We assure an efficient and effective organization.
- We provide a safe and secure environment.

LONG-TERM GOALS

1. Introduction

The Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) serves as the state's framework for measuring student achievement and school accountability. Administered annually by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), MCAP evaluates student proficiency in English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies. These assessments measure student mastery of the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS) and provide comparable data across all 24 local education agencies (LEAs).

HCPS administers MCAP assessments each spring across all grade spans. The testing sequence begins with the Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (MISA) in March, followed by English Language Arts/Literacy and mathematics in April, and social studies in May. High school students take end-of-course assessments that often serve as final exams and contribute to their course grades.

MCAP results, when interpreted alongside local diagnostic and formative measures, inform the district's instructional planning, budgeting, and accountability efforts. The data also guide state-level reporting and progress monitoring under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, which emphasizes access to early learning, high-quality teaching, college and career readiness, and continuous improvement.

This report comprises the performance of Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) from the 2024-25 school year for each core content area, English Language Arts/Literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies (Source: MDReportCard.org). Performance comparisons with other counties in Maryland and the state is indicated. State performance data was presented at the Maryland State Board of Education meeting on August 26, 2025.

Table 1 indicates the assessment, tested population, and additional details about each state assessment. Detailed information about each assessment is linked below to the website for the MSDE.

Table 1. *MCAP Assessments*

Assessment	Tested Population	Notes
MCAP English Language Arts/Literacy (MCAP ELA)	Grades 3-8 and Grade 10	This assessment measures reading and writing standards at the student's grade level.
MCAP Mathematics	Grades 3-8 and high school students enrolled in Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II	This assessment measures mathematics standards at the student's grade level or enrolled course at the middle or high school level. Students enrolled in Algebra I or Geometry in middle school take the corresponding MCAP assessment.
Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (MISA)	Grades 5 and 8	The grade 5 assessment measures science standards taught in grades 3, 4, and 5 for elementary students. The grade 8 assessment measures science standards taught in grades 6, 7, and 8.
Life Science MISA (LS MISA)	Students enrolled in Biology, usually students in grade 9	This assessment measures the life science standards and counts as 20% of the final course grade as the final exam.
Social Studies 8	Grade 8	This assessment measures social studies standards taught in grade 8.
American Government	Students enrolled in American Government, usually students in grade 10	This assessment measures the social studies standards taught in this course and counts as 20% of the final course grade as the final exam.

1.1 Limitations

While MCAP provides valuable information about student performance, several factors constrain interpretation and comparison:

- **Timing and reporting lag:** Individual score reports are released months after testing, limiting immediate instructional use.
- **Assessment scope:** Each assessment samples a limited subset of standards taught throughout the year, meaning that proficiency does not represent full curricular mastery.
- **Comparability:** Variations in local course offerings (e.g., middle school Algebra I) and participation rates affect district-level rankings.
- **Test design:** In 2025, MSDE's Technical Advisory Committee identified "anomalies" in the mathematics assessment, confirming misalignment between instruction and tested content.
- **Retesting practices:** HCPS has chosen to retest non-proficient Grade 10 ELA students, unlike many districts, which influences comparative proficiency rates. High school students who do not earn a proficient scale score of 750 in the spring window of their tenth-grade year retest in the fall window of their next school year to meet College and Career Readiness (CCR). In 2023-24, HCPS retested 1,023 high school students. In 2024-25, that number declined to 290 students.
- **Variability on requirements:** At the high school level, students taking MCAP English Language Arts/Literacy and mathematics are not required to pass these assessments, so has no impact on their grades. Passing these two assessments is one method for students meeting College and Career Readiness (CCR). However, high school students taking Life Science MISA and American Government must pass the course and these state assessments serve as the final examinations (20% of the student's overall final grade).

These limitations indicate that MCAP results should be interpreted as one piece of a larger assessment network that includes local measures, classroom evidence, and multiple data sources to assess student growth. Academic performance of students is comprised and evaluated using a variety of assessment measures including teacher observations and notes, projects, teacher-created assessments, assessments created from curricular resources to measure mastery of the state standards, and local assessments such as the i-Ready Diagnostic Assessments that provide students' strengths and areas of growth.

Table 2 compares local and state assessments.

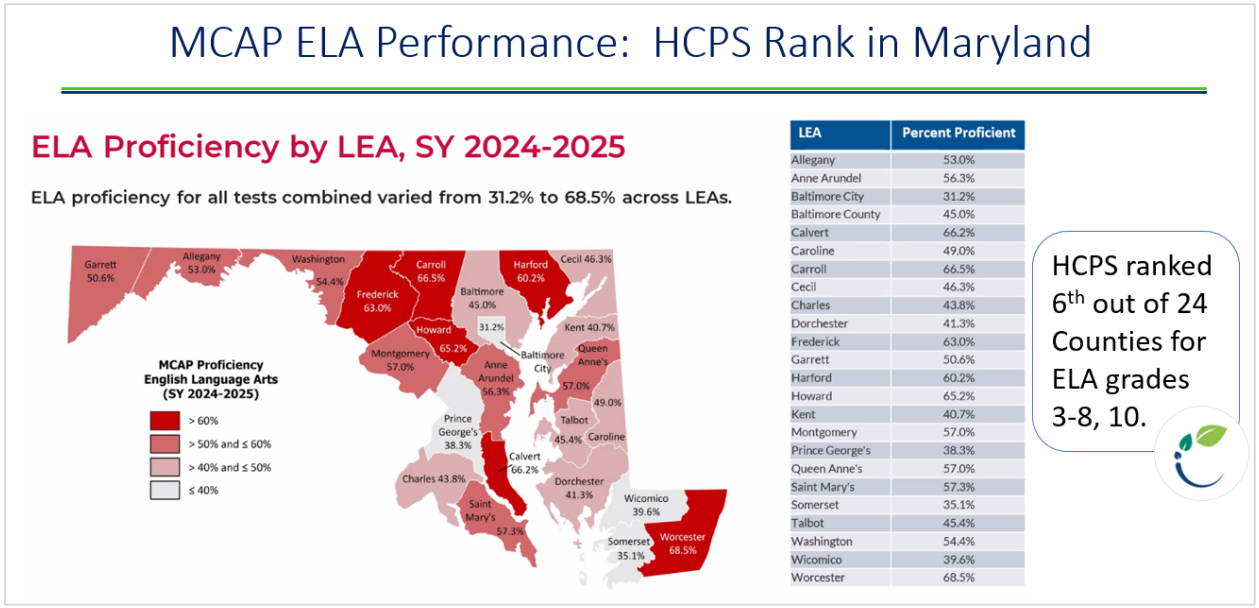
Table 2. *Local and State Assessment Comparison*

Local Assessments	State Assessments
Measure the mastery of the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards at each grade level or course	Measure of accountability across schools and districts through a random sample of standards taught during the school year
Measure student achievement and growth to drive instructional decisions for educators to help each individual student	Measure of student achievement at a high level and do not provide immediate instructional implications
Results are immediately available to educators after testing	Results are not immediate as students receive their individual score reports in the fall after the spring testing window
Can be individualized for students' needs based on a disability or formal plan	Cannot be individualized as all students are required to be assessed at their grade level

2. MCAP English/Language Arts (ELA) Literacy Results

HCPS continues to demonstrate strong performance in English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA). In 2024–25, the district achieved an overall proficiency rate of 60.2%, up 3.5 percentage points from the previous year (56.7%), and ranked 6th out of 24 Local Education Agencies (LEA) in Maryland (up from 7th in 2023-24). See Figure 1.

Figure 1. *MCAP ELA Performance: HCPS Rank in Maryland*



LEA	Percent Proficient
Allegany	53.0%
Anne Arundel	56.3%
Baltimore City	31.2%
Baltimore County	45.0%
Calvert	66.2%
Caroline	49.0%
Carroll	66.5%
Cecil	46.3%
Charles	43.8%
Dorchester	41.3%
Frederick	63.0%
Garrett	50.6%
Harford	60.2%
Howard	65.2%
Kent	40.7%
Montgomery	57.0%
Prince George's	38.3%
Queen Anne's	57.0%
Saint Mary's	57.3%
Somerset	35.1%
Talbot	45.4%
Washington	54.4%
Wicomico	39.6%
Worcester	68.5%

Students at the high school level who retake the MCAP ELA 10 assessment are counted in these metrics. (Please refer to Section 1.1: Limitations for further information).

Figure 2. *MCAP ELA Ranking in Maryland by Grade Level*

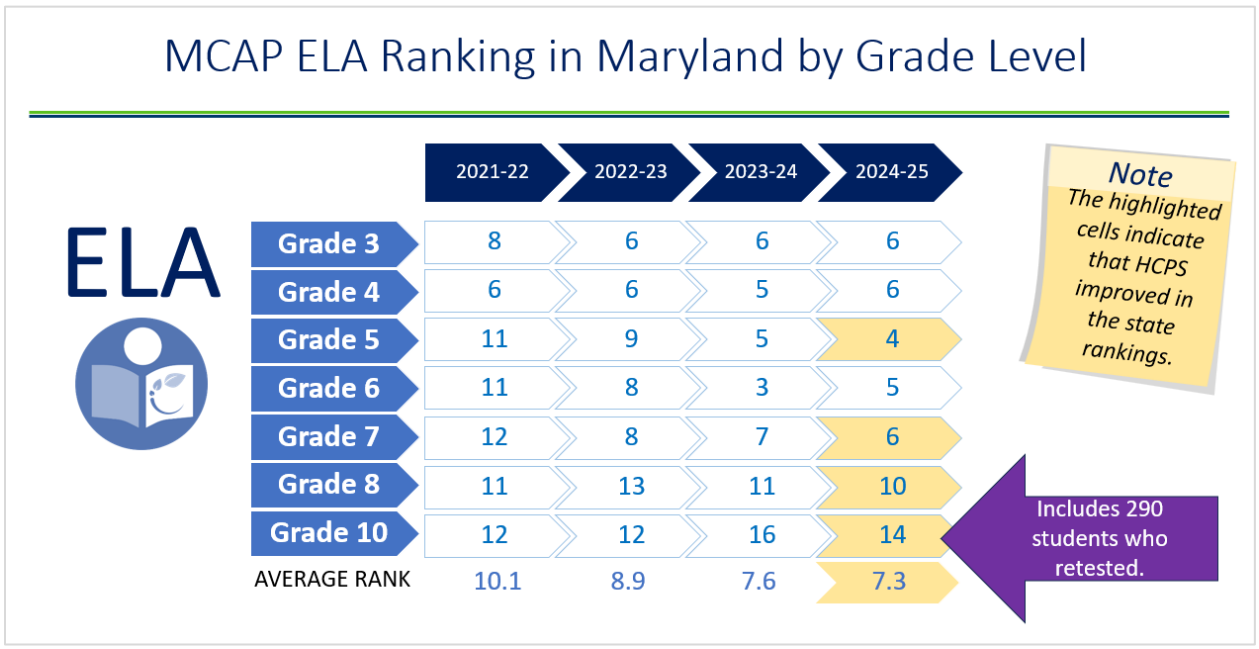


Figure 2 specifies the HCPS rank at each grade level for MCAP ELA. Each year, HCPS's average rank continues to increase. The HCPS district rank for ELA improved from 10.1 in 2021–22 to 7.3 in 2024–25, reflecting steady progress over multiple years.

Grades 5, 7, 8, and 10 showed an increase in rank across the state. The rank for grade 3 remained the same as the previous year; however, student performance increased 6% from 2023-24 to 2024-25. The rank for grade 4 declined by one placement level and performance for the entire state declined by about 1%. Grade 6 showed a decline in rank by two levels: however, performance increased by 2.2% in HCPS.

Table 3 indicates the performance of HCPS at each grade level for the four prior school years. The greatest increase between 2023-24 and 2024-25 occurred in Grade 10 (+8.7 percentage points).

Table 3. *Historical MCAP ELA Performance*

Grade	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	4 Year Change
3	54.0%	58.6%	55.5%	61.50%	+7.5
4	55.3%	59.2%	61.8%	58.5%	+3.2
5	46.0%	47.6%	55.8%	58.3%	+12.3
6	46.7%	57.5%	61.5%	63.7%	+17
7	46.0%	53.5%	57.4%	63.2%	+17.2
8	43.9%	51.1%	52.4%	53.5%	+9.6
10	56.9%	59.1%	53.7%	62.4%	+5.5

2.1 Elementary School Results

In 2024-25, HCPS proficiency results at the elementary level have been the highest ever since Maryland adopted the more rigorous assessments in the 2014-15 school year. In the 2017-18 school year, all districts were required to assess students online instead of using paper booklets. Figure 3 summarizes performance at the elementary school level from 2016-17 through the 2024-25 school year.

Figure 3. *HCPS MCAP ELA: Grades 3-5, Historical 2017-2025*

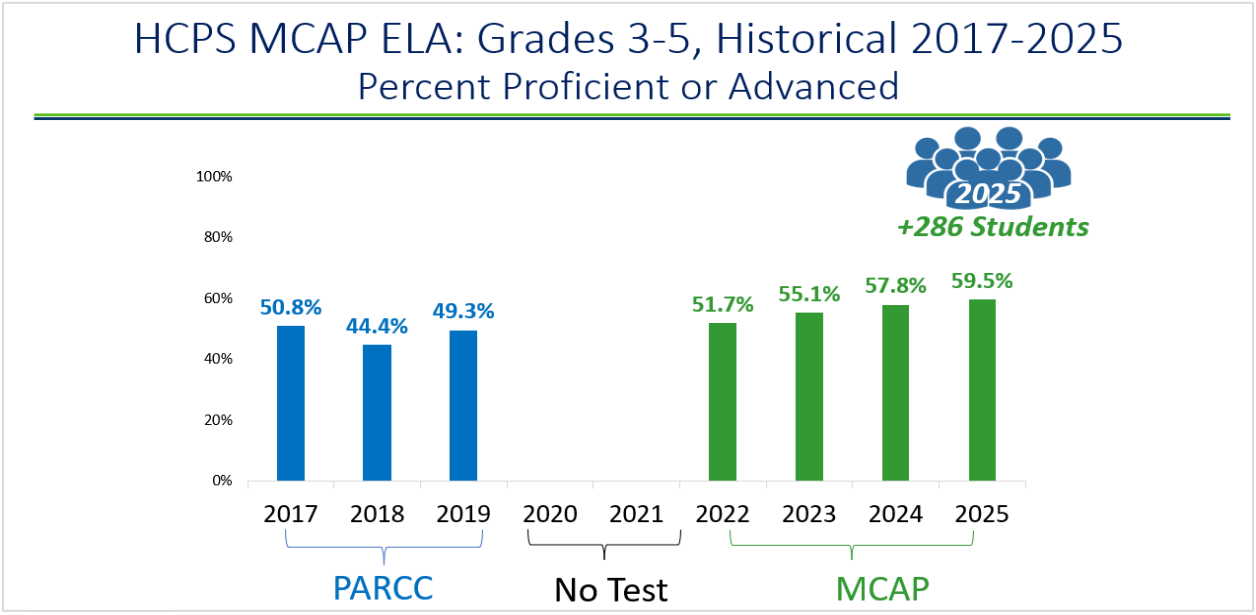
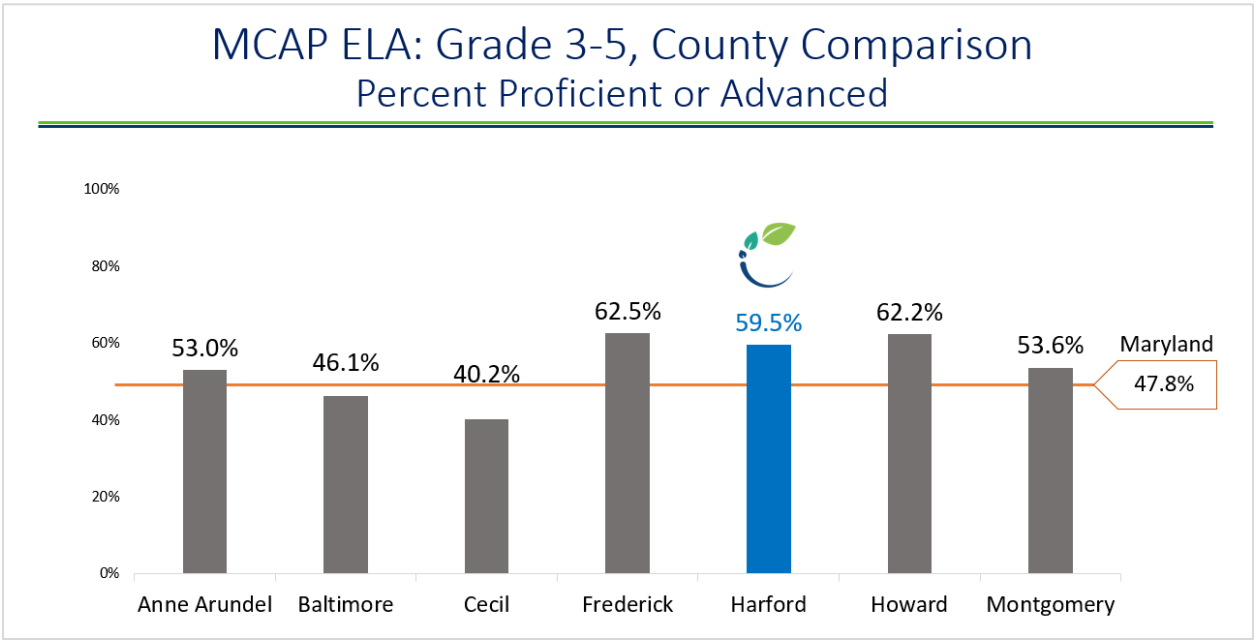


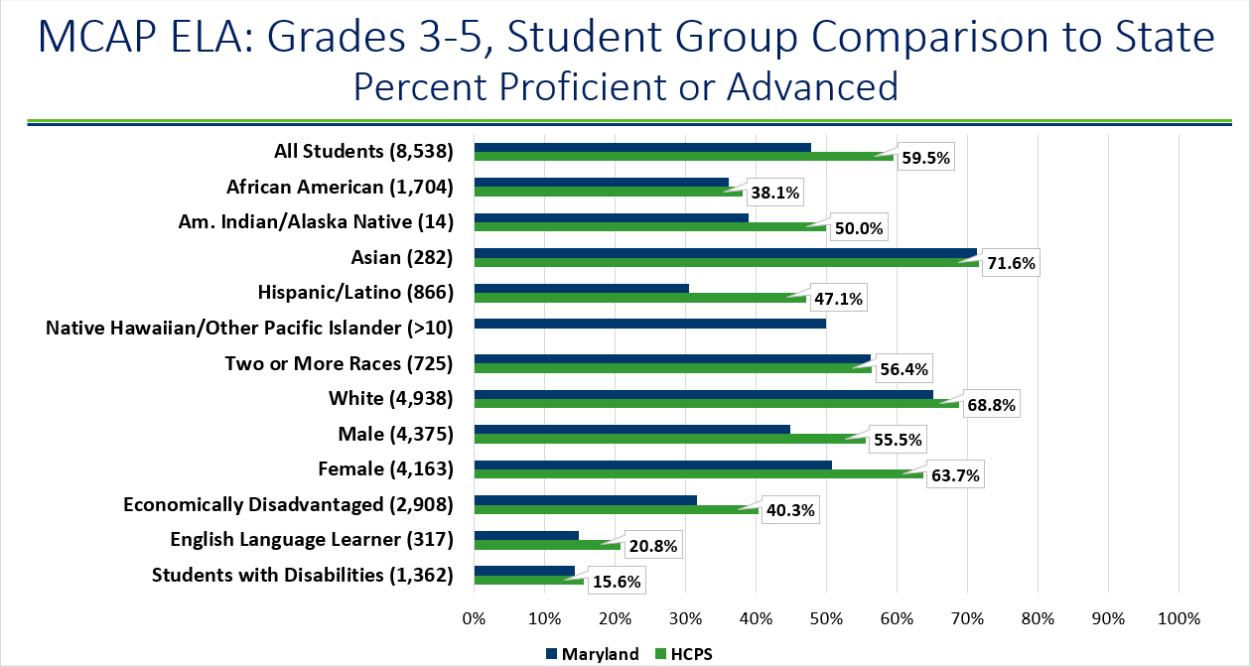
Figure 4 compares neighboring and similar counties to HCPS as well as results for the state. The performance of HCPS is compared to Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, Cecil County, Frederick County, Howard County, and Montgomery County. HCPS achieved a 59.5% proficiency rate, outperforming many other districts and outperforming the state by 11.7%.

Figure 4. *MCAP ELA: Grade 3-5, County Comparison*



HCPS continues to outperform state performance on MCAP ELA in the majority of student groups. Figure 5 compares HCPS and state performance at the aggregate level and by race, ethnicity, gender, and student service programs such as economically disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and special education services).

Figure 5. *MCAP ELA: Grades 3-5, Student Group Comparison to State*



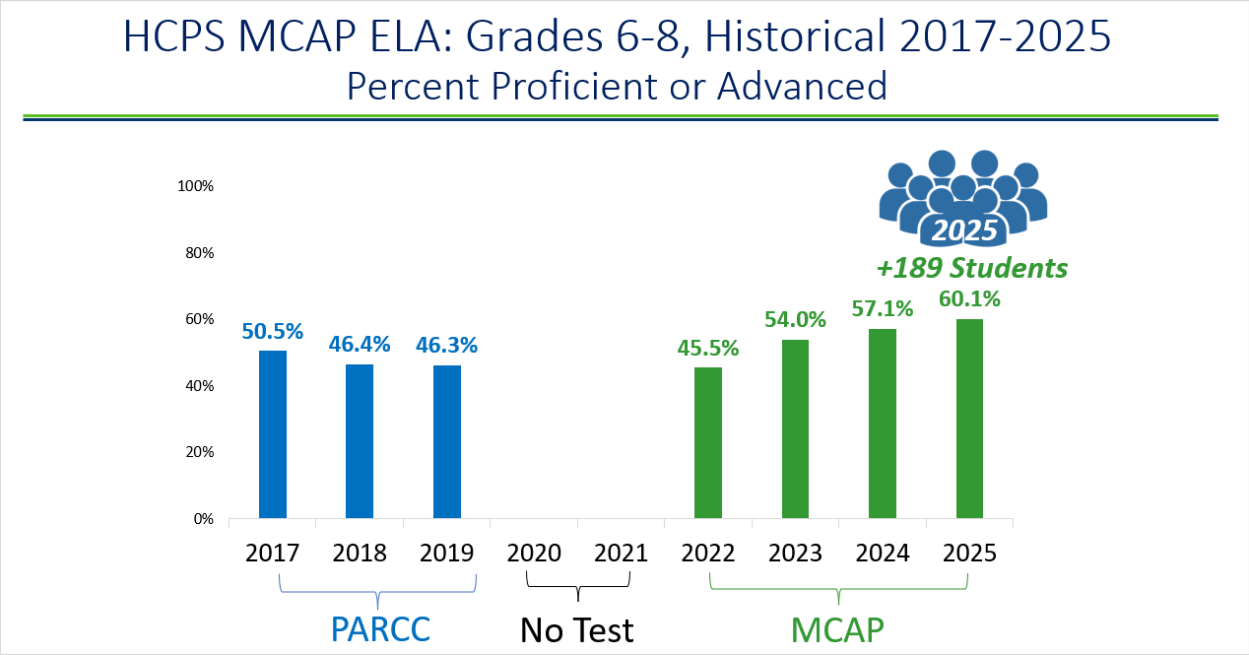
Elementary ELA Findings:

Elementary ELA results reflect the district's continued emphasis on early literacy foundational skills and systematic, explicit reading instruction. Gains coincide with the implementation of structured literacy instructional practices aligned to the Science of Reading research, an emphasis on district-wide early screening and expanded intervention support as illustrated in our multi-tiered systems of support. The district has prioritized building teacher capacity. Currently, 695 teachers across the district have enrolled in the SUNY Science of Reading course offered through MSDE and district level professional development has been provided at both the county and school level with a focus on Science of Reading practices. These results indicate that HCPS is on a strong trajectory toward meeting the Blueprint's literacy proficiency benchmarks by 2030.

2.2 Middle School Results

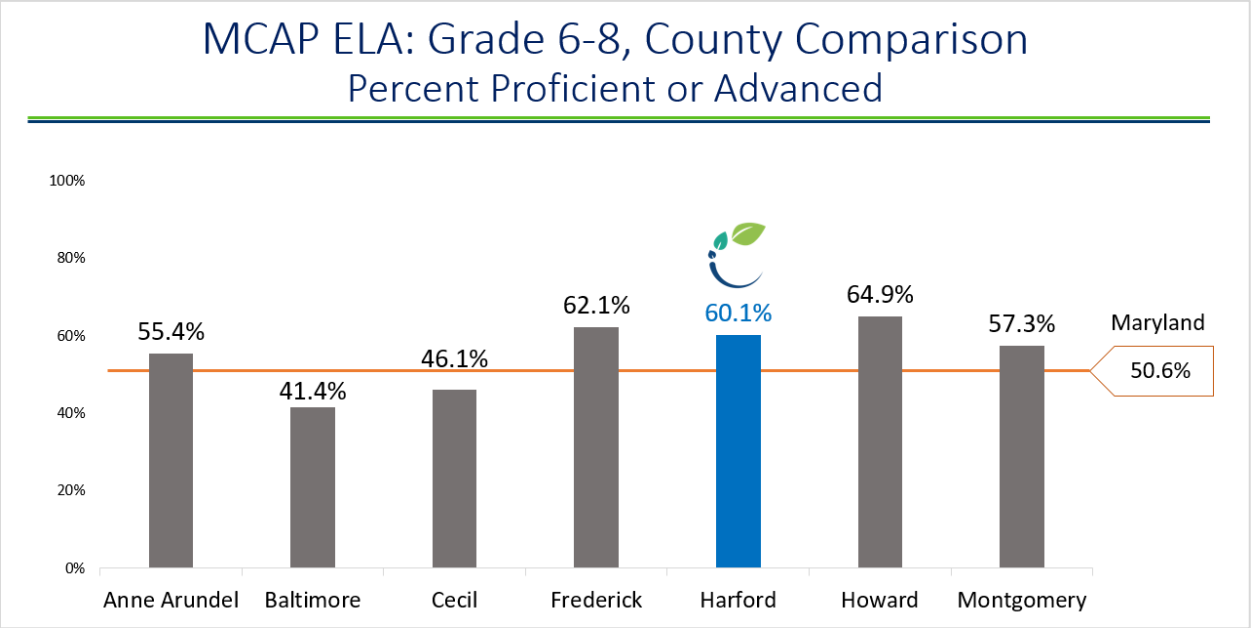
In 2024-25, with a 60.1% proficiency rate, exceeding the state average by 9.5 points, HCPS proficiency results at the middle school level are also the highest since Maryland adapted the more rigorous assessments. In the 2017-18 school year, all districts were required to assess students online instead of using paper booklets. Figure 6 summarizes performance at the middle school level.

Figure 6. *HCPS MCAP ELA: Grades 6-8, Historical 2017-25*



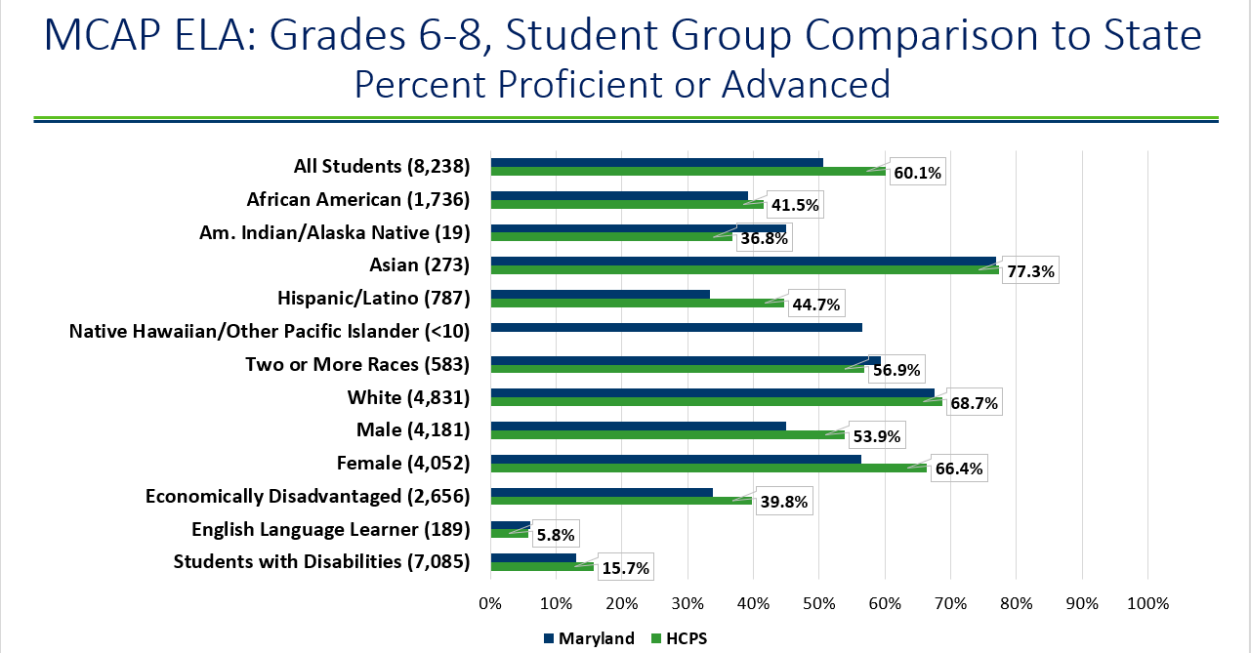
Next, Figure 7 compares neighboring and similar counties to HCPS as well as results for the state. HCPS outperformed comparable counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Cecil by wide margins.

Figure 7. *MCAP ELA: Grade 6-8, County Comparison*



HCPS continues to outperform state performance on MCAP ELA in most student groups (Figure 8).

Figure 8. *MCAP ELA: Grades 6-8, Student Group Comparison to State*



Middle School ELA Findings:

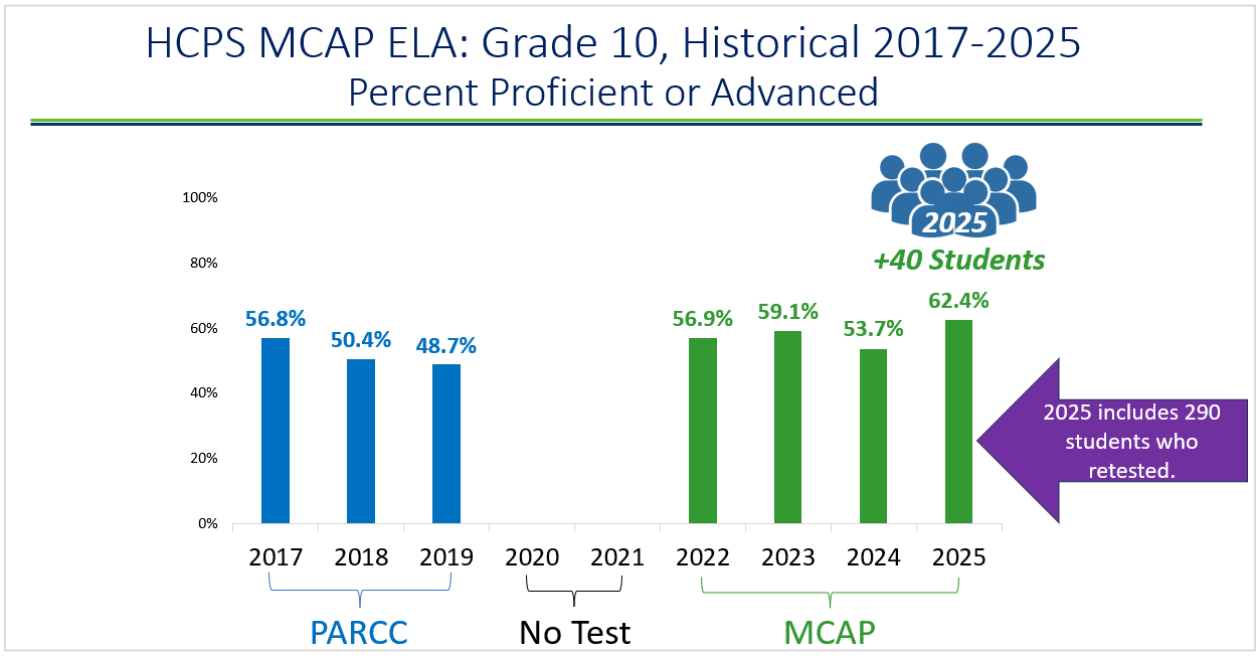
The increase in Middle School ELA scores can be attributed to several strategic instructional improvements implemented this past year. The restructuring to a double period of language arts has provided dedicated time for both reading and writing instruction, allowing teachers to deliver more focused, in-depth lessons in each literacy domain. Additionally, the shift toward Project-Based Learning has fostered greater student ownership and engagement in the learning process. Our adoption of i-Ready as an assessment platform, administered three times annually across grades 6-8, has enabled more precise progress monitoring and data-driven instructional decisions. Our middle school Professional Learning Communities have strengthened collaborative planning, ensuring that lessons consistently incorporate research-based literacy practices. For the first time during the 2024-25 school year, all middle school students were assessed on their ability to craft argumentative essays that included a claim that was supported by relevant and sufficient evidence and reasoning. Students' writing was assessed using a standards-aligned rubric and their writing growth was tracked with targeted instruction provided as needed.

2.3 High School Results

In 2024-25, results at the high school level for MCAP ELA 10 have also been the highest since the adoption of the more rigorous assessments in the 2014-15 school year. HCPS results increased 8.7% from the 2023-24 school year. As previously stated, HCPS retests students who have not earned a proficient score to help students attain CCR. (Please refer to Section 1.1: Limitations for further information).

Figure 9 summarizes the performance at the high school level from 2016-17 through the 2024-25 school years.

Figure 9. *HCPS MCAP ELA: Grade 10, Historical 2017-2025*



Since the students who retake this assessment can skew the data, it is more statistically sound to compare the performance for students who take the test for the first time. Figure 10 indicates the first-time test takers increase each year for the past four years.

Figure 10. *HCPS MCAP ELA: Grade 10, First Time Test Takers Only*

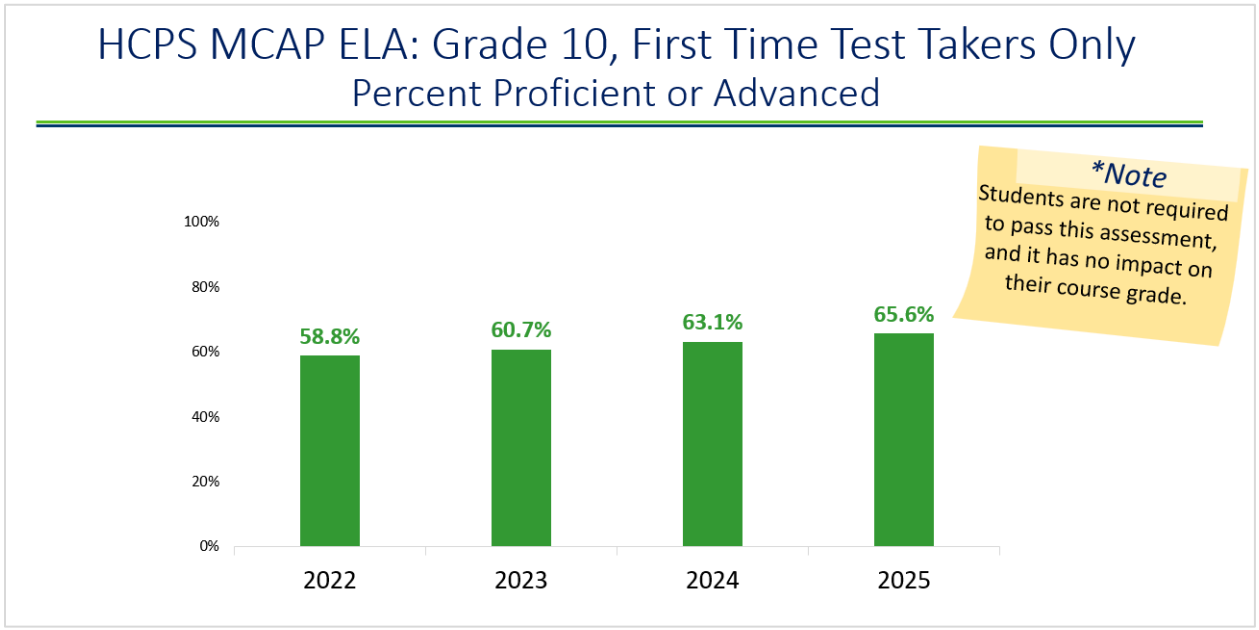
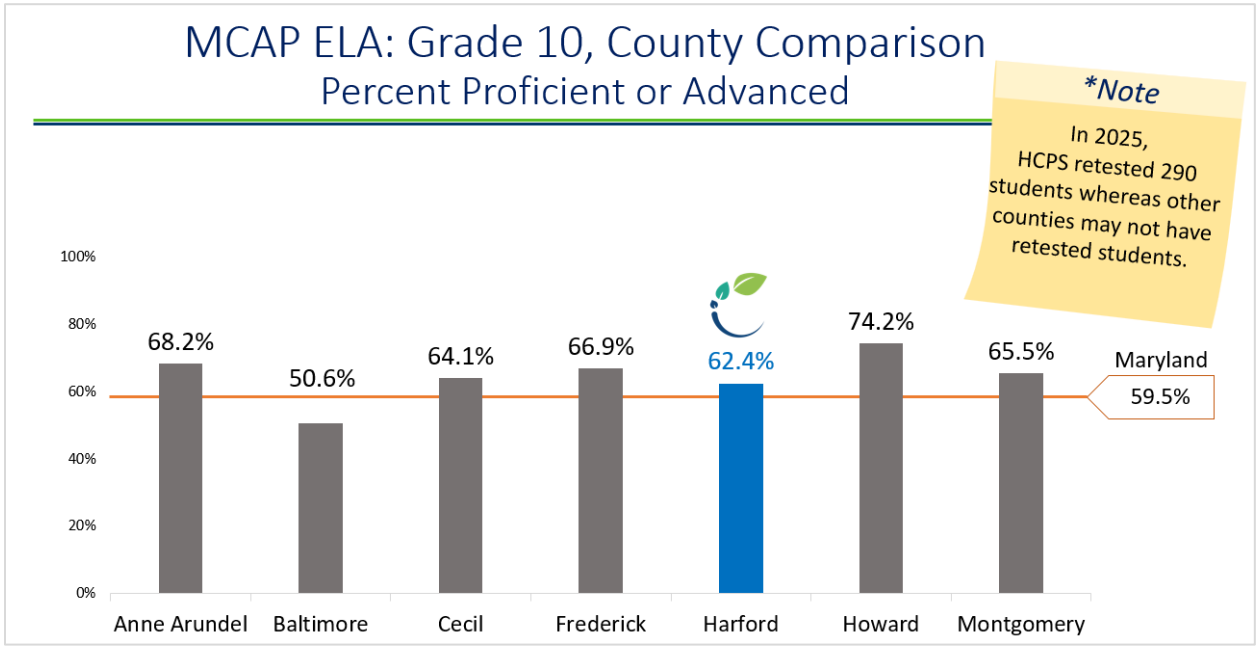


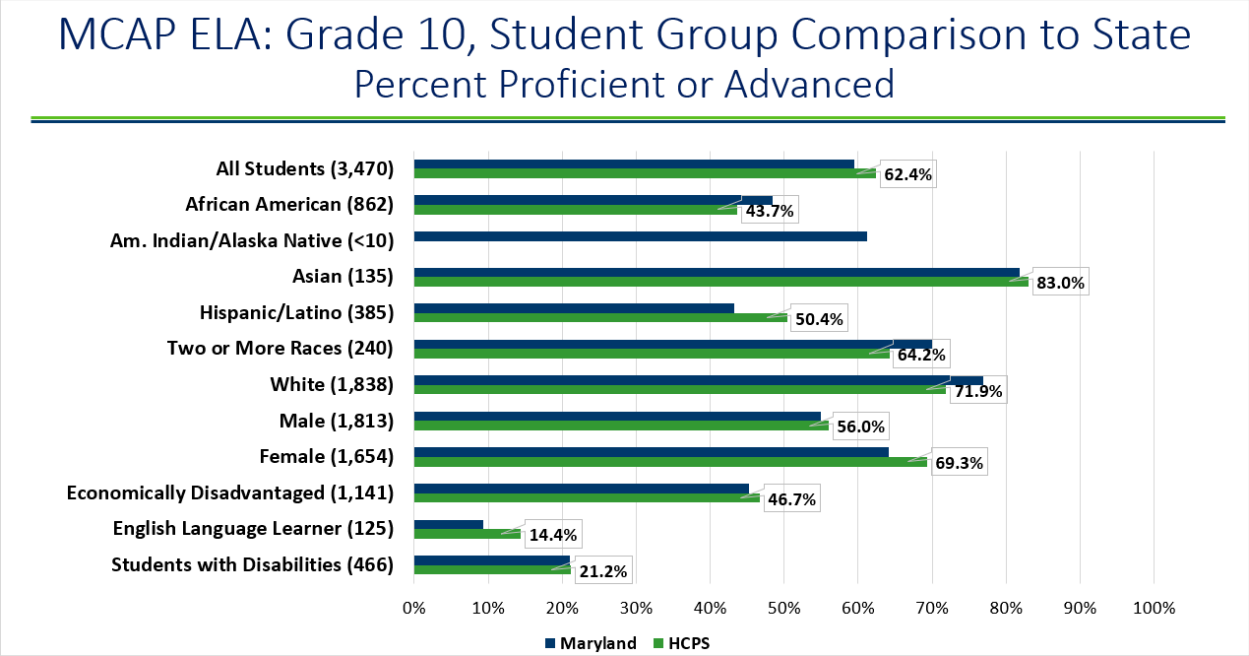
Figure 11 compares neighboring and similar counties to HCPS as well as results for the state. HCPS achieved a 62.4% proficiency rate, outperforming the state by 2.9%. Caution is used when comparing this performance to other counties as most systems will not reassess students who do not earn proficiency. The results for first time test takers in other counties are not publicly available.

Figure 11. *MCAP ELA: Grade 10, County Comparison*



HCPS continues to outperform state performance on MCAP ELA in most student groups. Results for Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and economically disadvantaged students all increased by at least four percentage points. Reminder, caution for statewide comparison is required due to retesting students. (Please refer to Section 1.1: Limitations for further information).

Figure 12. *MCAP ELA: Grade 10, Student Group Comparison to State*



High School ELA Findings:

Proficiency on the MCAP ELA 10 assessment in HCPS has reached its highest rate since the adoption of the rigorous state standards. This achievement reflects the district's strategic focus on building the capacity of English department chairs to lead their departments through data-driven instructional decisions. The integration of Common Lit with our core curriculum has provided benchmark assessments and targeted lessons aligned to state standards, offering educators reports aligned to state standards. State aligned assessment items and writing prompts were included in the curriculum using unit text selections to provide students with additional practice toward achieving the work of their grade-level literacy standards. Teachers have successfully fostered greater student motivation and ownership in the assessment process, contributing to improved performance. Professional learning opportunities, including the AIM Secondary Literacy Pathways course offered by MSDE, have strengthened teachers' instructional practices. Additionally, many schools have implemented cross-disciplinary literacy initiatives with an emphasis on writing instruction aligned to state standards and assessment expectations.

3 MCAP Mathematics Results

Mathematics results for Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) in 2024–25 show steady improvement despite statewide challenges related to assessment validity. HCPS achieved an overall proficiency rate of 24.9% in 2023–24, improving to approximately 26% in 2024–25, and ranked 12th statewide (Figure 13), up from 13th the previous year.

Interpretation of mathematics data requires caution due to several key factors:

- **Assessment design and rigor:** MSDE's Technical Advisory Committee identified "anomalies" in statewide math tests, confirming that standards taught and standards assessed were not fully aligned.
- **Percentile thresholds:** In 2024–25, students needed to score at the 63rd percentile in Grade 5, 75th in Grade 6, 86th in Grade 7, and 95th in Grade 8 to meet proficiency, which are unusually high cut scores relative to national norms.
- **Course offerings:** HCPS offers Algebra I and Geometry in all middle schools, unlike many other districts. This structural difference limits direct comparison because middle school students taking high school math courses participate in different MCAP tests.
- **Alternative accountability measures:** Some districts use SAT mathematics in lieu of MCAP Geometry or Algebra II, further complicating comparisons.

These limitations, combined with state-level concerns about item alignment and cut-score validity, underscore the need to interpret results contextually.

Furthermore, data in this report indicates the inconsistent performance of MCAP Math assessments compared to the previous assessments administered in Maryland, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Specifically, performance across the state and LEAs indicate a much lower proficiency rate in the current MCAP assessments than PARCC. Internal analysis conducted in the Office of Accountability has confirmed the difficult nature of the state mathematics assessments as student performance steeply declines as students advance to a higher grade level. In 2024-25, students had to score at the 63rd percentile on the MCAP Grade 5 math assessment to achieve proficiency. This percentile increased to 75 for MCAP Grade 6, 86 for MCAP Grade 7, and 95 for MCAP Grade 8 on the 2024-25 assessments. These high percentiles required to earn proficiency confirm the high rigor and generally low performance across the state.

At the Maryland State Board of Education (MSBE) meeting on August 26, 2025, State Superintendent Dr. Carey Wright publicly addressed concerns with overall performance on the MCAP Math assessments. She explained that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) that reviews the performance data of state assessments found "anomalies" with MCAP Math assessments at all grade levels. MSDE acknowledged the strong need to create new assessments as the standards taught and assessed do not fully align, according to Dr. Wright. An article on this topic was published in the Capital Gazette on September 23, 2025 and outlines discrepancies of student performance on other assessments compared to MCAP state assessments in Anne Arundel County.

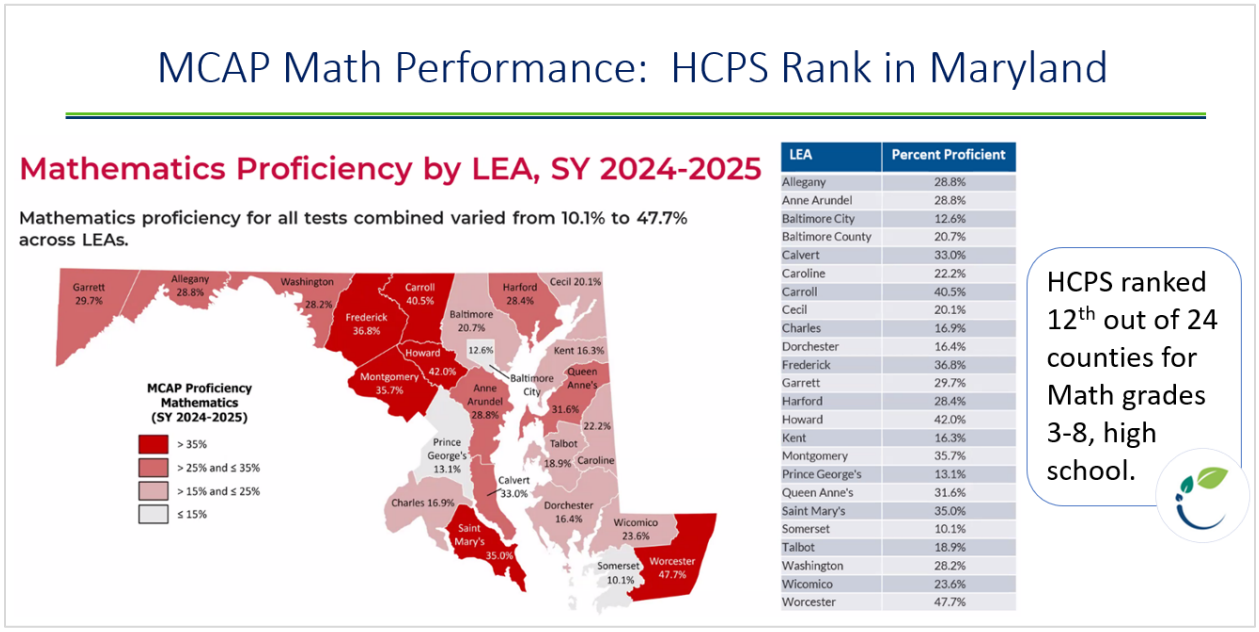
While no changes are anticipated in the 2025-26 school year, new state assessments will be implemented in the 2026-27 school year as a new vendor is selected to deliver and score the state assessments in addition to educators implementing the revised state standards. A recording of this board meeting can be viewed here.

Table 4 indicates the performance of HCPS at each grade level for the four prior school years. The greatest increase between 2023-24 and 2024-25 occurred in Grade 6 (+4 percentage points).

Table 4. *Historical MCAP Math Performance*

Grade	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	4 Year Change
3	44.8%	49.8%	49.5%	51.3%	+6.5
4	34.9%	38.4%	40.9%	40.3%	+5.4
5	26.2%	32.6%	35.8%	37.3%	+11.1
6	23.1%	21.9%	22.9%	26.9%	+3.8
7	10.9%	13.2%	11.1%	14.4%	+3.5
8	5.0%	5.4%	6.1%	5.9%	+0.9
Algebra I	14.1%	17.7%	16.3%	18.7%	+4.6

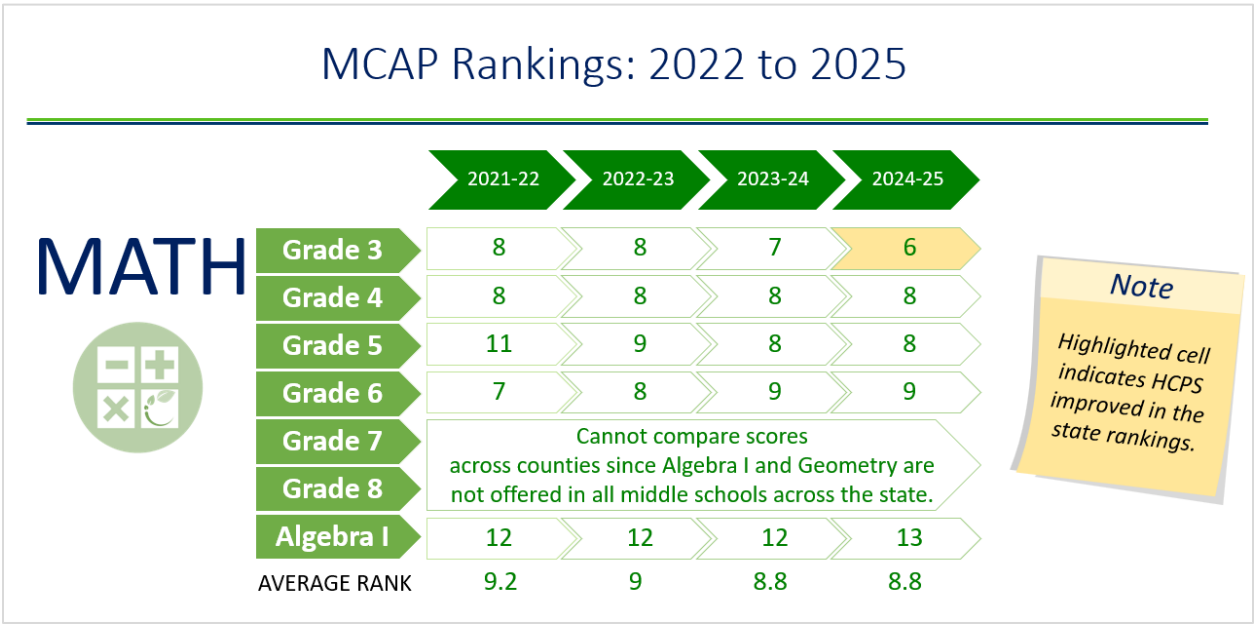
Figure 13. *MCAP Math Performance: HCPS Rank in Maryland*



LEA	Percent Proficient
Allegany	28.8%
Anne Arundel	28.8%
Baltimore City	12.6%
Baltimore County	20.7%
Calvert	33.0%
Caroline	22.2%
Carroll	40.5%
Cecil	20.1%
Charles	16.9%
Dorchester	16.4%
Frederick	36.8%
Garrett	29.7%
Harford	28.4%
Howard	42.0%
Kent	16.3%
Montgomery	35.7%
Prince George's	13.1%
Queen Anne's	31.6%
Saint Mary's	35.0%
Somerset	10.1%
Talbot	18.9%
Washington	28.2%
Wicomico	23.6%
Worcester	47.7%

Figure 14 indicates the HCPS rank at each grade level for MCAP Mathematics. Each year, HCPS's average rank in 2024-25 remained consistent with 2023-24. During the 2021-22 school year, the average rank was 9.2 out of 24 LEAs in Maryland. That rank increased to 8.8 for 2024-25. The ranks for grades 7 and 8 are excluded due to the inconsistency of high school courses offered at the middle school level across the state.

Figure 14. *MCAP Rankings: 2022 to 2025*



As indicated in Figure 14, grade 3 showed an increase in rank across the state. The rank for grades 4 through 6 remained the same as 2023-24. The rank for Algebra I includes students who tested at both the middle school and high school levels and declined one spot: however, proficiency on the Algebra I assessment increased by 0.8% from 2023-24.

3.1 Elementary Mathematics Results

In 2024-25, HCPS proficiency results at the elementary level have been the highest since Maryland adopted rigorous MCAP assessments in 2021-22. HCPS proficiency at the elementary level rose 0.9%, with a total of 43% proficiency. This is an increase of 171 proficient students from the 2023-24 school year. Elementary performance increased in Grades 3, 5, and 6. In addition, over 19% of students scored within ten points of earning a proficient score.

Figure 15 summarizes performance at the elementary school level from 2016-17 through the 2024-25 school year.

Figure 15. *HCPS MCAP Math: Grades 3-5, Historical 2017-2024*

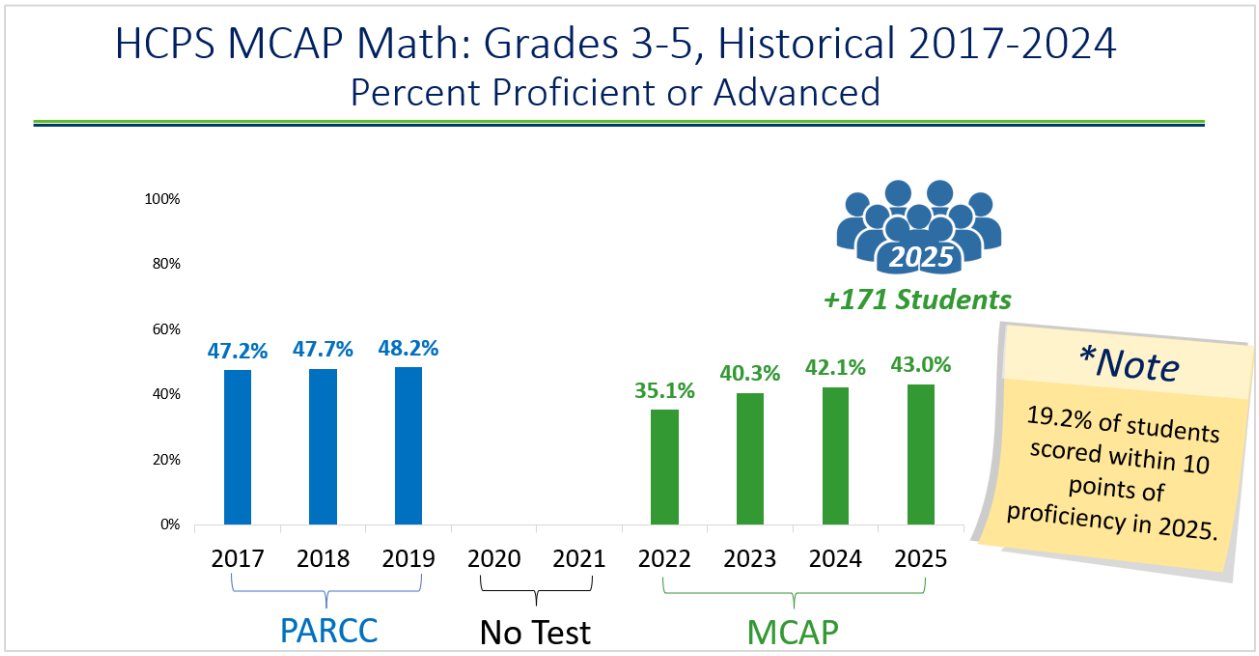
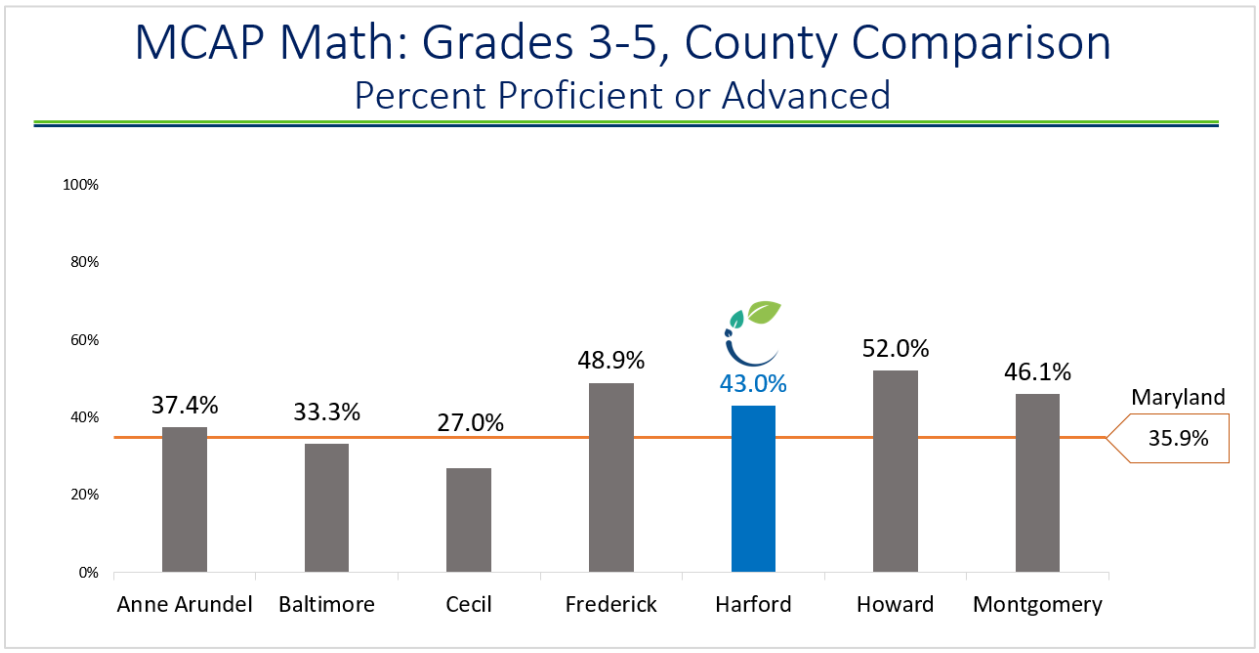


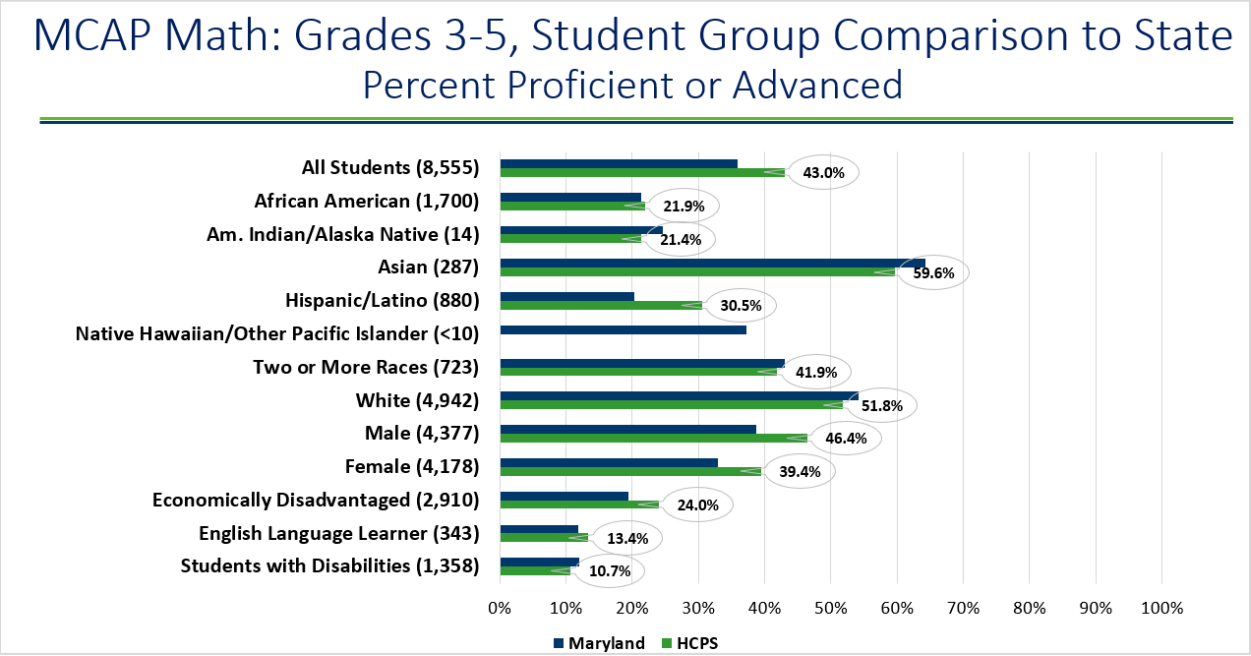
Figure 16 compares neighboring and similar counties to HCPS as well as results for the state. HCPS achieved a 43% proficiency rate, outperforming the state by 7.1%. HCPS outscored Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Cecil counties.

Figure 16. *MCAP Math: Grades 3-5, County Comparison*



HCPS continues to outperform state performance on MCAP Math in most student groups (Figure 17).

Figure 17. *MCAP Math: Grades 3-5, Student Group Comparison to State*



Elementary Mathematics Findings:

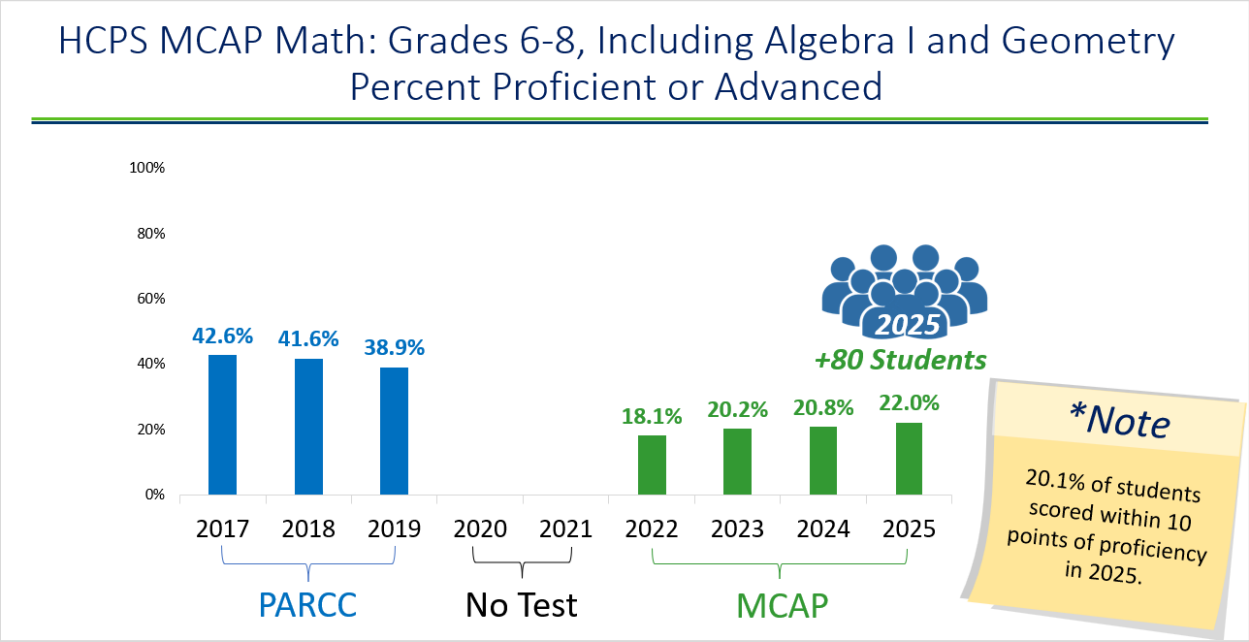
Elementary math gains are the result of systemic alignment between curriculum, instruction, assessment, and intervention supports. Data from the SNAP Assessment, Grade 1 Math Benchmark, and i-Ready Math Diagnostic assessment provided teachers with data about the most important prerequisite skills needed to be successful with grade level instruction. Gains coincide with the implementation of the newest edition of enVision Mathematics and professional development aligned to its impactful use. HCPS continues to expand use of evidence-based instructional materials, structures, and programs, guided by new state-required comprehensive math plans and MSDE Mathematics Policy that emphasize conceptual understanding and problem solving. Growth at the elementary level lays the foundation for future gains in Algebra readiness. The data has resulted in the following actions for the 2025–26 school year:

- Development and use of enhanced Topic Assessments including interview items (grades K–2) and reasoning and modeling items that use the MCAP rubrics to guide scoring and feedback (grades 3–5).
- Delivery of professional development to teachers around differentiation for all students, particularly students receiving special education services.
- Development and use of a Tiered Instructional model focused on data informed decisions and use of evidence-based programs.

3.2 Middle School Mathematics Results

In 2024-25, HCPS proficiency results at the middle school level increased by 1.2% percent to a 22% proficiency rate. This is an increase of 80 students proficient from 2023-24. Figure 18 shows all MCAP Math assessments given in the middle school level, including MCAP Algebra I and Geometry. Over 20% of students (one in five) at this level were within 10 points of earning a proficient score in 2024-25.

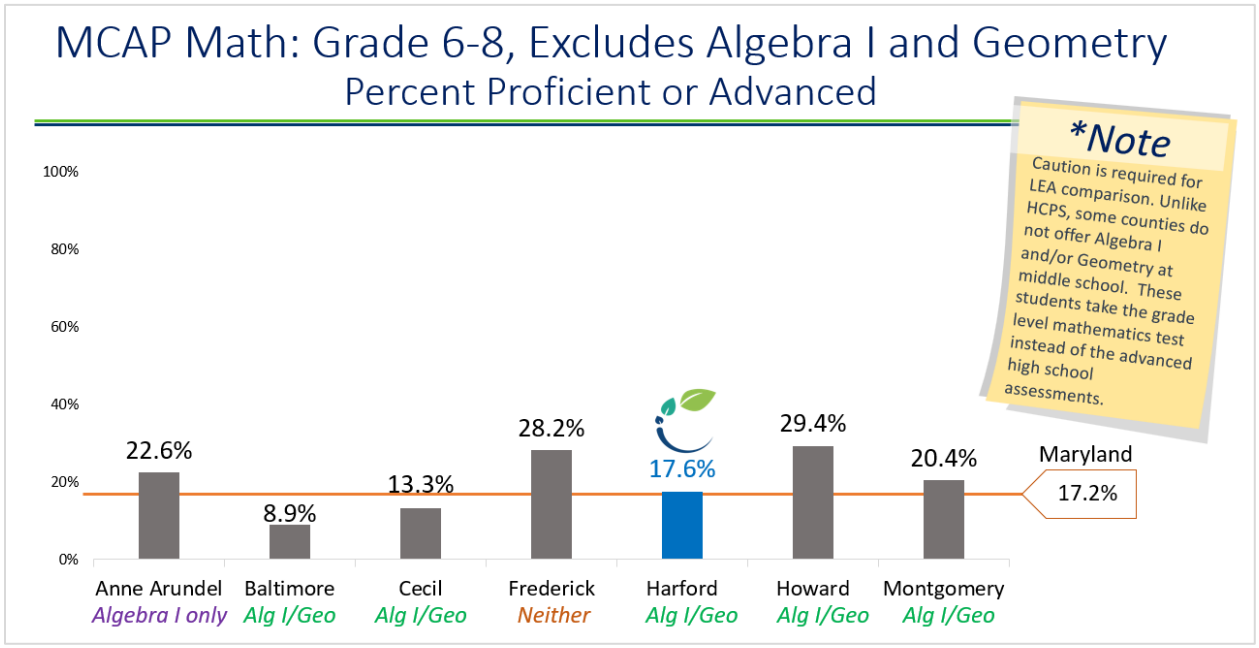
Figure 18. *HCPS MCAP Math: Grades 6-8, Including Algebra I and Geometry*



The proficiency rate for all middle school students, regardless of test, is not available publicly. Instead, the Maryland Report Card site separates performance of Algebra I and Geometry from the performance of students in grades 6 through 8. Caution is advised when comparing middle school results across districts due to variability in Algebra I and Geometry enrollment. The Maryland Report Card combines the proficiency rates of MCAP Algebra I and Geometry at the middle and high school levels.

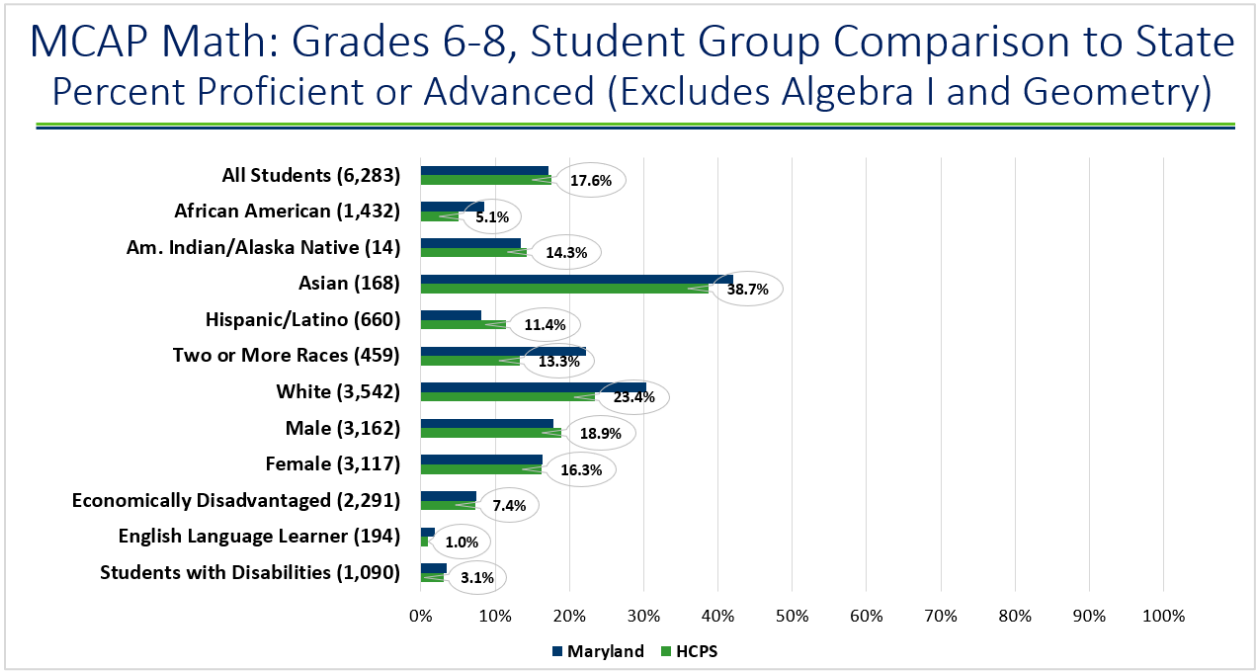
Therefore, a comparison between our similar and surrounding counties excludes students who took MCAP Algebra I and Geometry at the middle school level. Figure 19 indicates what counties offer Algebra I and/or Geometry at the middle school level. Since there is inconsistency in course offerings, caution comparing performance is strongly advised.

Figure 19. *MCAP Math: Grade 6-8, Excludes Algebra I and Geometry*



HCPS continues to outperform state performance on MCAP Math in most student groups. Again, caution drawing conclusions is recommended due to the inconsistency of course offerings at the middle school level. Figure 20 also excludes middle school students taking the MCAP Algebra I and Geometry assessments as that data is not publicly available.

Figure 20. *MCAP Math: Grades 6-8, Student Group Comparison to State*



Middle School Mathematics Findings:

Middle math gains are the result of systemic alignment between curriculum, assessment, and instruction, Data from the i-Ready math diagnostic assessment provided teachers with data about the most important prerequisite skills needed to be successful with grade level instruction. Gains coincide with the implementation of professional learning about high cognitive demand tasks and discourse throughout the school year. HCPS continues to expand use of evidence-based instructional materials, structures, and programs, guided by new state-required comprehensive math plans and the MSDE Mathematics Policy that emphasize conceptual understanding and problem solving. Growth at the middle school level bridges the foundation work in elementary school and Algebra readiness. The data has resulted in the following actions for the 2025–26 school year:

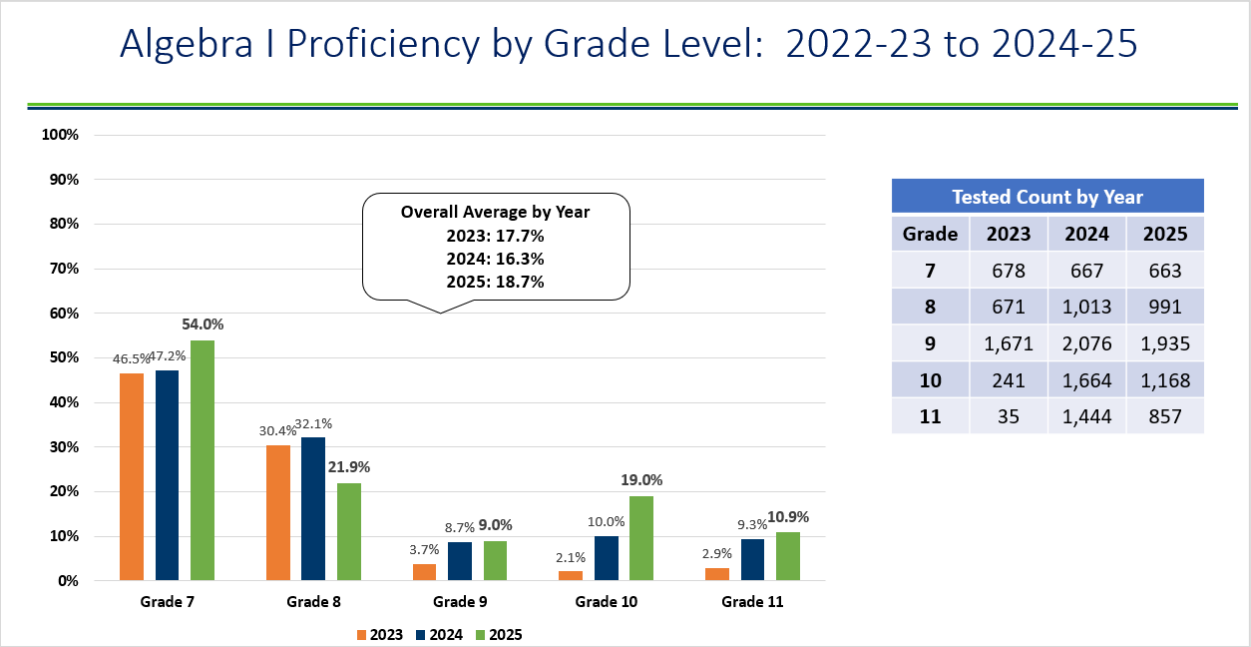
- Development and use of recommended topic/unit assessment items that align to the rigor and intent of MCCRS for mathematics.
- Development and implementation of Project Based Learning Units to engage students in authentic learning and application of math concepts.
- Implementation of i-Ready Math Personalized Instruction during Advisory alongside small group instruction that prioritizes prerequisite standards and the use of visual models.
- Organization of a High-Quality Instructional Material (HQIM) review committee to recommend a new middle school math program for adoption for the 2026-27 school year.
- Delivery of professional development to teachers around differentiation for all students, particularly students receiving special education services.

3.3 Algebra I Results

Algebra I serves as a key milestone in secondary mathematics, and its results reflect both middle and high school cohorts. At HCPS, students can enroll in Algebra I as early as grade 7. Approximately 23.3% of grade 7 students took Algebra I in 2024-25, meaning many students took this high school-level course earlier than their peers statewide. HCPS's Algebra I participation rate among middle schoolers is among the highest in Maryland, demonstrating access to advanced coursework. Students taking Algebra I in grades 7 or 8 take the same MCAP Algebra I assessment as high school students.

Figure 21 indicates the proficiency rates of the MCAP Algebra I assessment by grade level. Proficiency increased in both middle and high school cohorts. In 2024-25, HCPS students taking this assessment earned a proficiency rate of 18.7%, up 2.4% from the prior year. As a comparison to the PARCC assessments administered in the 2015-16 school year, 72.4% of grade 8 students who took the Algebra I assessment earned a proficient score versus 21.9% of grade 8 students who earned a proficiency score in 2024-25, which indicates significant test design differences and proficiency placement, not necessarily declines in student understanding.

Figure 21. *Algebra I Proficiency by Grade Level: 2022-23 to 2024-25*



Tested Count by Year			
Grade	2023	2024	2025
7	678	667	663
8	671	1,013	991
9	1,671	2,076	1,935
10	241	1,664	1,168
11	35	1,444	857

Algebra I Findings:

HCPS's steady Algebra I growth, even amid statewide test misalignment, highlights systemic alignment between curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Data from the i-Ready math diagnostic assessment provided teachers with data about the most important prerequisite skills needed to be successful with grade level instruction. Gains coincide with the implementation of enVision Mathematics Algebra 1 (High School) and professional development aligned to its impactful use. Gains also coincide with the implementation of professional learning about high cognitive demand tasks and discourse throughout the school year. HCPS continues to expand use of evidence-based instructional materials, guided by new state-required comprehensive math plans and the MSDE Mathematics Policy that emphasize conceptual understanding and problem solving. Continued progress in this area supports the Blueprint's goal of ensuring all students reach CCR in mathematics by the end of high school. The data has resulted in the following actions for the 2025–26 school year:

- Development and use of recommended topic/unit assessment items that align to the rigor and intent of MCCRS for mathematics.
- Implementation of i-Ready Math Personalized Instruction for students enrolled in Ramp Up to Algebra and Algebra 1 alongside small group instruction that prioritizes prerequisite standards and the use of visual models.
- Delivery of professional development to teachers around differentiation for all students, particularly students receiving special education services.

4 MCAP Social Studies Results

HCPS results for Social Studies assessments at both the middle and high school levels showed mixed performance trends. In 2024–25, 42.6% of Grade 8 students scored proficient or advanced on the MCAP Social Studies assessment, compared to 43.6% in 2023–24. Statewide, 39.3% of students scored proficient or advanced. The Grade 8 Social Studies assessment does not impact a student's overall grade but is required for state accountability reporting.

At the high school level, performance on the MCAP American Government assessment declined in 2024–25, with 30.6% of students scoring proficient or advanced compared to 48.8% the prior year.

Caution should be used when comparing American Government results across years. Interpretation of Social Studies data must account for several factors:

- **Course sequence changes:** In 2024–25, HCPS shifted its high school sequence so that most 9th grade students took World History instead of American Government. Only 157 students took the American Government course and corresponding MCAP assessment, compared to 2,940 in 2023–24.
- **Assessment weighting:** The Grade 8 Social Studies assessment does not affect student grades, whereas the American Government assessment counts as 20% of the course grade.
- **Testing history:** The Grade 8 assessment is relatively new (first administered in 2022–23), and baseline trends are still emerging.
- **Comparability issues:** Year-to-year changes in course enrollment make longitudinal analysis difficult, particularly at the high school level.

Table 5 indicates the performance of HCPS at each grade level for the prior three school years. The grade 8 assessment increased 0.8% from 2022-23. Due to the small and unique population of students who took the American Government assessment in 2024-25, comparisons cannot be made.

Table 5. *Historical MCAP Social Studies Performance*

Grade	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	3 Year Change
8	41.8%	43.6%	42.6%	+0.8
HS Gov	43.8%	48.8%	30.6%	Not comparable*

4.1 Grade 8 Results

In 2024–25, HCPS Grade 8 Social Studies proficiency results remained above the state average, with 42.6% of students scoring proficient or advanced compared to 39.3% statewide. While proficiency decreased slightly from the prior year, 17.3% of students scored within ten points of proficiency, demonstrating that many students are close to meeting expectations.

The Grade 8 Social Studies assessment has only counted toward state accountability measures for the past three school years as this assessment was first administered in the 2022-23 school year. Figure 22 summarizes HCPS Grade 8 Social Studies performance over this period.

Figure 22. *HCPS MCAP Social Studies Grade 8*

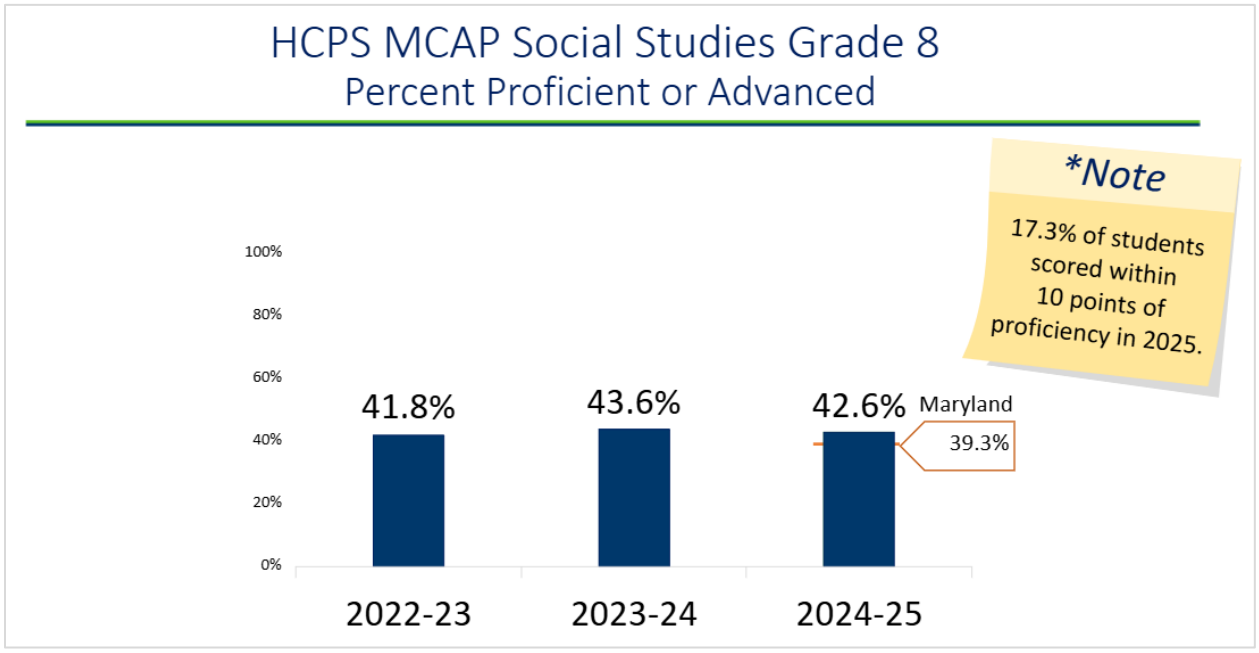
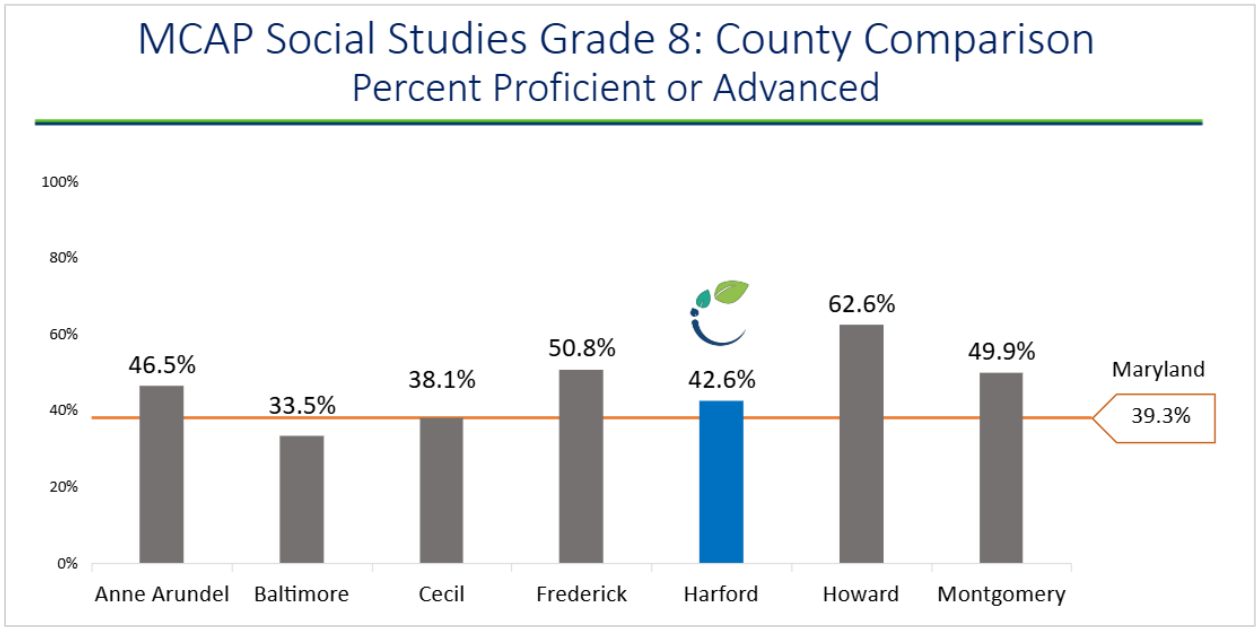


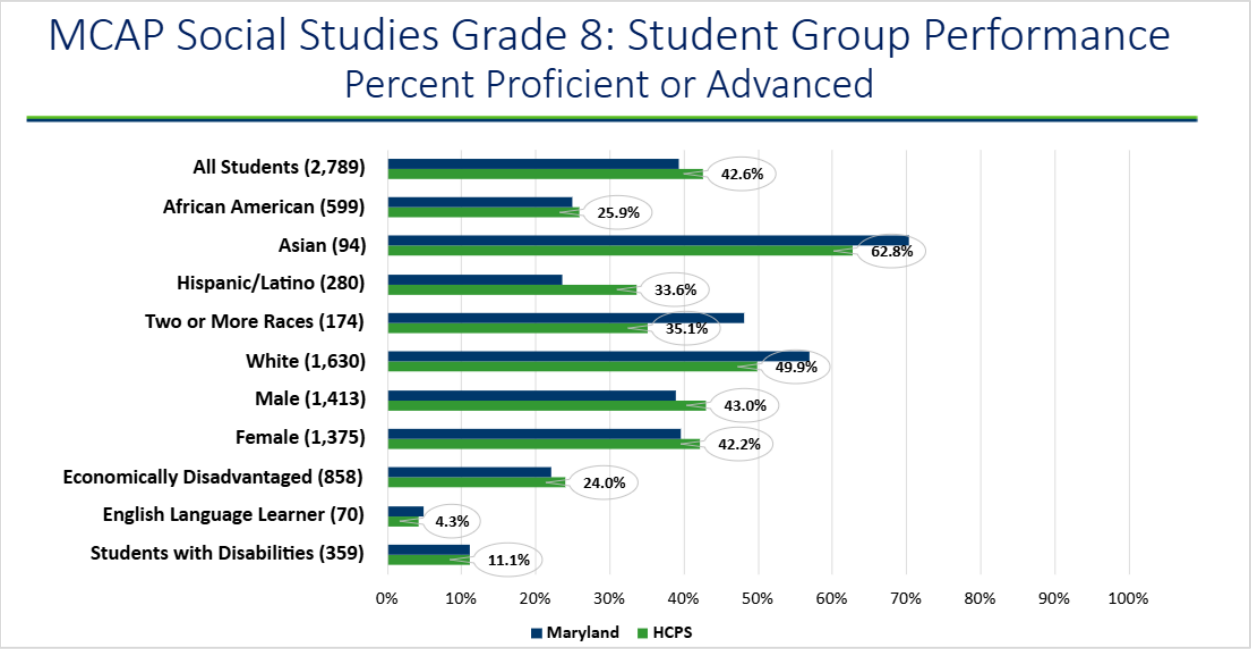
Figure 23 compares neighboring and similar counties to HCPS as well as results for the state. HCPS achieved a 42.6% proficiency rate, outperforming the state by 3.3%. HCPS also outscored Baltimore and Cecil counties.

Figure 23. *MCAP Social Studies Grade 8: County Comparison*



HCPS continues to outperform state performance on MCAP Social Studies in most student groups (Figure 24).

Figure 24. *MCAP Social Studies Grade 8: Student Group Performance*



Social Studies Grade 8 Findings:

Administered statewide for only the third year, this assessment continues to build an emerging baseline for measuring students' readiness for critical thinking, informed citizenship, and cross-disciplinary literacy. Although proficiency declined slightly from the previous year, 17.3% of students scored within ten points of proficiency, indicating that many are approaching mastery. The skills assessed—analysis of historical documents, argumentation with evidence, and comprehension of complex informational texts—closely mirror the reading and writing demands of the MCAP English Language Arts (ELA) assessment.

HCPS's strong performance and growth in ELA, particularly in Grades 6–8, suggest that literacy-focused instruction is strengthening students' capacity for historical reasoning and source-based writing in social studies. This data reflects students who experienced Grades 6–7 instruction aligned to former state standards. Beginning in 2024–25, HCPS implemented a new Grades 6–7 Social Studies curriculum vertically aligned to the Grade 8 assessment; gains from this change are not yet reflected but are expected in future cycles.

These findings highlight both the district's strengths and opportunities for growth as the new curriculum takes hold. The integration of literacy and social studies, especially evidence-based writing, source analysis, and critical reading, remains central to future success. Districtwide initiatives that advanced MCAP ELA gains directly support the disciplinary thinking required in social studies. As the vertically aligned curriculum becomes fully embedded, HCPS anticipates higher proficiency and deeper civic inquiry. Continued collaboration through professional learning communities, strategic use of formative data, and cross-content literacy instruction will ensure students develop the analytical, interpretive, and civic reasoning skills essential for success on the MCAP and as engaged citizens.

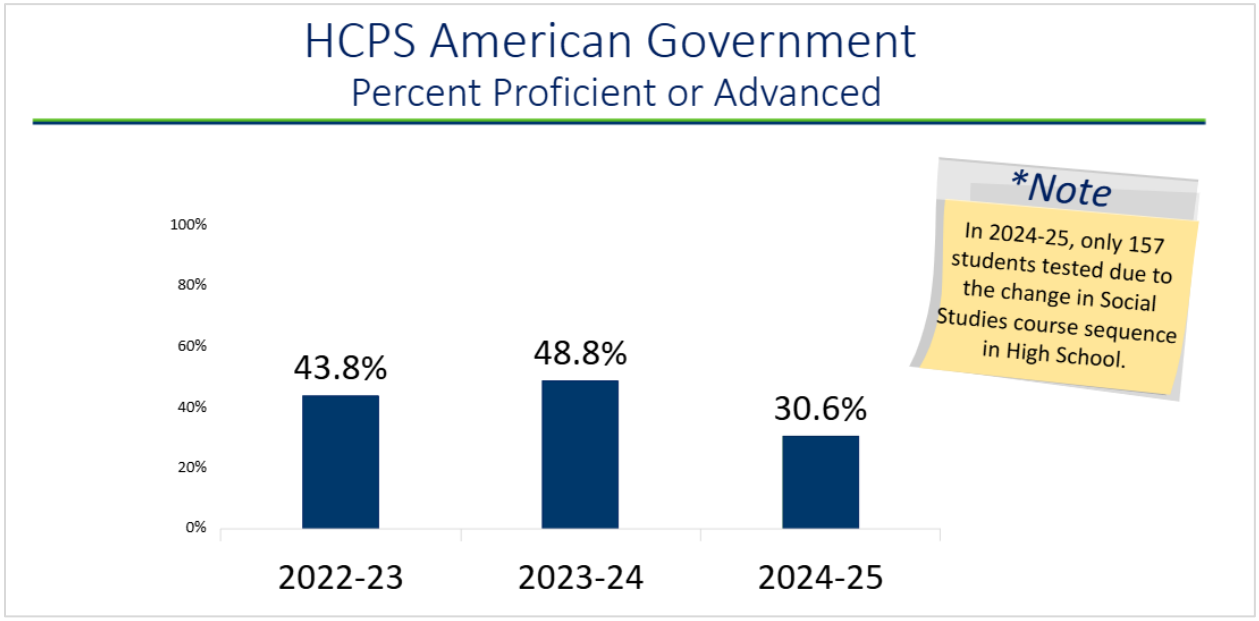
4.2 American Government Results

In 2024–25, HCPS implemented a new high school Social Studies course sequence, resulting in the majority of students enrolling in World History in that school year rather than the American Government course. Students now enroll in American Government in their tenth-grade year where this course was formerly taken by ninth grade students. Consequently, only students who were required to fulfill the American Government graduation requirement participated in the MCAP American Government assessment. Therefore, only 157 students were assessed in 2024–25, compared to nearly 3,000 the year before.

The MCAP American Government assessment serves as the final exam for the course, contributing 20% of a student's overall grade. Performance declined in 2024–25, with 30.6% (Figure 25) of the 157 students scoring proficient or advanced compared to 48.8% in the prior year when 2,940 took the test. The majority of the 157 students who were assessed in 2024-25 failed this course in the previous school year. Due to the small and unique population who were assessed, comparisons to previous year's data should not be made.

Students who do not pass this assessment are not required to retake the test since the state assessment serves as the final exam. However, should students fail the course they must retake the course the following school year.

Figure 25. *HCPS American Government*



American Government Findings:

HCPS expects performance gains from the new course sequencing. The restructuring of the social studies course sequence allows students to build a more coherent and developmentally appropriate understanding of historical and civic concepts, which in turn supports stronger performance on the MCAP Government exam. By shifting United States Government from 9th to 10th grade, students will first gain essential background knowledge through a chronological study of U.S. History, helping them better grasp the abstract ideas and structures that underpin American democracy. This progression ensures that when students encounter the Government course and MCAP assessment, they are cognitively and academically prepared to apply historical reasoning, analytical skills, and informed civic understanding. Additionally, aligning the sequence with the majority of Maryland school districts promotes consistency in preparation for statewide assessments and ensures that Harford County students are competitively positioned for postsecondary success and informed citizenship.

5 MISA Science Results

HCPS students continue to outperform state averages on MISA science assessments at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, with results showing improvement compared to previous years. In 2024–25, 31.4% of Grade 5 students scored proficient or advanced on the MISA Science assessment, which measures science standards taught in grades 3 through 5. It is worth noting that the state assessments in this content area for elementary and middle school students are the only assessments that measure state standards in three grade levels. Additionally, the testing window for grades 5 and 8 opens the first full week in March, which is the earliest assessment of the four core content areas.

Statewide, 25.6% of HCPS students scored proficient or advanced. At the middle school level, 35.1% of Grade 8 students scored proficient or advanced on the MISA Science assessment, which assesses standards taught in grades 6 through 8. Statewide, 31.4% of students scored proficient or advanced. In elementary and middle school, this assessment does not impact students' grades but is required for state accountability reporting.

At the high school level, students enrolled in biology, typically in grade 9, completed the Life Science MISA assessment, which measures life science standards. This assessment serves as the course final exam and counts as 20% of the overall course grade, directly influencing both student performance and state accountability outcomes.

When interpreting the science data, the following considerations apply:

- The number of items and cognitive demand on MCAP science assessments have increased over time, making direct comparisons to earlier results less precise.
- Science content is weighted by strands (e.g., Earth & Space, Physical, Life, and Engineering), so proficiency may reflect relative strengths in some strands more than others.
- High school proficiency (Life Science MISA) includes different cohorts each year; small variations in course enrollment or student mobility can influence percentage rates.
- As with other content areas, MCAP results represent only one measure of performance; local assessments, classroom work, and formative data remain critical to a full view of student learning.

Table 6 indicates the performance of HCPS at each grade level for the four prior school years. The greatest increase between 2023-24 and 2024-25 occurred in the LS MISA assessment for the high school level (+6.5 percentage points).

Table 6. *Historical MCAP Science Performance*

Grade	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	4 Year Change
5	33.5%	40.3%	30.9%	31.4%	-2.1
8	43.0%	32.7%	31.7%	35.1%	-7.9
LS MISA	36.8%	34.7%	41.3%	47.8%	+11.0

5.1 Grade 5 Results

In 2024–25, HCPS Grade 5 Science proficiency results remained above the state average, with 31.4% of students scoring proficient or advanced compared to 25.6% statewide. HCPS growth remained steady with a 0.5% increase in proficiency. Figure 26 summarizes HCPS Grade 5 performance.

Figure 26. *HCPS MISA: Grade 5*

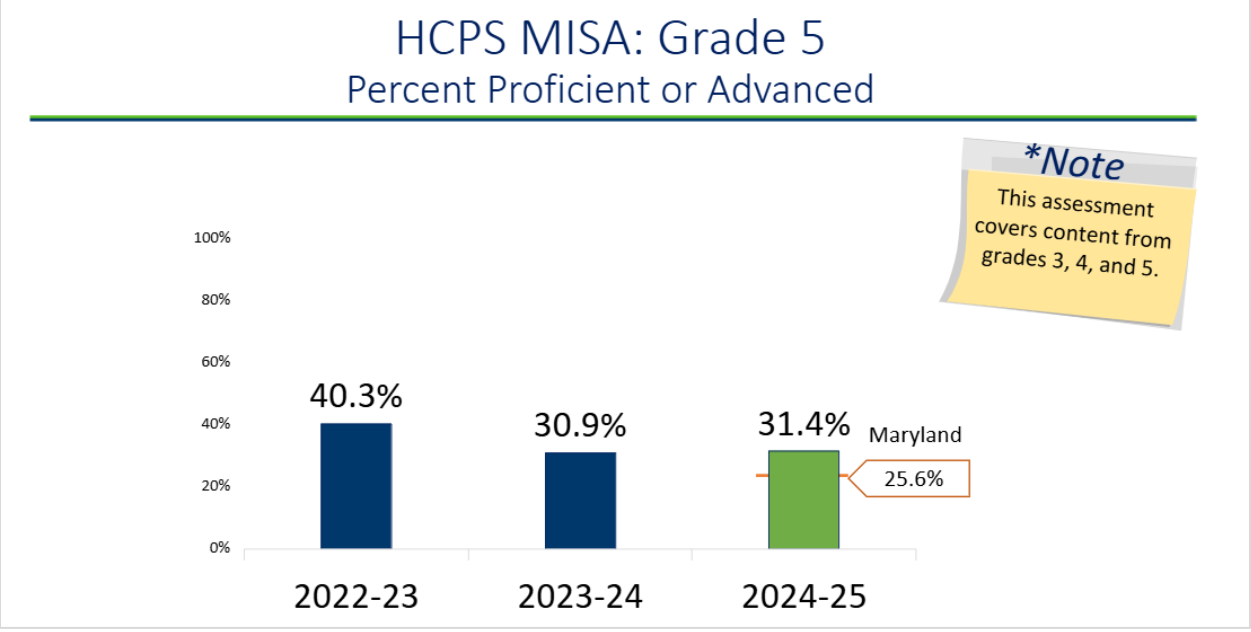
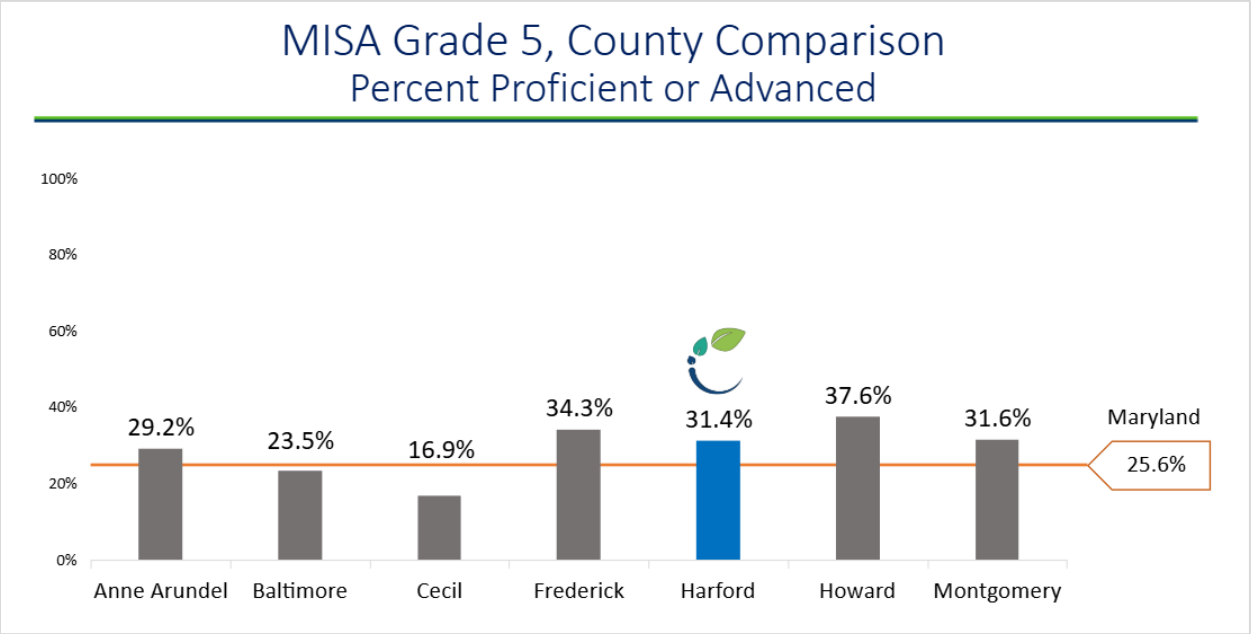


Figure 27 compares neighboring and similar counties to HCPS as well as results for the state. HCPS achieved a 31.4% proficiency rate, outperforming the state by 5.8%. HCPS outscored Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Cecil counties.

Figure 27. *MISA Grade 5, County Comparison*



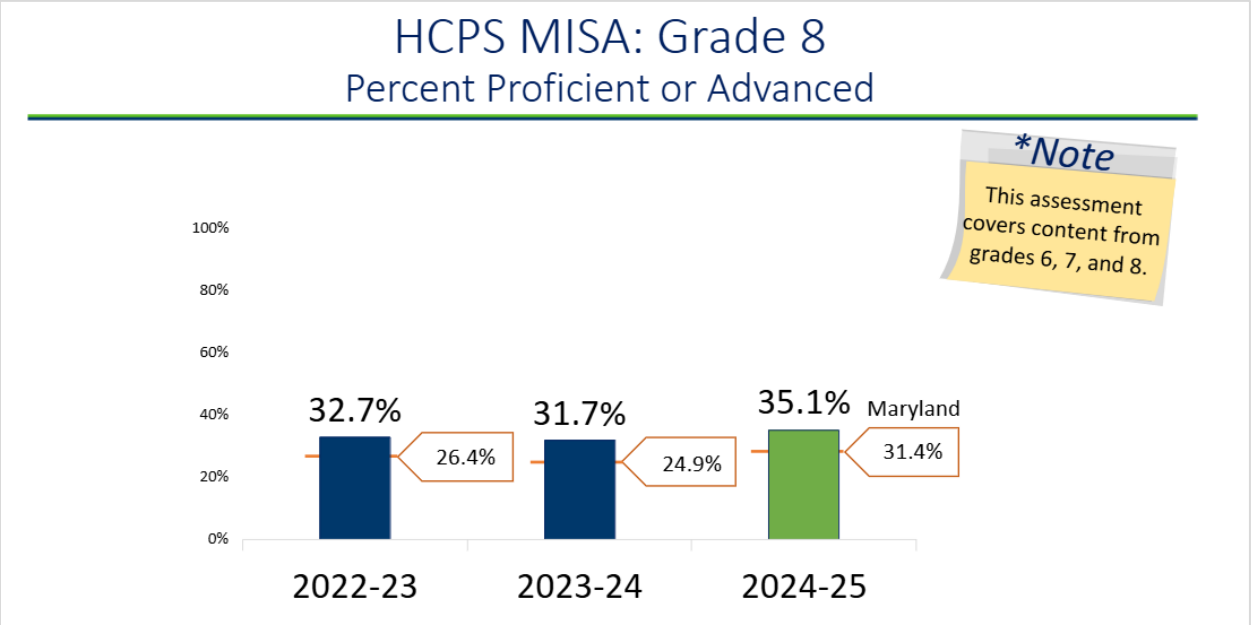
MISA Grade 5 Findings:

Strong performance in Grade 5 science lays the foundation for deeper conceptual understanding in later grades. Growth in proficiency can be attributed to strong professional development and continued focus on Performance Expectations. In 2024-25, all elementary teachers had access to InnerOrbit assessment items which mirror the MISA assessment items. As teachers and students become more proficient in assessment types, this will have a direct impact on student scores on MISA. Moving forward, teachers are required to give one common assessment aligned to MISA for each instructional unit. It is important to reiterate that MISA 5 is based on Performance Expectations which cover three years of instruction. Additionally, the Performance Expectations that are assessed change each year due to the random selection of state standards, resulting in a virtually new test each year.

5.2 Grade 8 Results

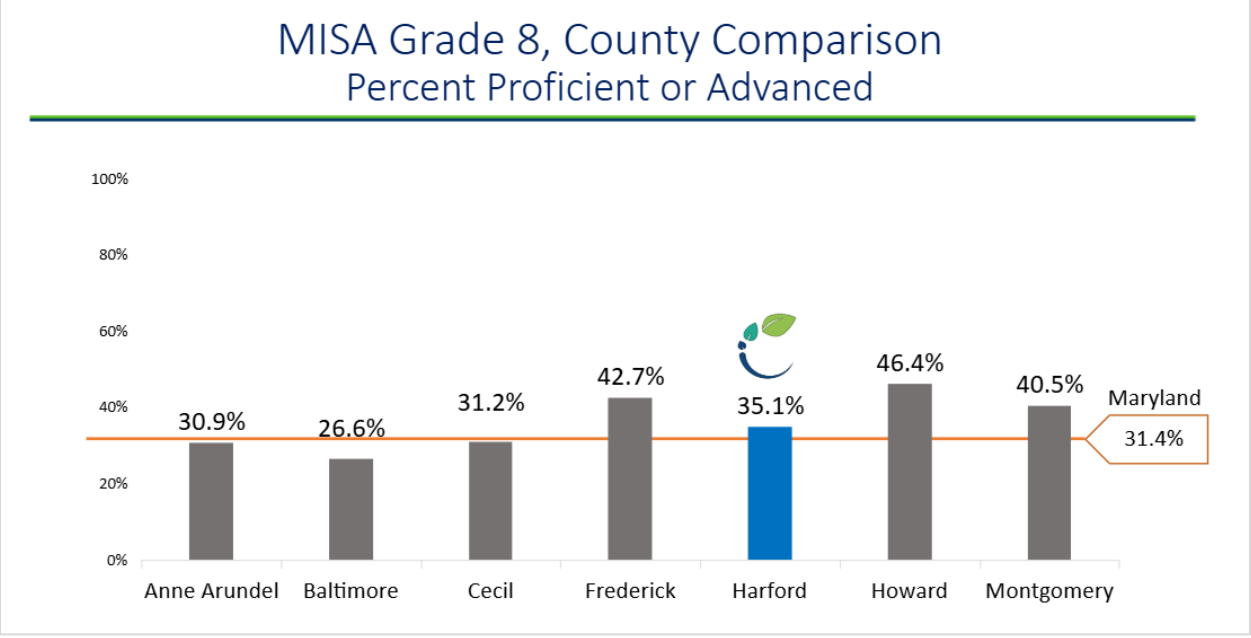
In 2024–25, HCPS Grade 8 Science proficiency results remained above the state average, with 35.1% of students scoring proficient or advanced compared to 31.4% statewide. HCPS students demonstrated a 3.4% increase in proficiency from the prior year. The graphic below summarizes HCPS Grade 8 MISA performance.

Figure 28. *HCPS MISA: Grade 8*



The graphic below compares neighboring and similar counties to HCPS as well as results for the state. HCPS achieved a 35.1% proficiency rate, outperforming the state by 3.7%. HCPS outscored Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Cecil counties.

Figure 29. *MISA Grade 8, County Comparison*



MISA Grade 8 Findings:

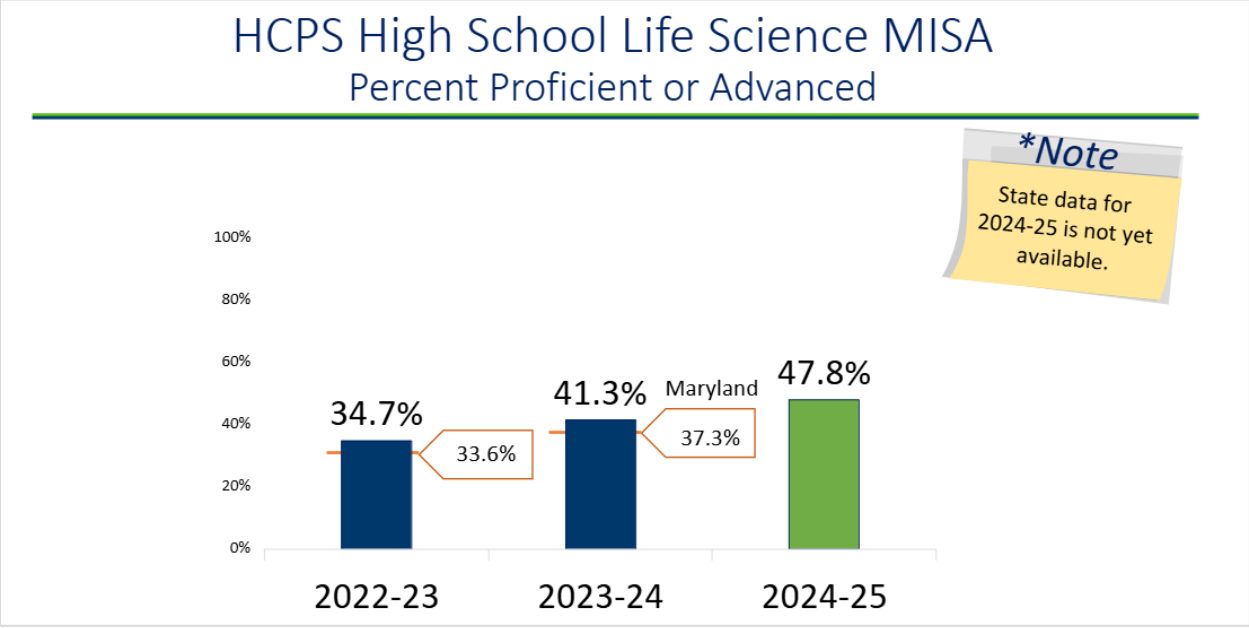
Grade 8 science mastery is vital for success in high school science courses. Students with solid middle school performance are better positioned for rigorous advanced coursework, including AP or dual-credit offerings. Increasing MISA 8 proficiency can be attributed to a variety of factors, including access to InnerOrbit assessment items for grades 6-8, with teachers being encouraged to incorporate items aligned to prior grades. Moving forward, teachers are required to give one common assessment aligned to MISA for each instructional unit. Like MISA 5, this assessment covers three years of instruction as the test randomly selects state standards that are assessed each year. This also results in a different test each year.

5.3 High School Life Science Results

HCPS performance on the assessment continued to improve in 2024–25, with 48.7% of students scoring proficient or advanced, compared to 41.3% in the previous year - a 7.4-point increase. State data for the 2024-25 school year has not yet been released by MSDE. Therefore, statewide results for the two prior school years are included.

The Life Science MISA assessment serves as the final exam for the high school biology course, measuring life science standards. Passing the biology course is a graduation requirement for all Maryland students. This assessment is required for all students and counts as 20% of a student's overall final course grade. Just like the American Government assessment, students are not required to pass this assessment but must pass the course. Students who do not pass the course must retake the course the following school year.

Figure 30. *HCPS High School Life Science MISA*



High School Life Science Findings:

Student success on the LS MISA can be attributed to several factors including the second year of impact on student grades. Students who perform successfully on the LS MISA have direct impact on their final grade. All life science teachers have access to InnerOrbit assessment items and were invited to give assessments to students in their class. Moving forward, teachers are required to give one common assessment aligned to MISA for each instructional unit.

6 Findings and Implications

The 2024–25 MCAP results for Harford County Public Schools show steady growth and progress. The data suggest that targeted instructional leadership, coherent curriculum alignment, intervention supports, and professional learning are paying off.

Cross-Content Findings

- HCPS continues to outperform statewide averages across most content areas and grade levels.
- Growth is shared broadly across student groups; while gaps remain, the achievement of historically underserved groups is improving.
- Elementary literacy and math gains serve as foundational indicators of long-term success; early performance strongly correlates to later proficiency.
- High school performance in ELA, science, and participation in advanced/sequenced courses is on an upward trajectory; however, assessment design limitations in mathematics complicate direct interpretation of proficiency rates.

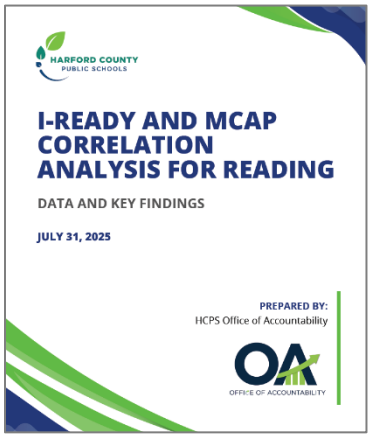
Strategic Implications

- Performance on high-stakes state assessments is anchored in the ability of students to develop early literacy and numeracy skills. Students are universally screened in kindergarten three times a year utilizing the DIBELS, 8th edition assessment for literacy and the SNAP assessment for numeracy. The results from these assessments allow educators to immediately provide differentiated instruction and interventions for students who need this additional support.
- District and school leaders collaborate to review academic performance, discuss strengths and areas of growth which are outlined in the School Performance and Achievement (SPA) Playbook.
- Each school has a SPA team that analyzes the performance data and develops an action plan in the focus area to elevate performance for all students and address any disparities in student groups. Focus areas in elementary and middle schools include Literacy, Numeracy, and Career Mindset and Preparation. Focus areas in high schools include On-track for Graduation, College and Career Readiness, and Graduate Outcomes.
- Central Services supports schools in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, data discussions and strategic planning to increase student achievement, leadership coaching for school improvement, and implementation of instructional programs to continuously improve teaching and learning.
- Professional development is differentiated by content and school to improve performance for all students.

Additional Analysis

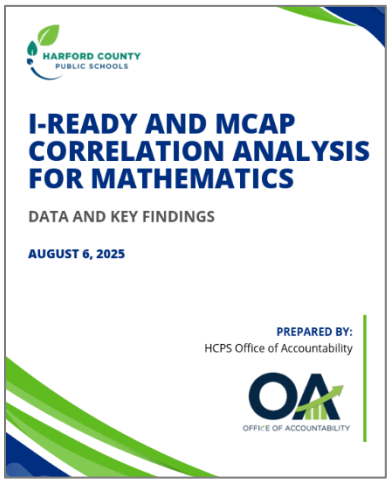
HCPS conducted a correlation study to link MCAP results with local assessments (i-Ready Reading and Math) so educators can translate state outcomes into timely classroom actions—setting preliminary "paths to proficiency," targeting interventions earlier, and monitoring progress with greater precision. Using last year's data as a baseline, we established initial thresholds and will refine them over multiple years and student groups to strengthen predictive accuracy. The following provides summary information for ELA and Math to guide instructional planning, resource allocation, and goal setting.

ELA



This HCPS study found strong correlations between i-Ready Reading and MCAP ELA results. Using 2024–25 data, HCPS set 95%-likelihood i-Ready "paths to proficiency" by season/grade (e.g., Grade 3: 512/524/535 fall/winter/spring; Grade 5: 582/592/602), with minimal growth needed in Grades 6–7 and a higher bar in Grade 8. The study notes i-Ready Reading does not assess writing, so MCAP-style writing must be built through curriculum (Benchmark/CommonLit). School median results were similar or mixed across tools (e.g., Grade 3 median 71% i-Ready vs 62% MCAP), and findings are preliminary given one year of implementation. Building on that work, we will refine multi-year benchmarking, check student group progress, and pair MCAP writing/constructed-response demands with curriculum-embedded tasks. This continued analysis lets PLCs read MCAP potential shifts in real time through i-Ready trends, target interventions sooner, and monitor whether instructional moves are closing the gap to proficiency. The full report is available here.

Math



Given statewide MCAP math complexities and high proficiency cut scores, local decision-making depends on a reliable connection to i-Ready Math. Correlations between spring i-Ready Math and MCAP Math were strong in grades 3–6 ($r \approx 0.86–0.88$), moderate in Grade 8, and lower for MS Algebra I/Geometry because i-Ready is grade-level content while those students test course standards. HCPS established 95%-likelihood thresholds for Grades 3–6 (e.g., Grade 3: 445/454/462; Grade 6: 513/524/534 fall/winter/spring), showing where i-Ready scale scores predict MCAP proficiency. Analyses highlight MCAP Math's high proficiency percentiles (50th–95th, Grade 8 at the 95th) and that median i-Ready scores exceed MCAP across grades—evidence of state test rigor and the need for continued MCAP-style reasoning/modeling practice (not directly measured by i-Ready Math). As with Reading, results reflect one year of data and should be trended over time. Next, we will validate those thresholds across years and student groups, adjust for students in accelerated courses (e.g., MS Algebra I/Geometry), and emphasize reasoning/modeling items that MCAP weights more heavily. This ongoing linkage will help schools translate MCAP outcomes into teachable prerequisite skills, schedule timely supports (e.g., tutoring, small-group instruction), and track progress toward Algebra readiness with greater precision. The full report is available here.

From the Desk of the Superintendent of Schools:

"I am pleased to share that the 2024–25 MCAP results confirm we are moving in the right direction as a district. Every rise in proficiency and narrowing of achievement gaps is the result of our teachers' hard work, the leadership of our instructional staff, the support of families, and the dedication of our students.

These gains align directly with the goals of our Strategic Plan. Of course, we still have work to do, especially as we plan for significant changes in mathematics from the State.

Our continued focus remains on fostering students who are purposeful **readers**, clear and confident **writers**, capable **problem-solvers**, **healthy** individuals, and **employable** young adults ready for success after graduation. By keeping our priorities growth-oriented, we maintain momentum toward career readiness for all."

\- Sean Bulson, Ed.D.

7 References

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