



MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (MCAP) PERFORMANCE

DATA AND KEY FINDINGS

2025-2026

PREPARED BY:

HCPS Office of Accountability



Executive Summary

Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) demonstrated steady improvement on the 2025–26 Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP). Across English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies, HCPS students continued to outperform state averages and comparable districts on most of the assessments. The district ranked sixth statewide in ELA and eleventh in Mathematics.

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 61.1%, a .9-point gain over 2024–25 (60.2%). HCPS is in sixth place statewide. Grade eight posted the largest increase (+2.2 points).
- **Mathematics:** HCPS outperformed the state 28.4% to 27.1%. Middle school math has improved by 2.9 percentage points since 2023–24. The district outperformed the state by six percentage points at the elementary level.
- **Science:** HCPS students scored above the state average at all levels: Grade five (39.8%), Grade eight (37.5%), and High School Life Science MISA (50.6%). Grade five improved by 8.1 percentage points since the 2023–24 school year.
- **Social Studies:** Grade eight proficiency (44%) exceeded the state average by 2.3 points. American Government results rebounded (56.2%) which is the highest it's been since 2022–23 school year.
- **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 for Biology and American Government which serve as final exams and count as twenty percent of the final course grade.

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 equitable 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 2025-26 school year for each core content area, English Language Arts/Literacy, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies (Source: [MDReportCard.org](https://mdreportcard.org)). Performance comparisons with other counties in Maryland and the state are indicated. [State performance data](#) was presented at the Maryland State Board of Education meeting on July 28, 2026.

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.

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.

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 student 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 2025–26, the district achieved an overall proficiency rate of 61.1% and ranked sixth out of 24 local education agencies (LEA) in Maryland. See Table 3 and Figure 1.

Table 3. MCAP ELA Performance: HCPS Rank in Maryland

LEA Name	Proficient Pct	Rank
State	51.7%	
Allegany	53.1%	12
Anne Arundel	55.9%	9
Baltimore City	32.9%	23
Baltimore County	46.1%	16
Calvert	66.6%	3
Caroline	50.8%	13
Carroll	67.5%	2
Cecil	46.9%	14
Charles	45.6%	17
Dorchester	37.5%	21
Frederick	64.0%	5
Garrett	53.4%	11
Harford	61.1%	6
Howard	65.9%	4

LEA Name	Proficient Pct	Rank
Kent	43.2%	18
Montgomery	58.5%	7
Prince George's	38.9%	20
Queen Anne's	57.9%	8
Saint Mary's	58.5%	7
Somerset	34.0%	22
Talbot	46.8%	15
Washington	55.0%	10
Wicomico	41.5%	19
Worcester	69.9%	1

Figure 1. MCAP ELA Ranking in Maryland by Grade Level

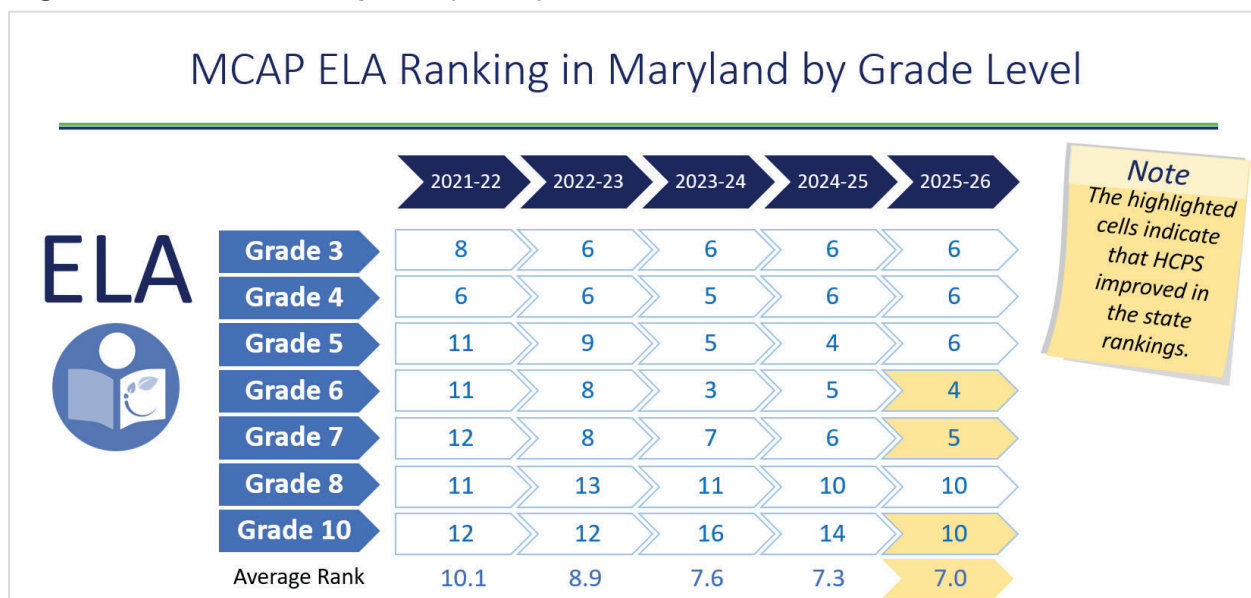


Figure 2 specifies the HCPS rank at each grade level for MCAP ELA. Each year, HCPS's average rank continues to increase. The HCPS district average rank for ELA improved from 10.1 in 2021–22 to 7 in 2025–26, reflecting steady progress over multiple years.

Grades six, seven, and ten showed an increase in rank across the state with grade ten moving up four spots. The rank for grade eight stayed the same but the grade level increased proficiency by almost two percentage points. Grade five showed a decline in rank and proficiency while still outperforming the state by almost ten percentage points.

Table 4 indicates the performance of HCPS at each grade level for the five prior school years. The greatest increase between 2021-2022 and 2025-2026 occurred in grade seven (+18.9 percentage points).

Grade	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	5-year Change
3	54.0%	58.6%	55.5%	61.5%	60.4%	+6.4
4	55.3%	59.2%	61.8%	58.5%	61.0%	+5.7
5	46.0%	47.6%	55.8%	58.3%	56.4%	+10.4
6	46.7%	57.5%	61.5%	63.7%	65.0%	+18.3
7	46.0%	53.5%	57.4%	63.2%	64.9%	+18.9
8	43.9%	51.1%	52.4%	53.5%	55.7%	+11.8
10	56.9%	59.1%	53.7%	62.4%	63.9%	+7

2.1 Elementary School Results

In 2025-26, HCPS proficiency results at the elementary level saw a slight decline in proficiency while maintaining the sixth place ranking in the state.

Figure 2 summarizes performance at the elementary school level from 2021-22 through the 2025-26 school year.

Figure 2. HCPS MCAP ELA: Grades 3-5, Historical 2022-2025

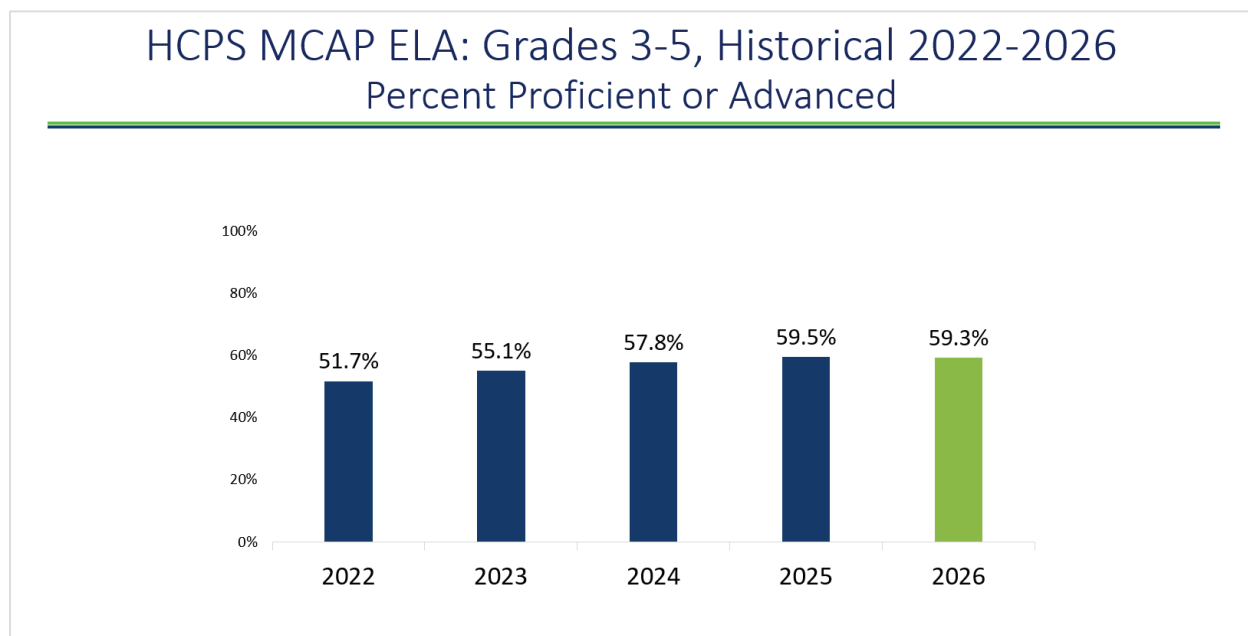
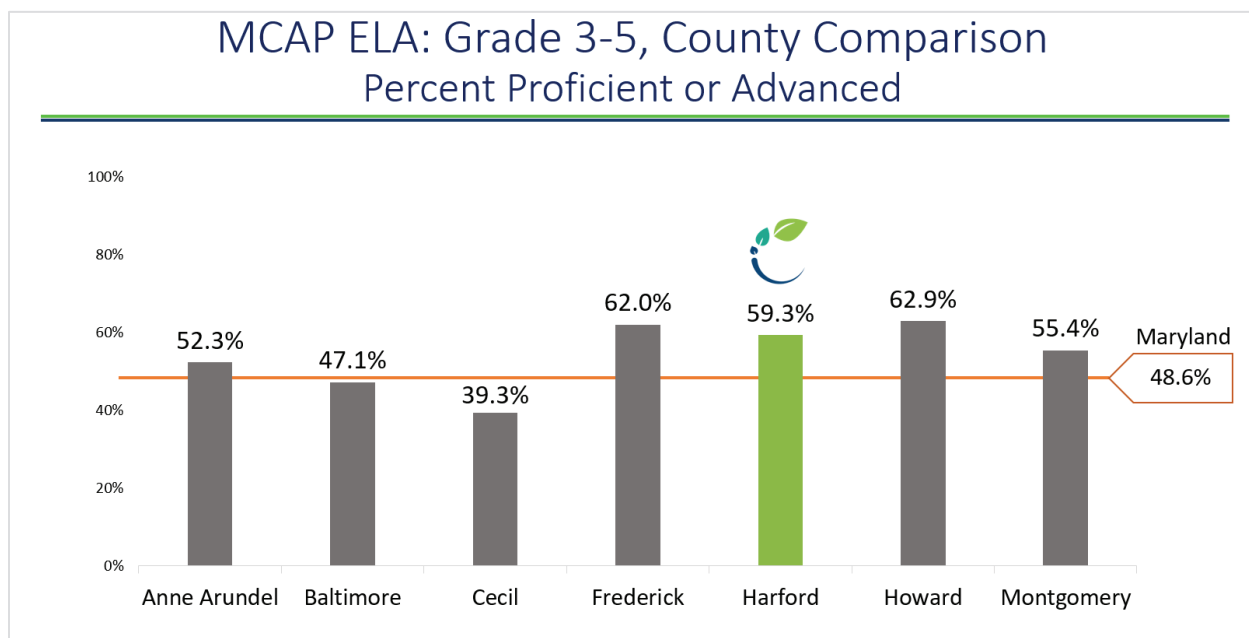


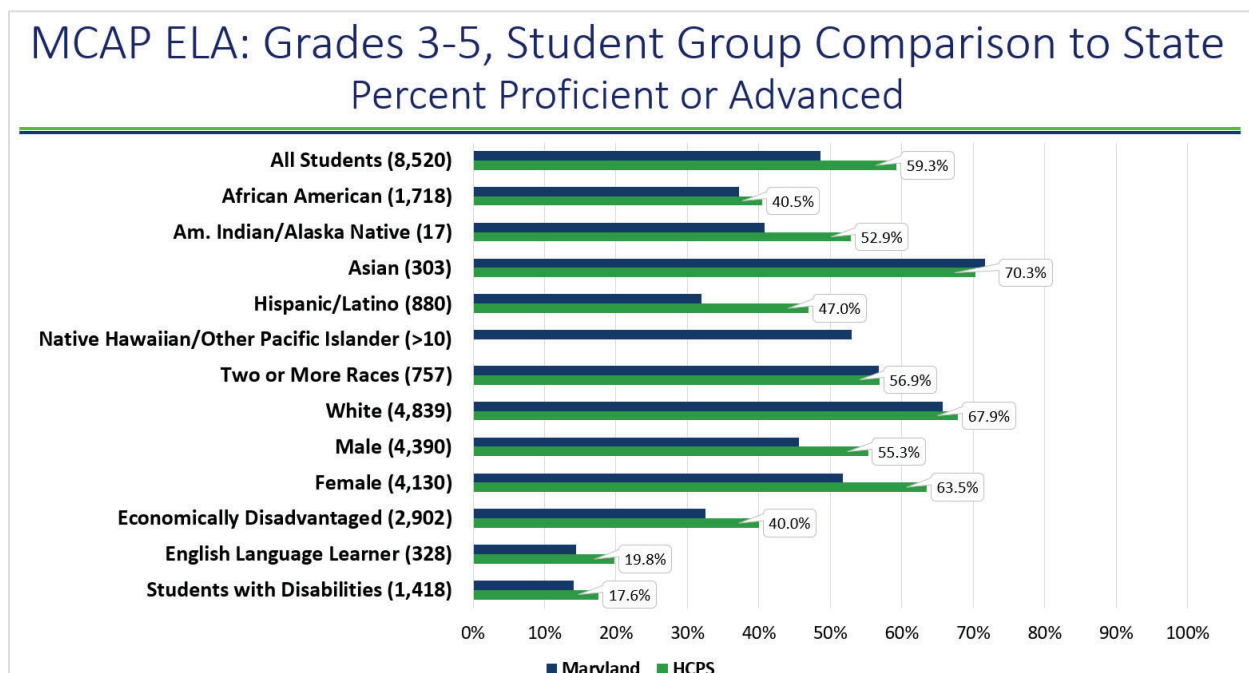
Figure 3 compares neighboring and similar counties to HCPS as well as results for the state. The performance of HCPS is compared to Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, Cecil County, Frederick County, Howard County, and Montgomery County. HCPS achieved a 59.3% proficiency rate, outperforming many other districts and outperforming the state by 10.7%.

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



HCPS continues to outperform state performance on MCAP ELA in the majority of student groups. Figure 4 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 4. MCAP ELA: Grades 3-5, Student Group Comparison to State



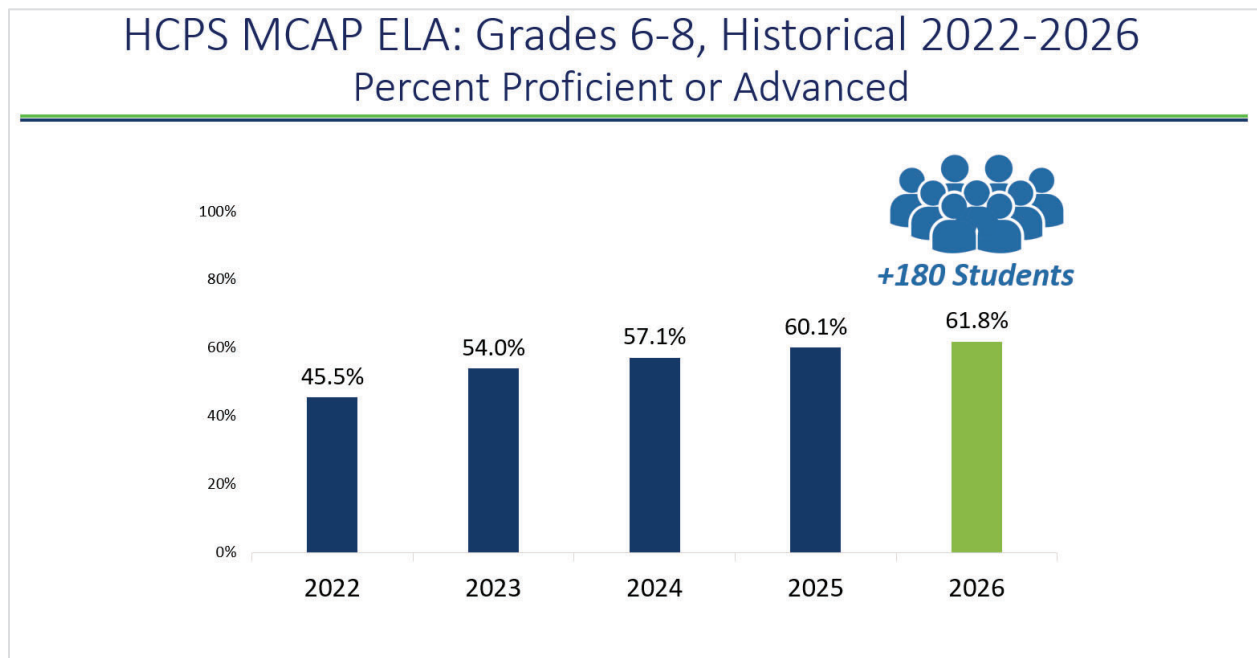
Elementary ELA Findings:

Elementary ELA results reflect the district's continued emphasis on systematic, explicit reading and writing instruction. Gains coincide with continued 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 continues to focus on building teacher capacity. Currently, more than 600 educators have completed state approved Science of Reading training while an additional 300 teachers are currently working to complete those courses. District-level professional development has been provided at both the county and school level with a focus on Science of Reading practices as well. 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

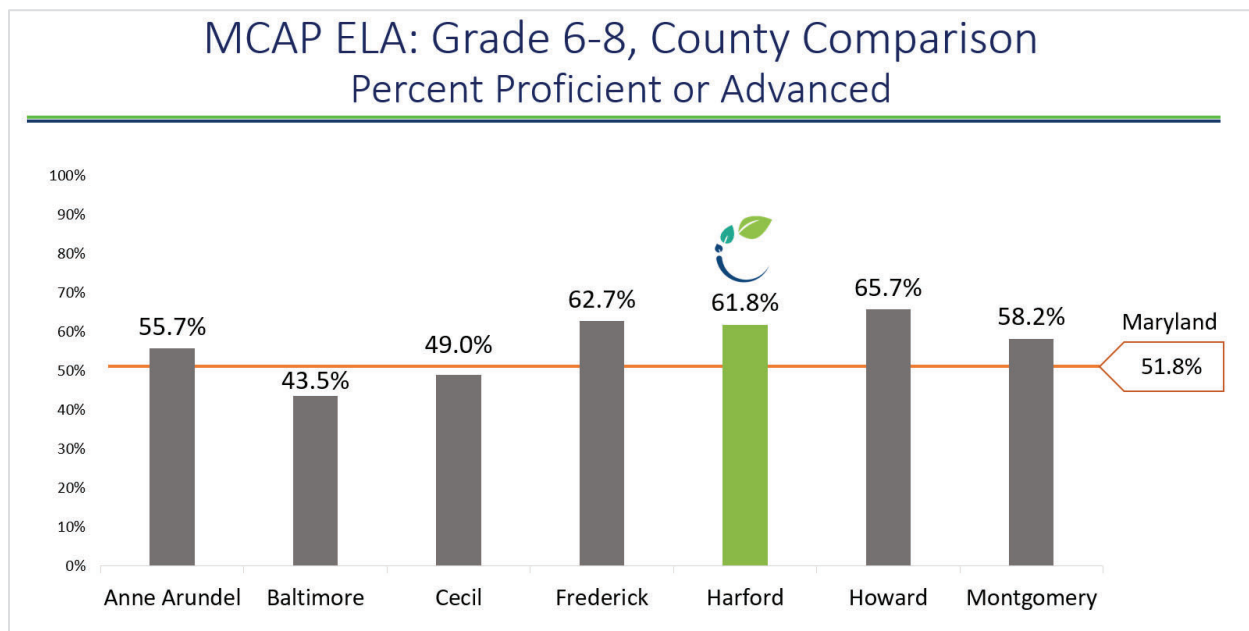
In 2025-26, students in grades six through eight earned a 61.8% proficiency rate, exceeding the state average by ten percentage points. Figure 5 summarizes performance at the middle school level from 2021-22 through the 2025-26 school years.

Figure 5. HCPS MCAP ELA: Grades 6-8, Historical 2021-2026



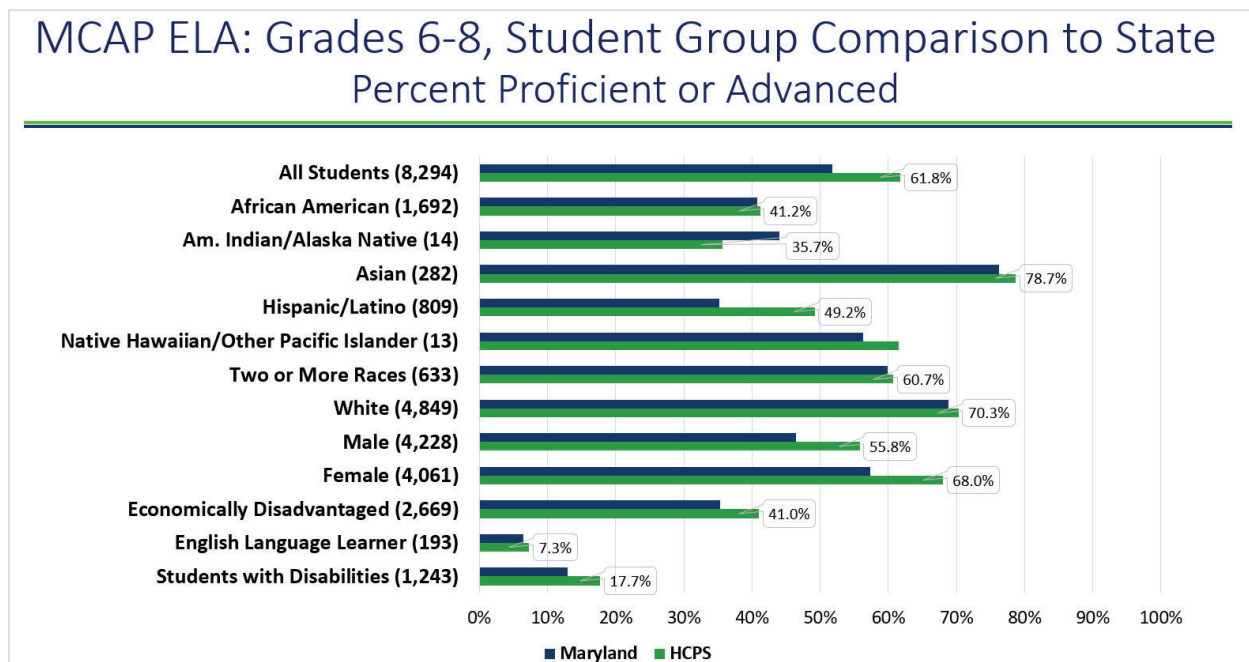
Next, Figure 6 compares neighboring and similar counties to HCPS as well as results for the state. HCPS outperformed comparable counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, and Cecil.

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



HCPS continues to outperform state performance on MCAP ELA in most student groups (Figure 7).

Figure 7. MCAP ELA: Grades 6-8, Student Group Comparison to State



Middle School ELA Findings:

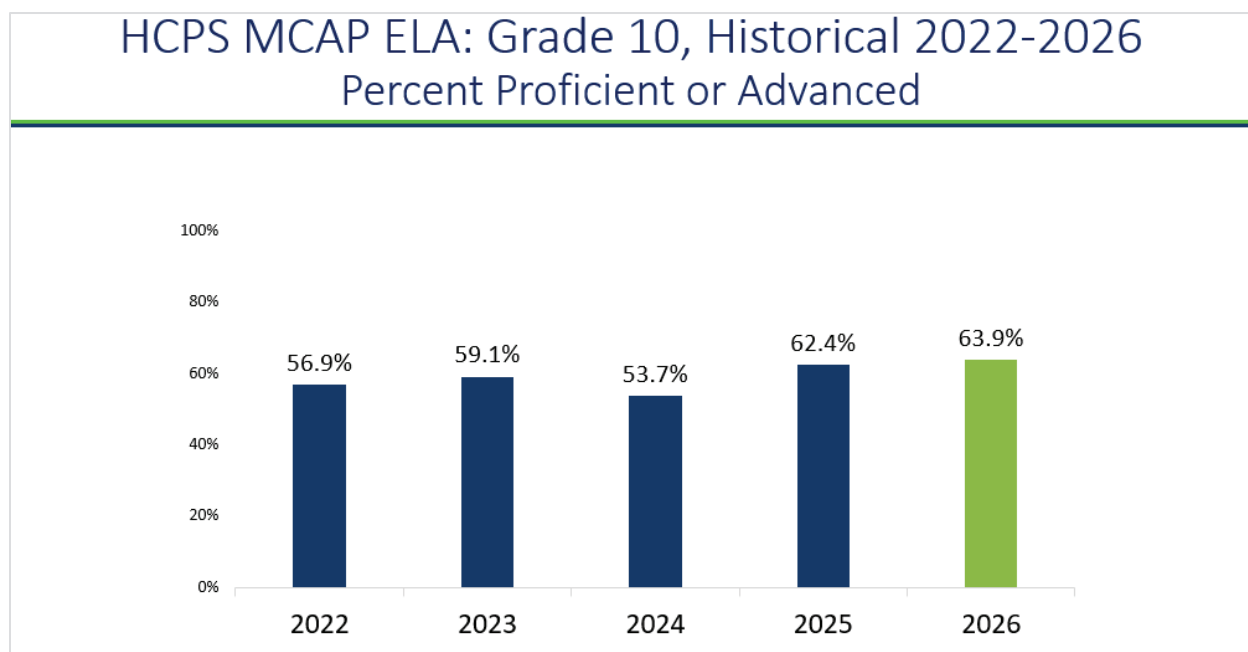
The significant increase in middle school ELA scores can be attributed to several strategic instructional improvements implemented over the past few years. The restructuring to a double period of language arts in grades six and seven across the county has provided dedicated time for both reading and writing instruction, allowing teachers to deliver more focused, in-depth lessons in each literacy domain. During the 2025-2026 school year, the district also implemented a new HQIM—Savvas myPerpectives— in grades six through eight that more fully aligns with the Science of Reading and provides a structured approach to literacy instruction that includes a gradual release model and broader access to a variety of texts. Continued use of i-Ready as an assessment platform, administered three times annually across grades six through eight, has enabled more precise progress monitoring and data-driven instructional decisions. On-Demand argumentative essays that included a claim supported by relevant and sufficient evidence and reasoning are used as a benchmark of student progress with students' writing being assessed using a standards-aligned rubric and their writing growth was tracked to assist in providing targeted instruction as needed.

2.3 High School Results

In 2025-26, results at the high school level for MCAP ELA 10 continues to grow to the highest level in five years. HCPS results increased 10.2 percentage points from the 2023-24 school year.

Figure 8 summarizes the performance at the high school level from 2021-22 through the 2025-26 school years.

Figure 8. *HCPS MCAP ELA: Grade 10, Historical 2022-2026*



Students may retake the ELA 10 assessment for proficiency or to meet CCR so it is more statistically sound to compare the performance for students who take the test for the first time. Figure 9 indicates the increase of proficiency for first-time test takers each year for the past five years.

Figure 9. HCPS MCAP ELA: Grade 10, First Time Test Takers Only

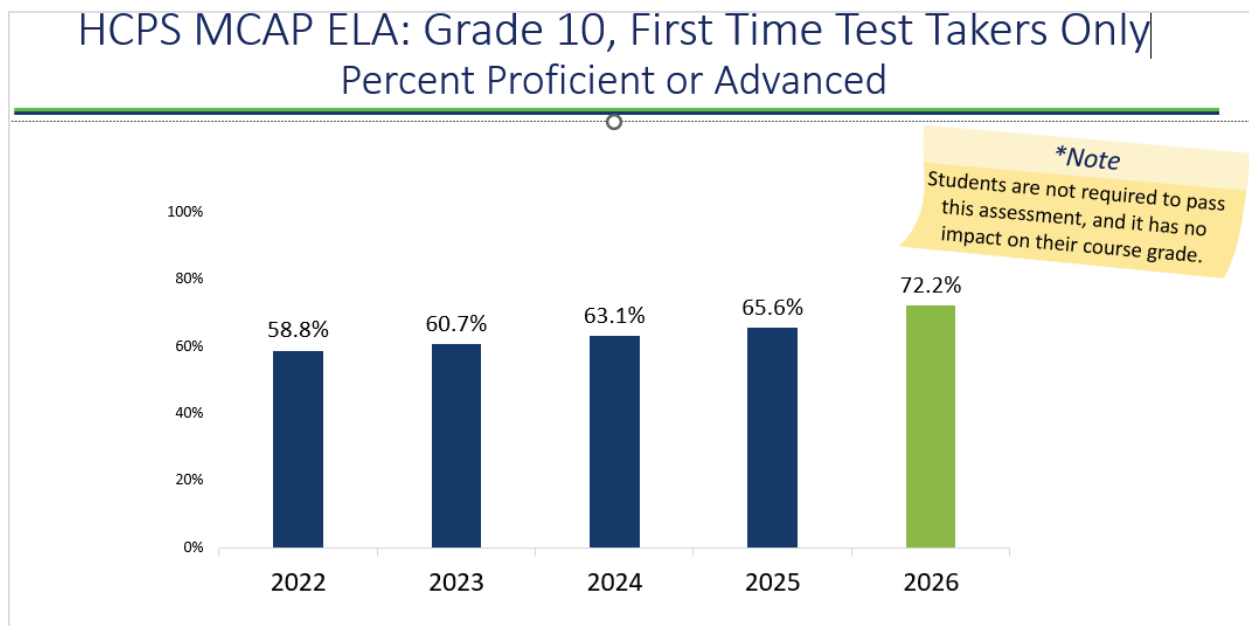
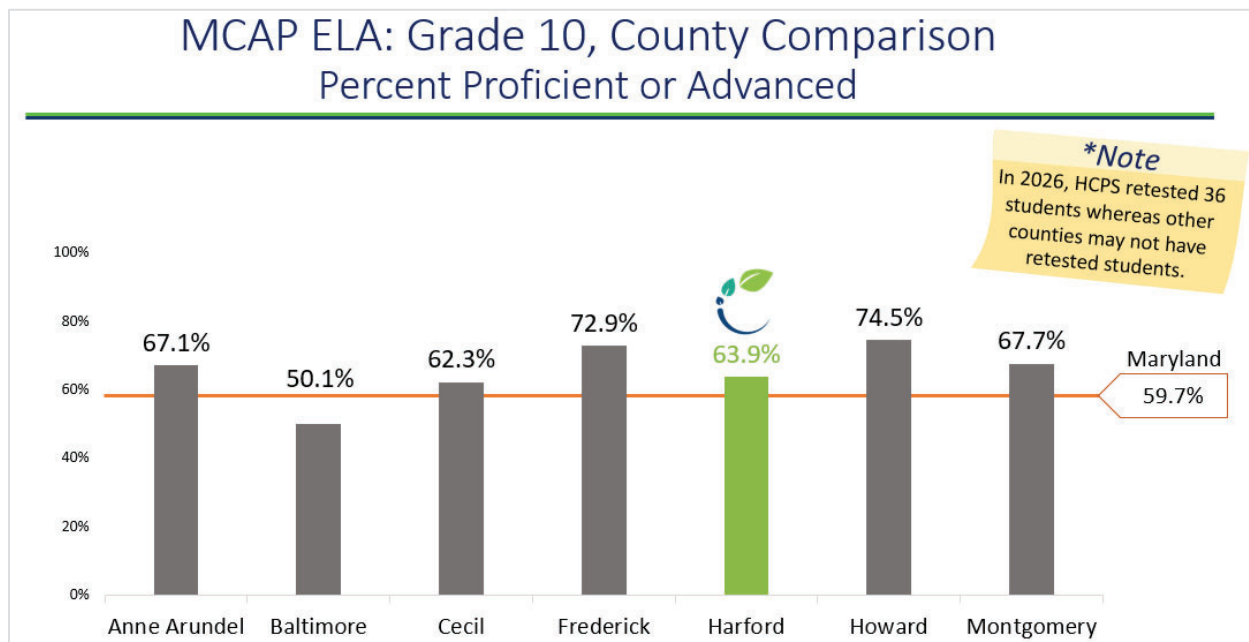


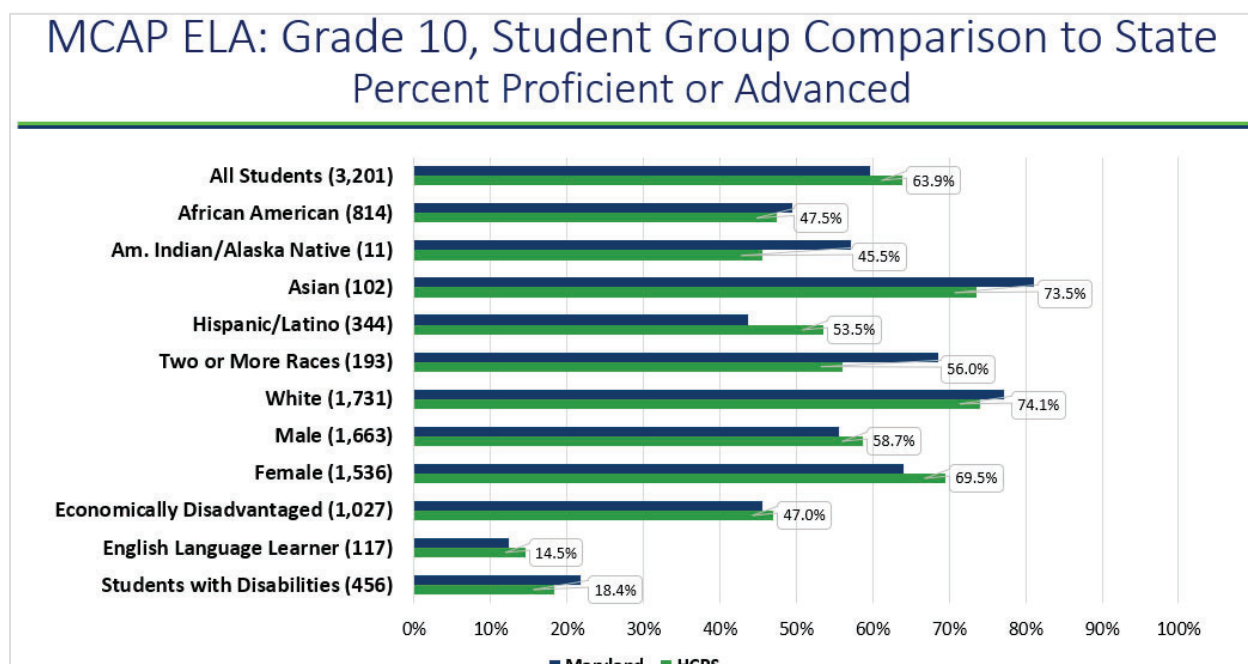
Figure 10 compares neighboring and similar counties to HCPS as well as results for the state. HCPS achieved a 63.9% proficiency rate, outperforming the state by 4.2 percentage points. The results for first time test takers in other counties are not publicly available.

Figure 10. MCAP ELA: Grade 10, County Comparison



In figure 11, HCPS continues to outperform state performance on MCAP ELA in many student groups.

Figure 11. MCAP ELA: Grade 10, Student Group Comparison to State



High School ELA Findings:

Proficiency on the MCAP ELA 10 assessment in HCPS has increased again this year. During the 2025-2026 school year, the district also implemented a new HQIM—Savvas myPerpectives—in grades nine and ten that more fully aligns with the Science of Reading and provides a structured approach to literacy instruction that includes a gradual release model and broader access to a variety of texts. This achievement reflects the district's continued work to support English department chairs in leading their departments through data-driven instructional decisions. The continued use of Common Lit alongside our core curriculum has provided targeted data and lessons aligned to state standards. 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 2025–26 stayed steady. HCPS achieved an overall proficiency rate of 28.4% in 2025–26, and ranked eleventh statewide (Table 5).

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 MCAP math assessments were not fully aligned to state standards being taught in the classroom.
- **Course offerings:** During the 2025 – 2026 school year, HCPS offered Algebra I and Geometry in all middle schools. Since not all Maryland school districts offer Algebra I and Geometry in middle school, it's unreliable to do a direct comparison because of the variance in testing population size and level of advancement for each assessment.

- **Alternative accountability measures:** Some districts use SAT mathematics in lieu of MCAP Geometry or Algebra II, further complicating comparisons.

Table 5. MCAP Math Performance: HCPS Rank in Maryland

LEA Name	Proficient Pct	Rank
State	27.1%	
Allegany	26.6%	12
Anne Arundel	29.3%	10
Baltimore City	13.3%	22
Baltimore County	21.9%	15
Calvert	37.9%	5
Caroline	23.7%	14
Carroll	41.9%	3
Cecil	20.5%	17
Charles	17.0%	18
Dorchester	16.3%	19
Frederick	38.5%	4
Garrett	32.3%	8
Harford	28.4%	11
Howard	42.1%	2
Kent	14.6%	20
Montgomery	36.9%	6
Prince George's	13.7%	21
Queen Anne's	31.7%	9
Saint Mary's	36.0%	7
Somerset	12.1%	23
Talbot	20.7%	16
Washington	29.3%	10
Wicomico	24.9%	13
Worcester	48.8%	1

Figure 12 indicates the HCPS rank at each grade level for MCAP Mathematics. In 2025-26 HCPS either kept the same rank or went down in rank compared to other districts in the state. The ranks for grades seven and eight are excluded due to the inconsistency of high school courses offered at the middle school level across the state.

Figure 12. MCAP Rankings: 2022 to 2026

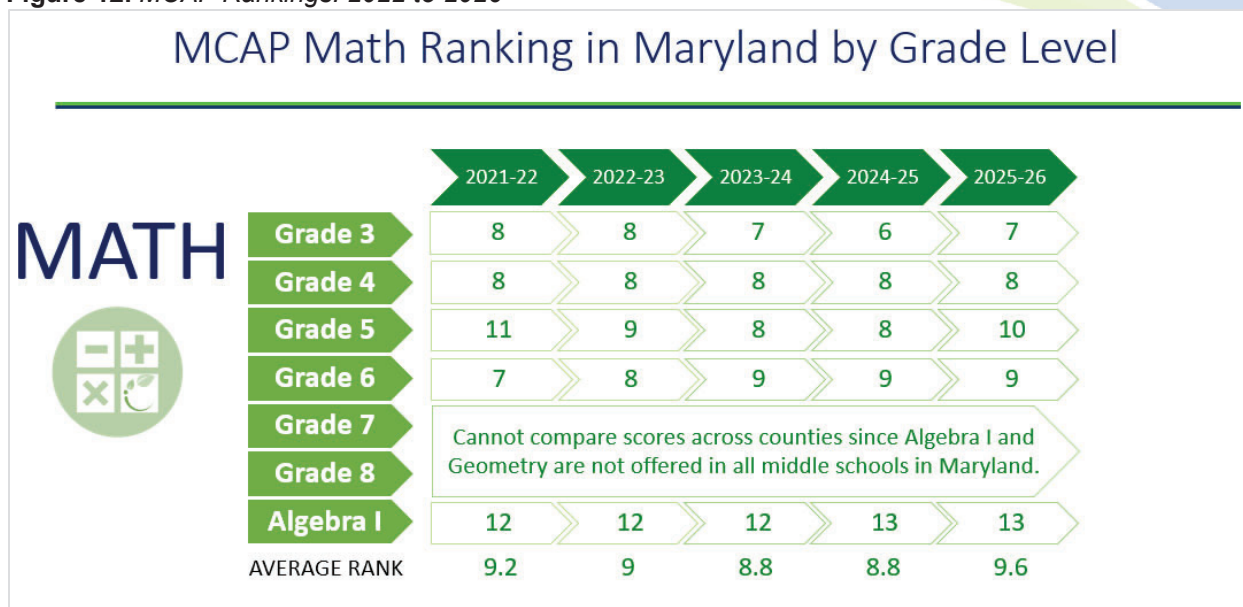


Table 6 indicates the performance of HCPS at each grade level for the five prior school years. The data for students in grades seven and eight only include students who are enrolled in general mathematics courses and not students enrolled in Algebra I or Geometry.

Grade/Course	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	5-year Change
3	44.8%	49.8%	49.5%	51.3%	50.2%	+5.4
4	34.9%	38.4%	40.9%	40.3%	42.0%	+7.1
5	26.2%	32.6%	35.8%	37.3%	33.2%	+7
6	23.1%	21.9%	22.9%	26.9%	26.7%	+3.6
7	10.9%	13.2%	11.1%	14.4%	16.2%	+5.3
8	5.0%	5.4%	6.1%	5.9%	4.8%	-0.2
Algebra I	14.1%	17.7%	16.3%	18.7%	19.6%	+5.5

3.1 Elementary School Results

In 2025-26, HCPS maintained the same level of proficiency as 2024-25. Since 2021-22, all elementary grade levels have grown over five percentage points. 20% of 2025-26 test takers scored within ten points of proficiency.

Figure 13 summarizes performance at the elementary school level from 2021-22 through the 2025-26 school year.

Figure 13. *HCPS MCAP Math: Grades 3-5, Historical 2022-2024*

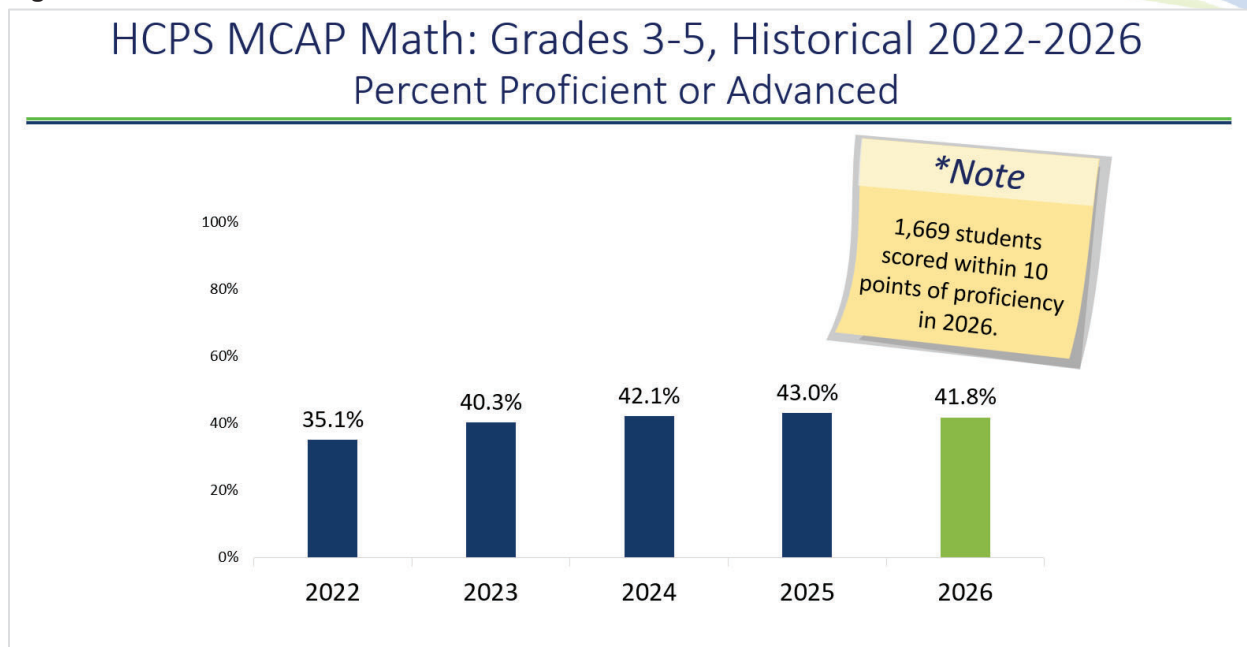
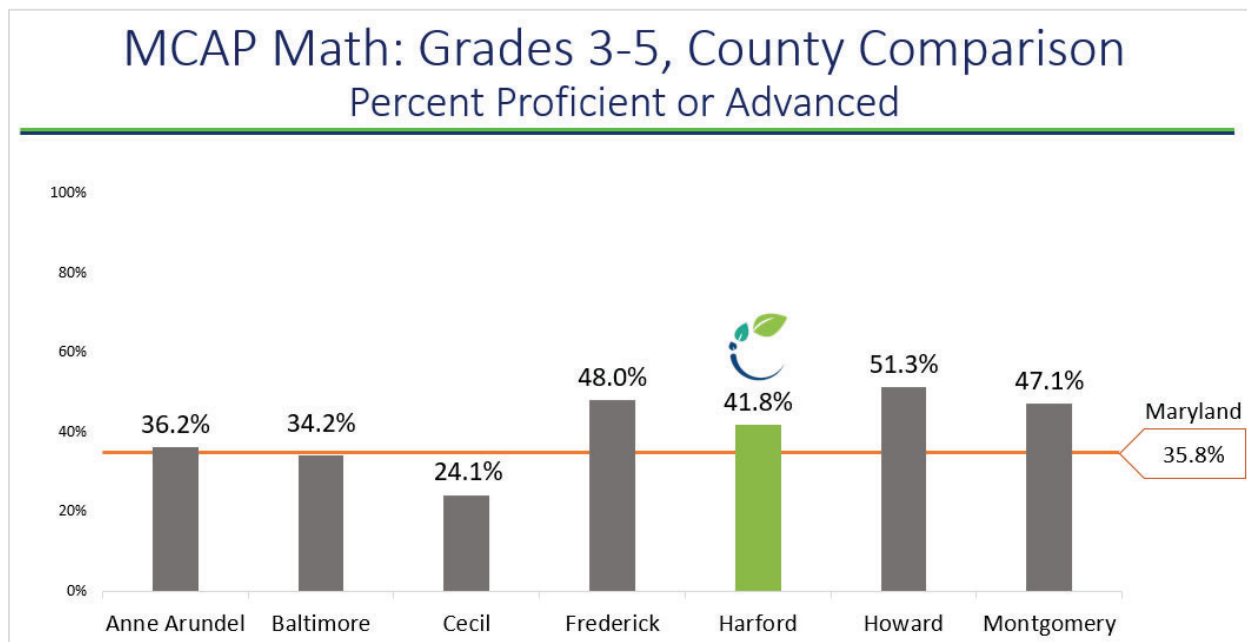


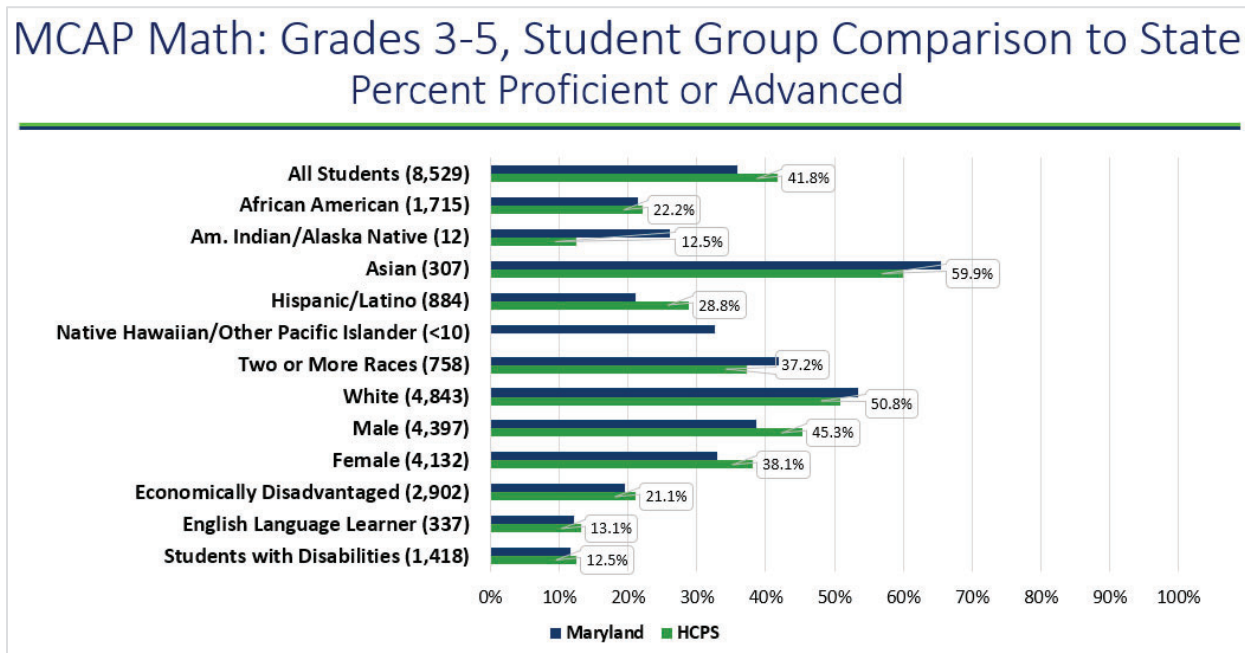
Figure 14 compares neighboring and similar counties to HCPS as well as results for the state. HCPS achieved a 41.8% proficiency rate, outperforming the state by six percentage points. HCPS outscored Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Cecil counties.

Figure 14. *MCAP Math: Grades 3-5, County Comparison*



HCPS continues to outperform state performance on MCAP math in the majority of student groups. Figure 15 HCPS continues to outperform state performance in many student groups.

Figure 15. *MCAP Math: Grades 3-5, Student Group Comparison to State*



Elementary Mathematics Findings:

Elementary mathematics results reflect HCPS's continued efforts to strengthen alignment among curriculum, instruction, assessment, and intervention. Data from the SNAP Assessment, Grade 1 Math Benchmark, and i-Ready Math Diagnostic provide teachers with information about students' foundational skills and readiness for grade-level instruction, while district Topic Assessments measure performance on grade-level standards.

HCPS continues to implement enVision Mathematics 2024 and expand the use of evidence-based instructional materials, practices, and programs. These efforts emphasize conceptual understanding, reasoning, and problem solving. Strengthening elementary mathematics instruction builds the foundational knowledge and skills needed for future success in Algebra.

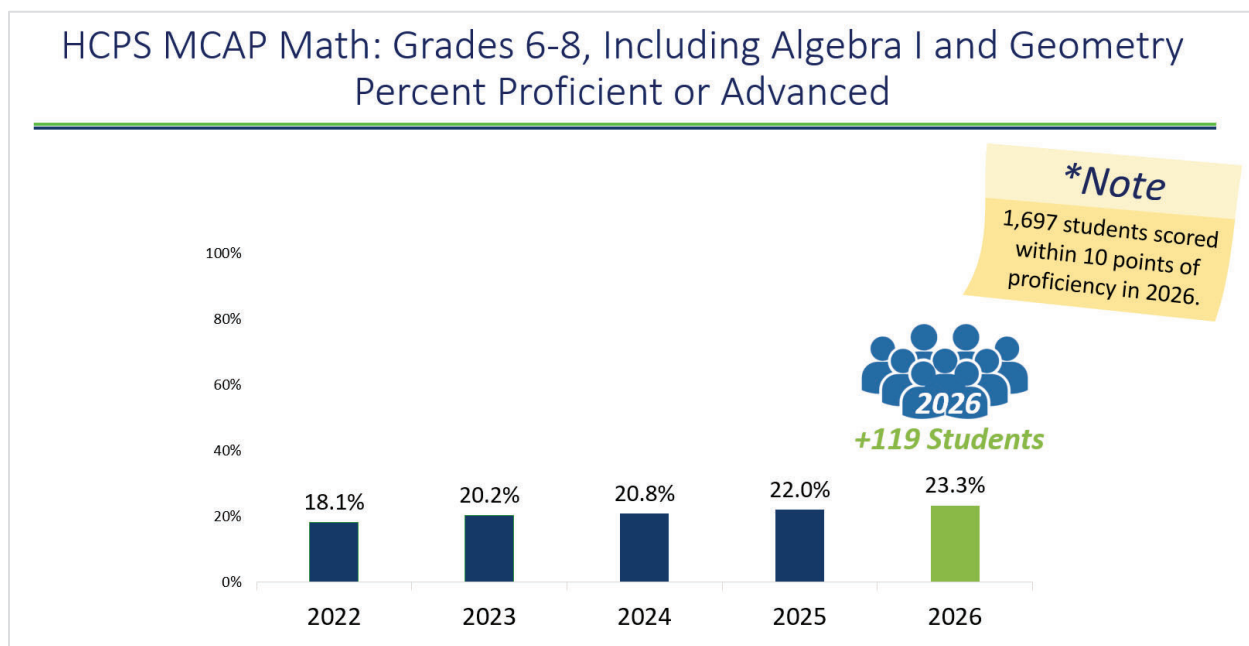
The following actions will guide improvement efforts during the 2026–2027 school year:

- **Strengthen Curriculum-Based Assessment and Data Use:** Implement districtwide Topic Assessments, including interview items in Kindergarten through second grade and reasoning and modeling items in grades three through five. Use MCAP-aligned rubrics and collaborative data analysis to identify student strengths, instructional needs, and next steps for learning.
- **Strengthen Tier 1 Mathematics Instruction:** Implement the Numeracy Playbook to establish a shared understanding of high-quality mathematics instruction, with an emphasis on conceptual understanding, reasoning, modeling, and discourse. Align instructional priorities, teacher and leader actions, and progress monitoring with School Performance and Achievement (SPA) processes.
- **Build Teacher Capacity:** Provide professional learning and direct teacher support focused on the revised Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards for Mathematics, effective implementation of enVision Mathematics 2024, and evidence-based instructional practices.
- **Strengthen Tiered Instruction:** Develop and implement a tiered instructional model that uses multiple sources of student data to identify needs, provide targeted instruction and intervention, and monitor student progress, with particular attention to foundational mathematics skills. Use the WIN (What I Need) Block as the structure that provides remediation, differentiation, and acceleration support for all students.

3.2 Middle School Results

In 2025-26, HCPS proficiency results at the middle school level, including Algebra I and Geometry, increased by 1.3 percentage points to a 23.3% proficiency rate. This is an increase of 119 students proficient from 2024-25. Figure 16 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 ten points of earning a proficient score in 2025-26.

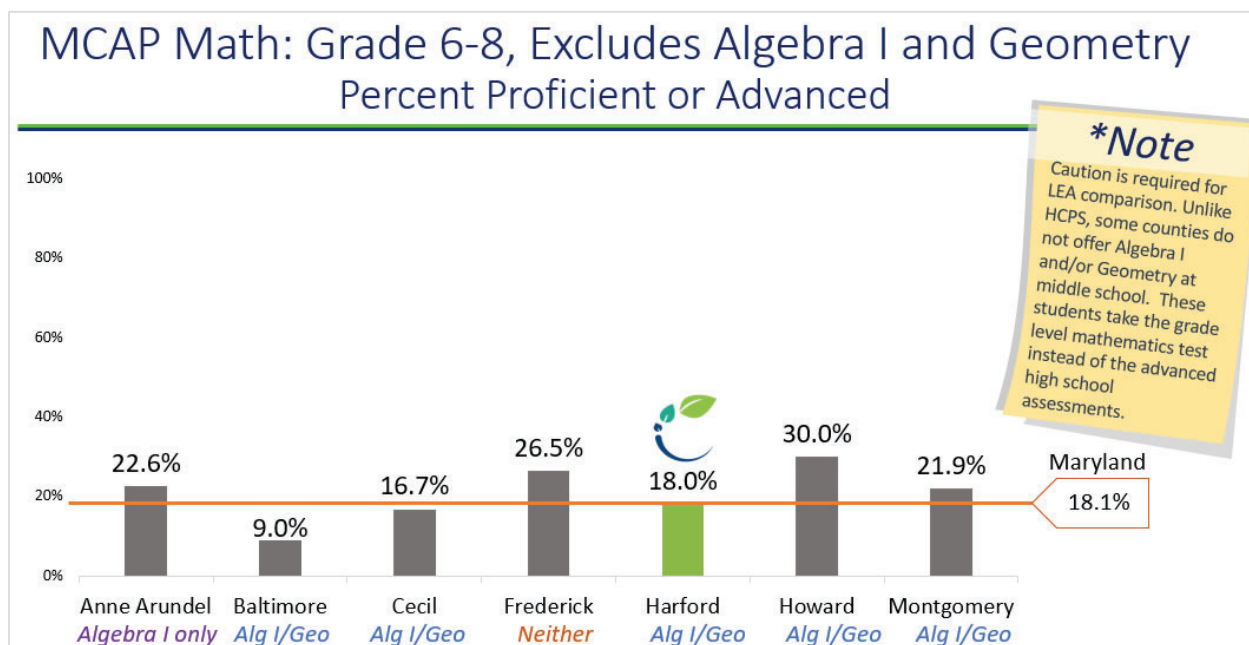
Figure 16. HCPS MCAP Math: Grades 6-8, Including Algebra I and Geometry



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 six through eight. 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.

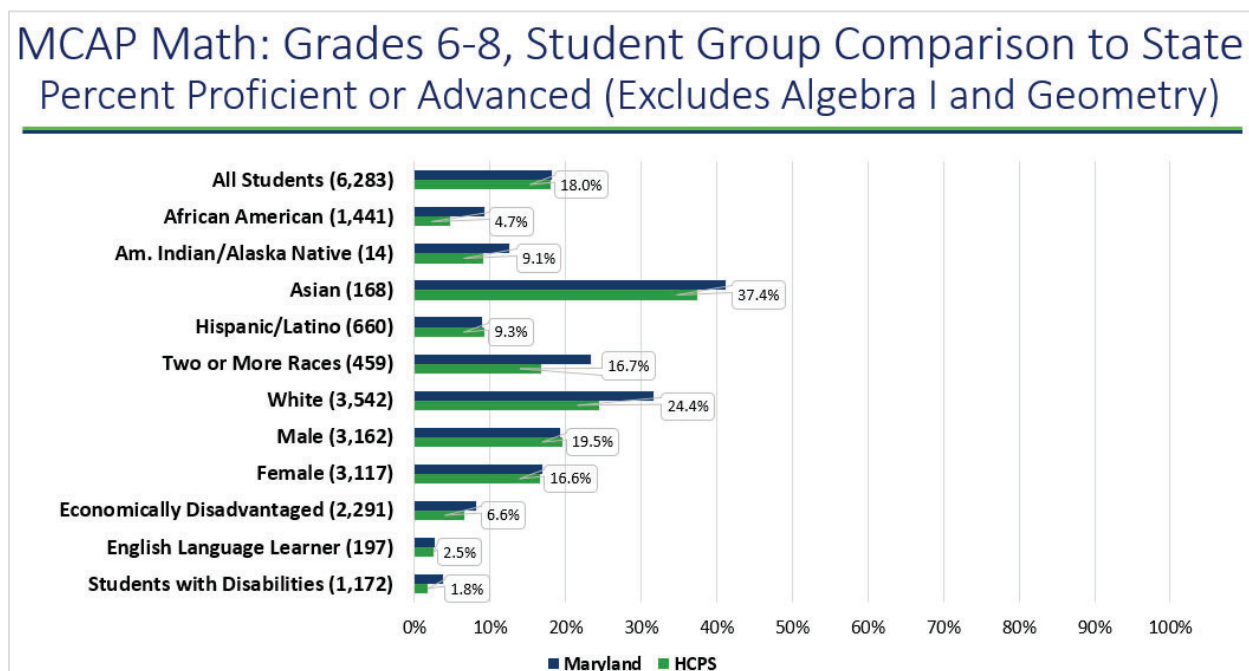
Therefore, a comparison between our similar and surrounding counties excludes students who took MCAP Algebra I and Geometry at the middle school level. Figure 17 indicates what counties offer Algebra I and/or Geometry at the middle school level. Since there is inconsistency in course offerings, caution comparing performance is strongly advised.

Figure 17. MCAP Math: Grade 6-8, Excludes Algebra I and Geometry



HCPS did not outperform Maryland in most student groups in grades six through eight. Again, caution drawing conclusions is recommended due to the inconsistency of course offerings at the middle school level. Figure 18 also excludes middle school students taking the MCAP Algebra I and Geometry assessments as that data is not publicly available.

Figure 18. MCAP Math: Grades 6-8, Student Group Comparison to State



Middle School Mathematics Findings:

Middle school mathematics results reflect HCPS's continued efforts to strengthen alignment among curriculum, instruction, assessment, and intervention. Data from the i-Ready Math Diagnostic provide teachers with information about students' foundational skills and readiness for grade-level instruction, while topic and unit assessments measure performance on grade-level standards.

HCPS continues to strengthen standards internalization and the implementation of high-quality instructional materials through the adoption of Illustrative Mathematics, a problem-based curriculum. These efforts align with the MSDE Mathematics Policy and comprehensive mathematics planning requirements, which emphasize conceptual understanding, reasoning, and problem solving. Strengthening middle school mathematics instruction builds on elementary foundations and prepares students for success in Algebra and subsequent mathematics coursework.

The following actions will guide improvement efforts during the 2026–2027 school year:

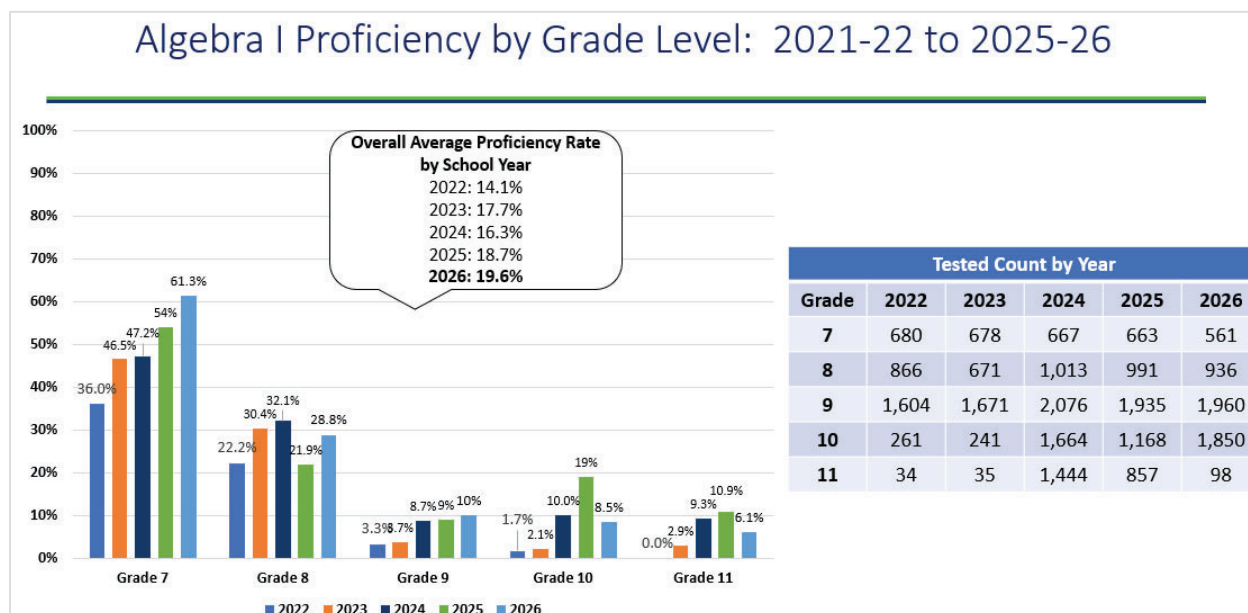
- **Strengthen Curriculum-Based Assessment and Data Use:** Implement districtwide Unit Assessments aligned with the revised Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards for Mathematics. Use collaborative data analysis to identify student strengths, instructional needs, and next steps for learning, with particular attention to reasoning and modeling.
- **Strengthen Tier 1 Mathematics Instruction:** Implement Illustrative Mathematics and the Numeracy Playbook to establish a shared understanding of high-quality mathematics instruction, with an emphasis on conceptual understanding, reasoning, modeling, and discourse. Align instructional priorities, teacher and leader actions, and progress monitoring with School Performance and Achievement (SPA) processes. Expand opportunities for students to apply mathematics through enhanced, interdisciplinary Project Based Learning (PBL) units.
- **Build Teacher Capacity:** Provide professional learning and direct teacher support focused on the revised Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards for Mathematics, purposeful implementation of Illustrative Mathematics, and evidence-based instructional practices.
- **Strengthen Tiered Instruction:** Implement a tiered instructional model that uses multiple sources of student data to identify needs, provide targeted instruction and intervention, and monitor student progress. Leverage the Advisory Block to provide responsive instruction, differentiation, and acceleration through i-Ready Personalized Instruction and teacher-led small-group instruction.

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. Approximately 21% of grade seven students took Algebra I in 2025-26, meaning many students took this high school-level course earlier than their peers statewide. HCPS's Algebra I participation rate among middle schoolers demonstrates the focus HCPS has on access to advanced coursework. Students taking Algebra I in grades seven or eight take the same MCAP Algebra I assessment as high school students.

Figure 19 indicates the proficiency rates of the MCAP Algebra I assessment by grade level. Proficiency increased in grades eight through nine. In 2025-26, HCPS students taking this assessment earned a proficiency rate of 19.6%, up 5.5 percentage points from 2021-22. Students in grade seven are showing steady growth and students in grades eight and nine made improvement. Test takers in grades ten and eleven are mostly students retaking the Algebra I assessments in an effort to meet proficiency and the CCR standard.

Figure 19. Algebra I Proficiency by Grade Level: 2021-22 to 2025-26



Algebra I Findings:

Algebra I results reflect HCPS's continued efforts to strengthen alignment among curriculum, instruction, assessment, and intervention. Data from the i-Ready Math Diagnostic provide teachers with information about students' foundational skills and readiness for Algebra I instruction, while school- and PLC-developed topic and unit assessments measure performance on course-level standards.

HCPS continues to strengthen standards internalization and the implementation of high-quality instructional materials and evidence-based instructional practices. These efforts emphasize conceptual understanding, reasoning, and problem solving. Strengthening Algebra I instruction prepares students for success in subsequent mathematics coursework and college and career readiness in mathematics.

The following actions will guide improvement efforts during the 2026 – 2027 school year:

- **Strengthen Curriculum-Based Assessment and Data Use:** Implement school- and PLC-developed Unit Assessments aligned with the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards for Mathematics, including reasoning and modeling items. Use collaborative data analysis to identify student strengths, instructional needs, and next steps for learning.
- **Strengthen Tier 1 Mathematics Instruction:** Implement the Numeracy Playbook for a shared understanding of high-quality mathematics instruction, emphasizing conceptual understanding, mathematical reasoning, modeling, and discourse. Align instructional priorities, teacher and leader actions, and progress monitoring.
- **Build Teacher Capacity:** Provide professional learning and direct teacher support focused on the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards for Mathematics, effective implementation of the Algebra I curriculum, and evidence-based instructional practices.
- **Strengthen Tiered Instruction:** Implement a tiered instructional model that uses multiple sources of student data to identify needs, provide targeted instruction and intervention, and monitor student progress. Leverage the Advisory Block in middle school and the Math Seminar course and framework in high school to provide responsive instruction, differentiation, and acceleration through i-Ready Personalized Instruction and teacher-led small-group instruction.
- **Prioritize Access to Middle School Math Standards prior to Algebra 1:** Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, the earliest that students can access Algebra 1 is grade eight. The revised acceleration model prioritizes mastery of all middle school math standards prior to enrollment in Algebra 1.

4. MCAP Social Studies Results

HCPS results for Social Studies assessments at the middle school level showed improvement from 42.6% in 2024-25 to 44.0% in 2025-26. 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 improved significantly in 2025-26, with 56.2% of students scoring proficient or advanced compared to 48.8% in the 2023-24 school year.

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

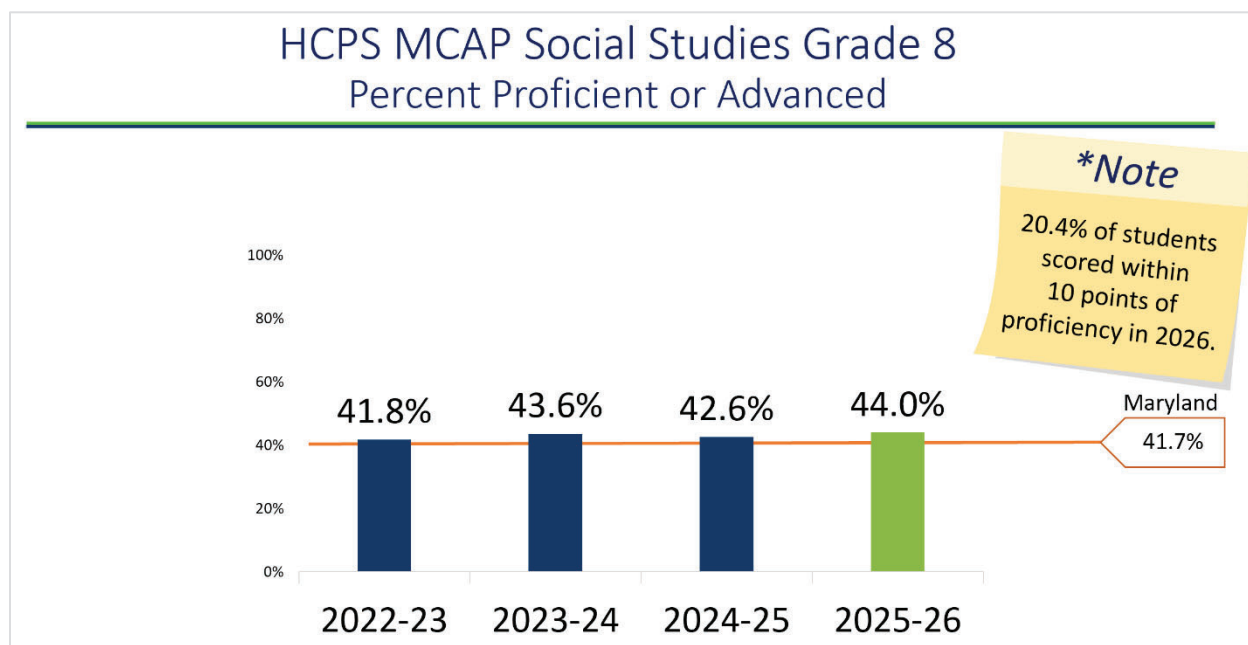
- **AP American Government:** Students enrolled in AP American Government and taking the AP Government exam are not required to participate in the MCAP American Government assessment. In 2025-26, 703 students took the AP American Government exam.
- **Assessment weighting:** The Grade 8 Social Studies assessment does not affect student grades, whereas the American Government assessment counts as 20% of the course grade.

4.1 Grade 8 Results

In 2025-26, HCPS Grade 8 Social Studies proficiency results remained above the state average, with 44.0% of students scoring proficient or advanced compared to 41.7% statewide. While proficiency increased from the prior year, 20.4% of students scored within ten points of proficiency, demonstrating that many students are close to meeting expectations.

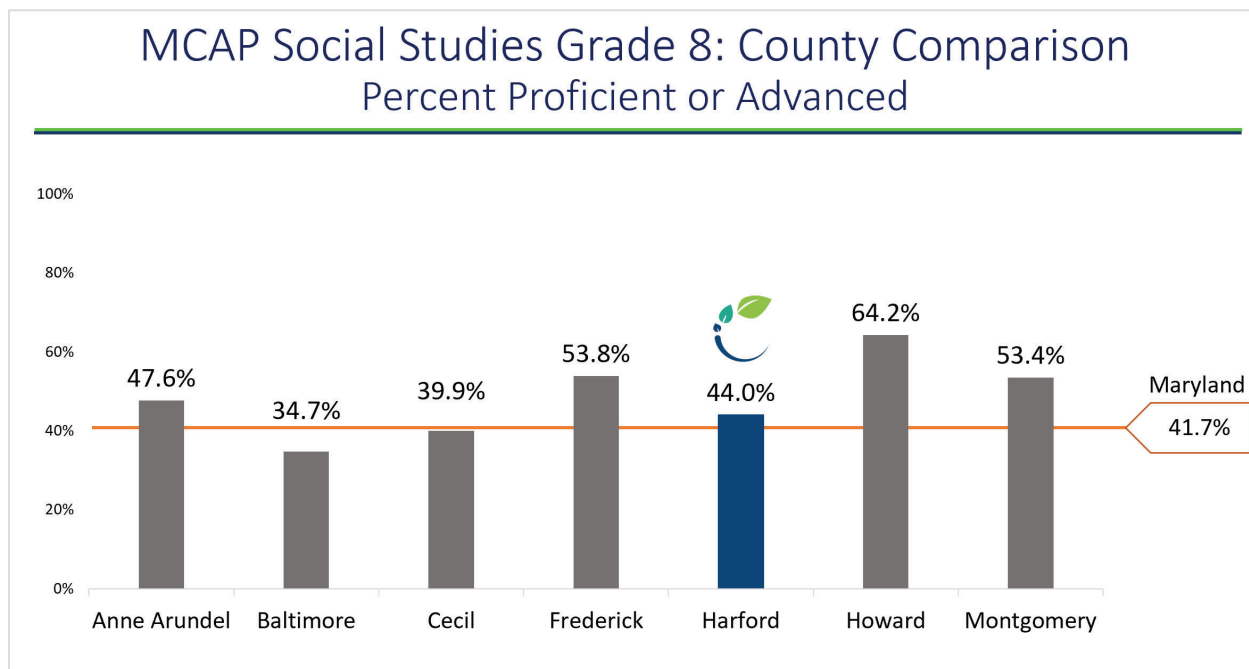
The Grade 8 Social Studies assessment has only counted toward state accountability measures for the past three school years as this assessment was first administered in the 2022-23 school year. Figure 20 summarizes HCPS Grade 8 Social Studies performance over this period.

Figure 20. HCPS MCAP Social Studies Grade 8



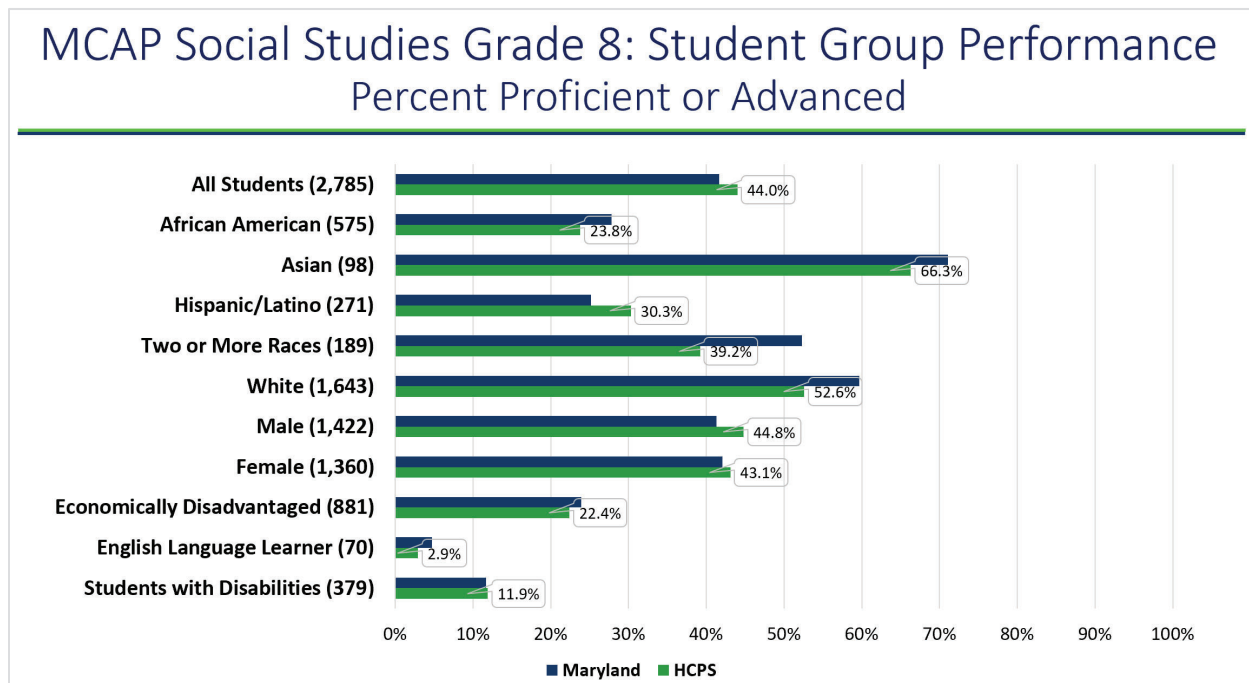
The graphic below compares neighboring and similar counties to HCPS as well as results for the state. HCPS achieved a 44.0% proficiency rate, outperforming the state by 2.3%.

Figure 21. MCAP Social Studies Grade 8: County Comparison



HCPS continues to outperform state performance on MCAP Social Studies in most student groups (Figure 22).

Figure 22. MCAP Social Studies Grade 8: Student Group Performance



Social Studies Grade 8 Findings:

The Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) Grade 8 Social Studies assessment measures students' mastery of Maryland's College and Career Ready Standards in history, geography, civics, and economics, with a strong emphasis on source analysis, evidence-based argumentation, disciplinary literacy, and historical reasoning. In 2025-26, HCPS students achieved a proficiency rate of 44.0%, exceeding the state average of 41.7%. Additionally, 20.4% of students scored within ten points of proficiency, indicating that many students are approaching mastery of the assessed standards.

This cohort of grade eight students represents the final group to complete the former grades six and seven Social Studies curriculum prior to the implementation of HCPS's newly developed and vertically aligned middle school Social Studies program. Because the previous curriculum was not designed to align with the revised Maryland Social Studies standards and the MCAP assessment framework, the district intentionally provided additional instructional supports, resources, and professional learning to strengthen students' readiness for the assessment. These efforts focused on the disciplinary practices emphasized on MCAP, including source evaluation, evidence-based writing, historical reasoning, and civic analysis.

During the 2025-26 school year, HCPS also collaborated with the Maryland State Department of Education to strengthen students' reasoning and argumentation skills through professional learning centered on deliberate teacher moves that make disciplinary thinking visible and support students in constructing evidence-based claims. This work reinforced inquiry-based instruction and built greater consistency in the teaching of historical thinking skills across schools.

It is important to note that the Grade 8 Social Studies assessment serves as a measure of school and district accountability and does not affect course grades or promotion decisions for individual students. As a result, continued efforts to strengthen student engagement with all assessment components, particularly written-response questions that measure higher-order thinking and disciplinary reasoning, remain an important area of focus. Looking forward, HCPS anticipates that future results will increasingly reflect both the impact of the newly aligned grades six and seven curriculum and the district's ongoing work to strengthen historical reasoning, literacy, and civic inquiry skills.

4.2 American Government Results

The MCAP American Government assessment serves as the final exam for the course, contributing 20% of a student's overall grade. Performance improved in 2025–26, with 56.2% (Figure 23) of students scoring proficient or advanced compared to 48.8% in the 2023-24 school year. Proficiency in the 2024-25 school year was an outlier because a small number of students participated due to course realignment in the HCPS social studies course sequence at the high school level. HCPS outperformed Maryland overall by 10.2 percentage points and also outperformed most other similar districts (Figure 24).

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 23. HCPS American Government

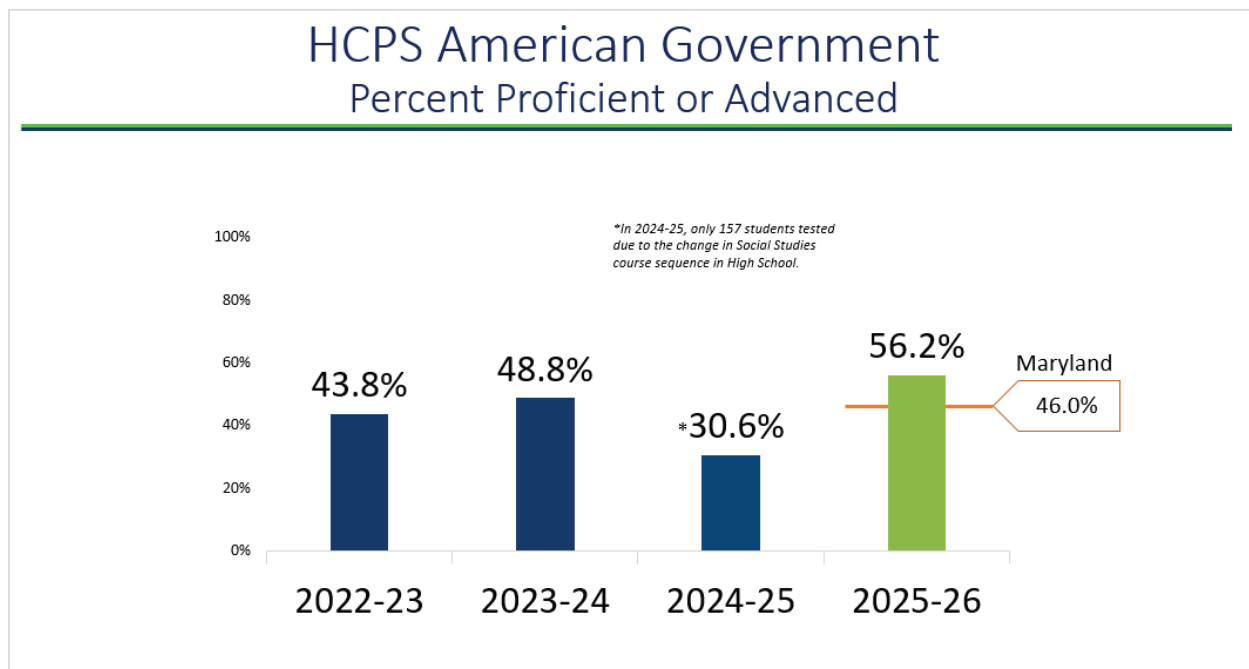
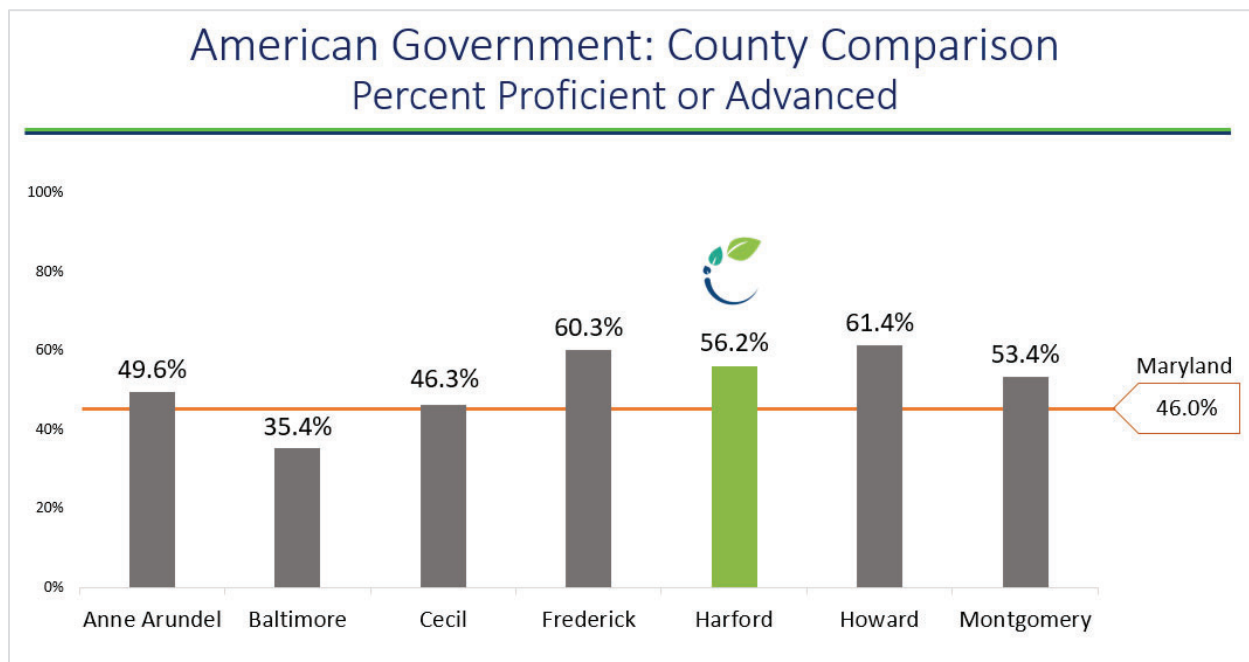


Figure 24. MCAP American Government: County Comparison



American Government Findings:

Performance on the MCAP American Government assessment improved substantially in 2025-26, with 56.2% of students scoring proficient or advanced, compared with 48.8% in 2023-24. HCPS outperformed the state average by 10.2 percentage points and exceeded the performance of many comparable districts. The 2025-26 school year also marked the first full year of implementation of the district's revised high school Social Studies course sequence.

The re-sequenced program was intentionally designed to create a more coherent progression of learning by ensuring students develop a stronger foundation in United States history before enrolling in American Government. This structure provides students with additional opportunities to build historical knowledge, disciplinary literacy skills, and civic understanding prior to engaging with the more abstract concepts and institutions studied in Government.

While caution should continue to be exercised when comparing results across years due to prior course-sequence transitions, the first year of full implementation coincided with a notable increase in proficiency on the American Government assessment. The results suggest that placing Government within a more developmentally appropriate instructional sequence may better support students' ability to analyze public policy, evaluate constitutional principles, and engage in evidence-based civic reasoning.

These findings reinforce the importance of vertical alignment and intentional curriculum design. HCPS will continue to monitor student performance data and instructional practices to ensure the revised sequence supports sustained growth in civic knowledge, disciplinary thinking, and college, career, and civic readiness.

5. MCAP 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 2025–26, 39.8% of grade five students scored proficient or advanced on the MISA Science assessment, which measures science standards taught in grades three through five. 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 five and eight opens the first full week in March, which is the earliest assessment of the four core content areas.

At the middle school level, 37.5% of grade eight students scored proficient or advanced on the MISA Science assessment, which assesses standards taught in grades six through eight. Statewide, 30.9% 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 nine, 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.

5.1 Grade 5 Results

In 2025–26, HCPS MISA Grade 5 Science proficiency results remained above the state average, with 39.8% of students scoring proficient or advanced compared to 32.4% statewide. HCPS growth was significant with an 8.4 percentage point increase in proficiency. Figure 25 summarizes HCPS MISA Grade 5 performance.

Figure 25. *HCPS MISA: Grade 5*

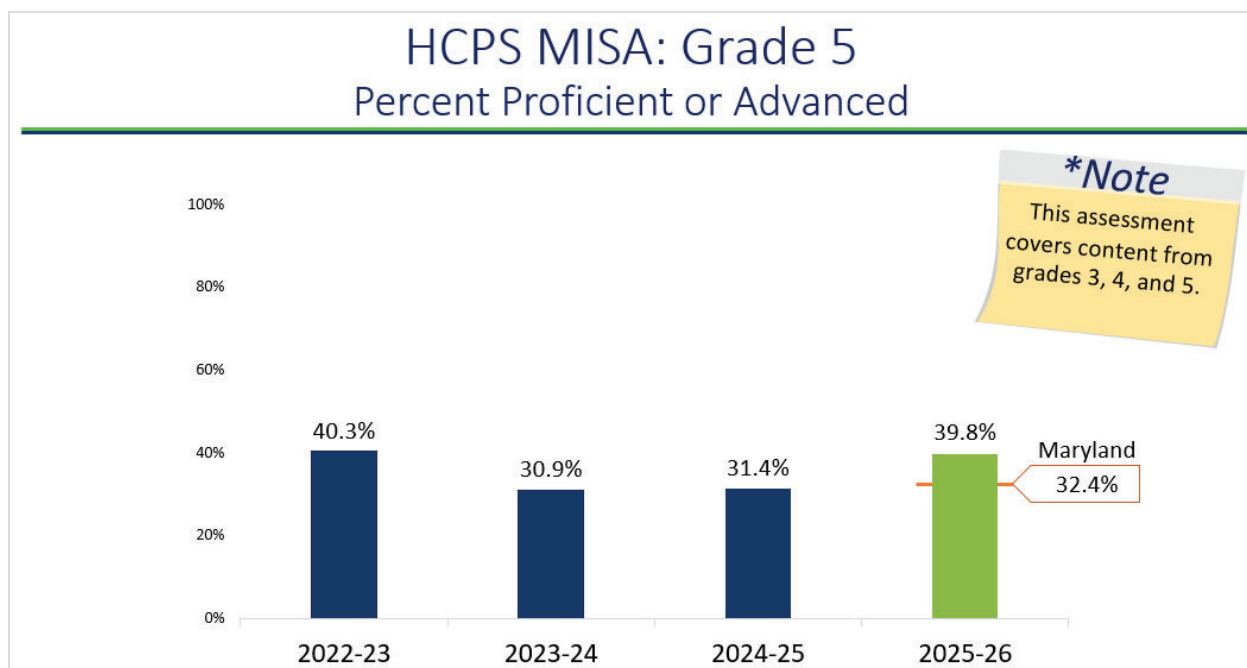
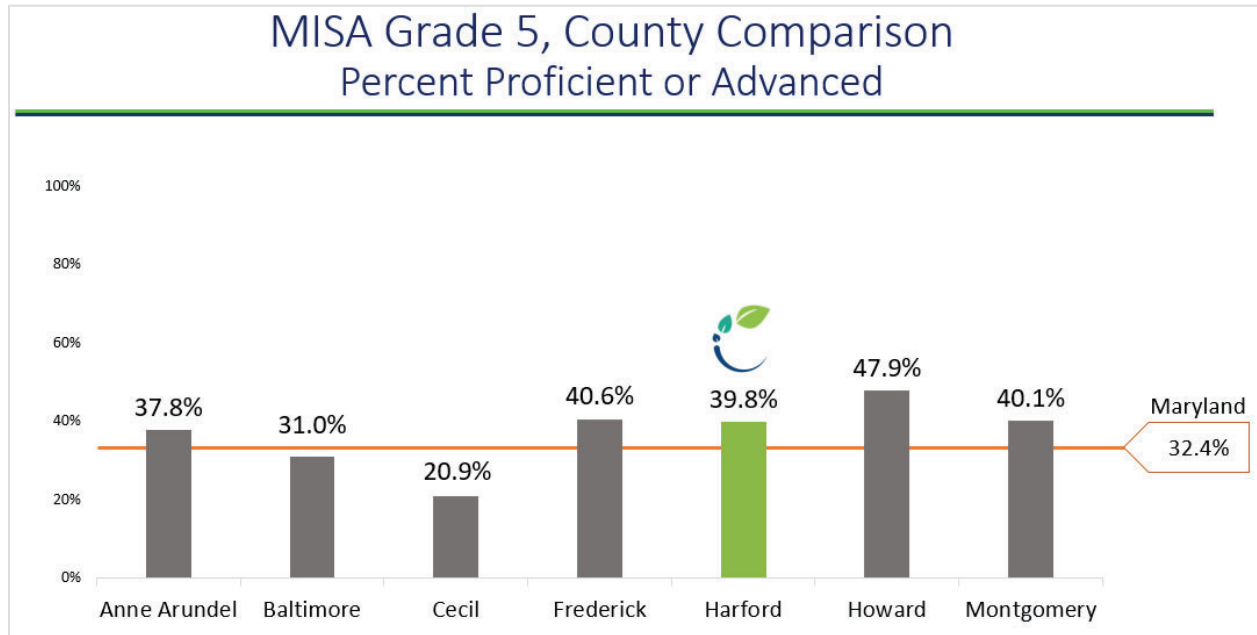


Figure 26 compares neighboring and similar counties to HCPS as well as results for the state.

Figure 26. 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 2025-26 all elementary teachers of science were required to use InnerOrbit summative assessments 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 2025–26, HCPS MISA Grade 8 Science proficiency results remained above the state average, with 37.5% of students scoring proficient or advanced compared to 30.9% statewide. HCPS students demonstrated a 2.4 percentage point increase in proficiency from the prior year. Figure 27 summarizes HCPS MISA Grade 8 performance.

Figure 27. HCPS MISA: Grade 8

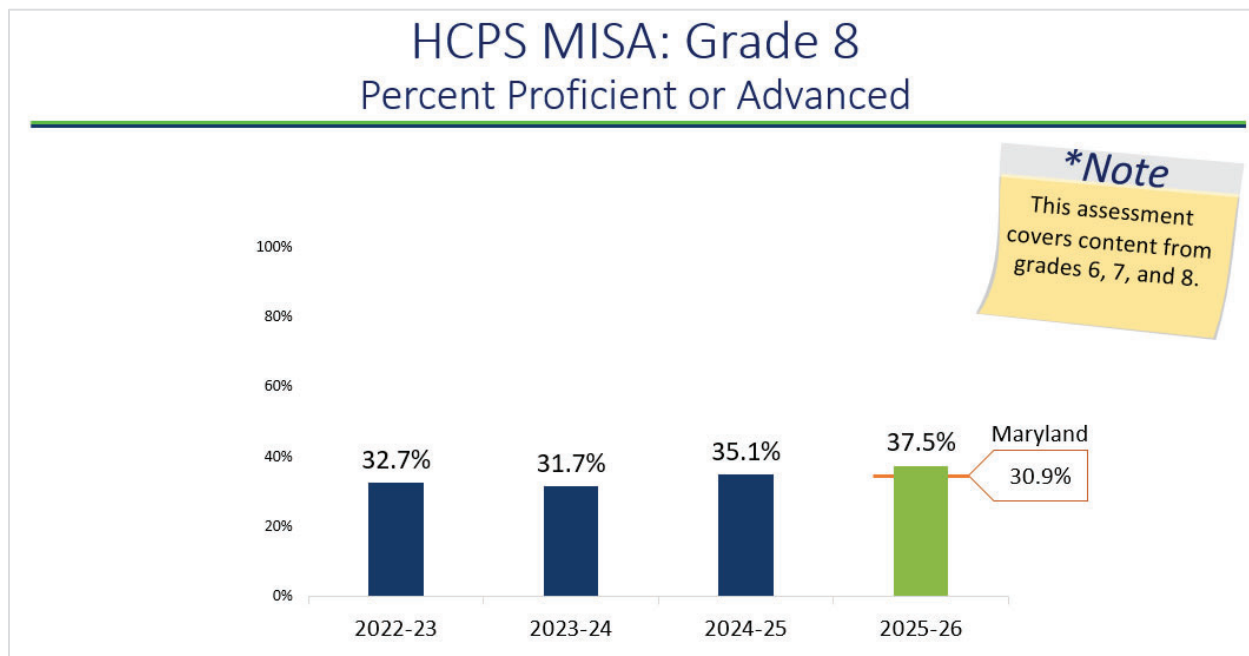
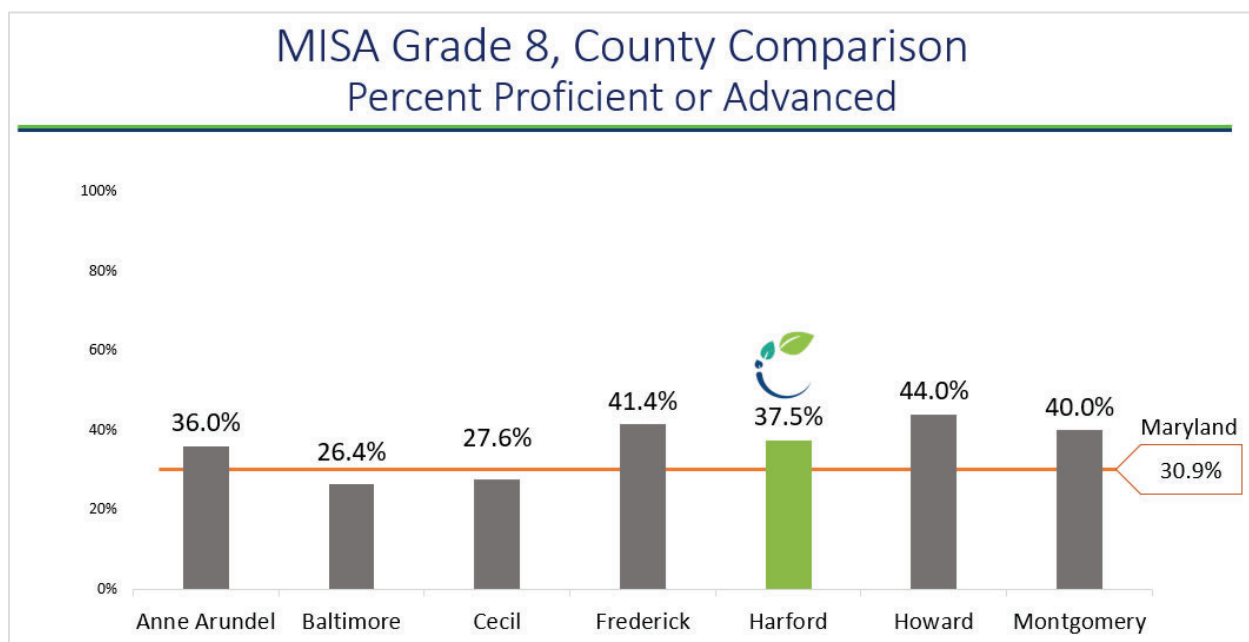


Figure 28 below compares neighboring and similar counties to HCPS as well as results for the state. HCPS outscored Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Cecil counties.

Figure 28. MISA Grade 8, County Comparison



MISA Grade 8 Findings:

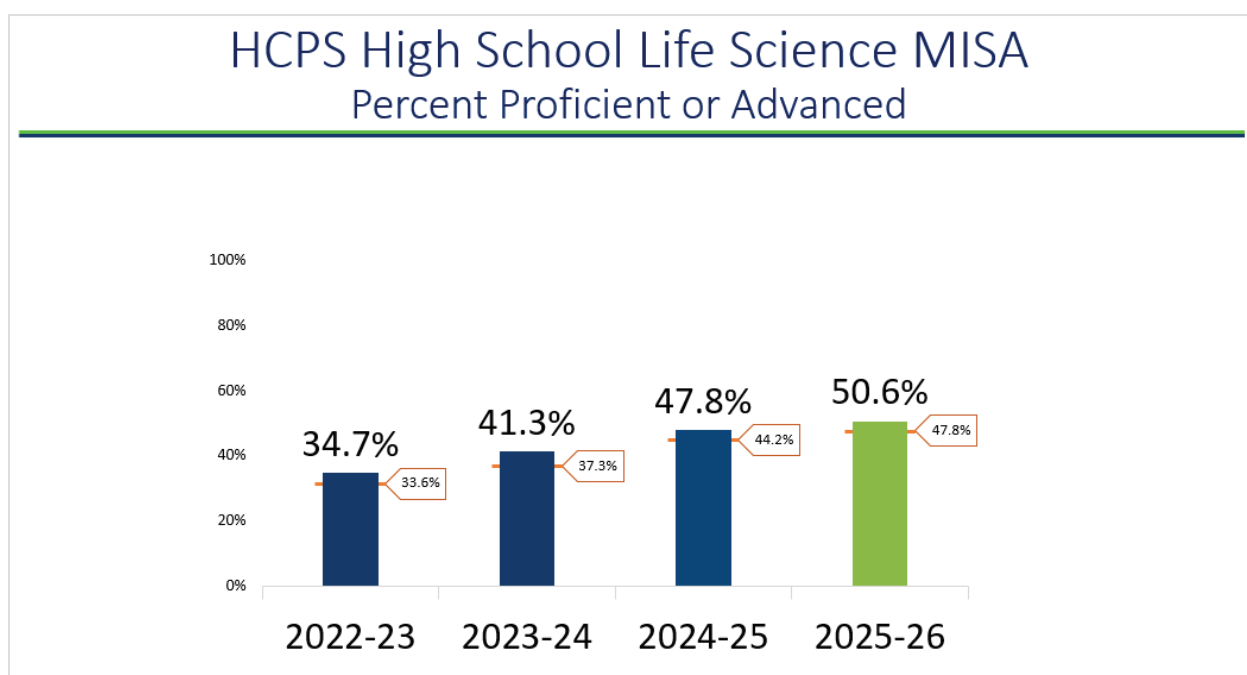
Grade 8 science mastery is vital for success in high school science courses. Students with solid middle school performance are better positioned for rigorous advanced coursework, including AP or dual-credit offerings. Increasing MISA 8 proficiency can be attributed to a variety of factors. During the 2025-26 school year, teachers were required to administer InnerOrbit summative assessments for each unit of instruction across the tested grade levels. These assessments include MISA-aligned questions, and offer opportunities for students to review content from prior units or years. Students engaged in a rigorous, Project Based Learning unit, and teachers received professional development to build capacity with the Crosscutting Concepts, which continues to be a county-wide department focus. 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 2025–26, with 50.6% of students scoring proficient or advanced, compared to 47.8% in the previous year, a 2.8-point increase. HCPS outperformed Maryland by 2.8 percentage points.

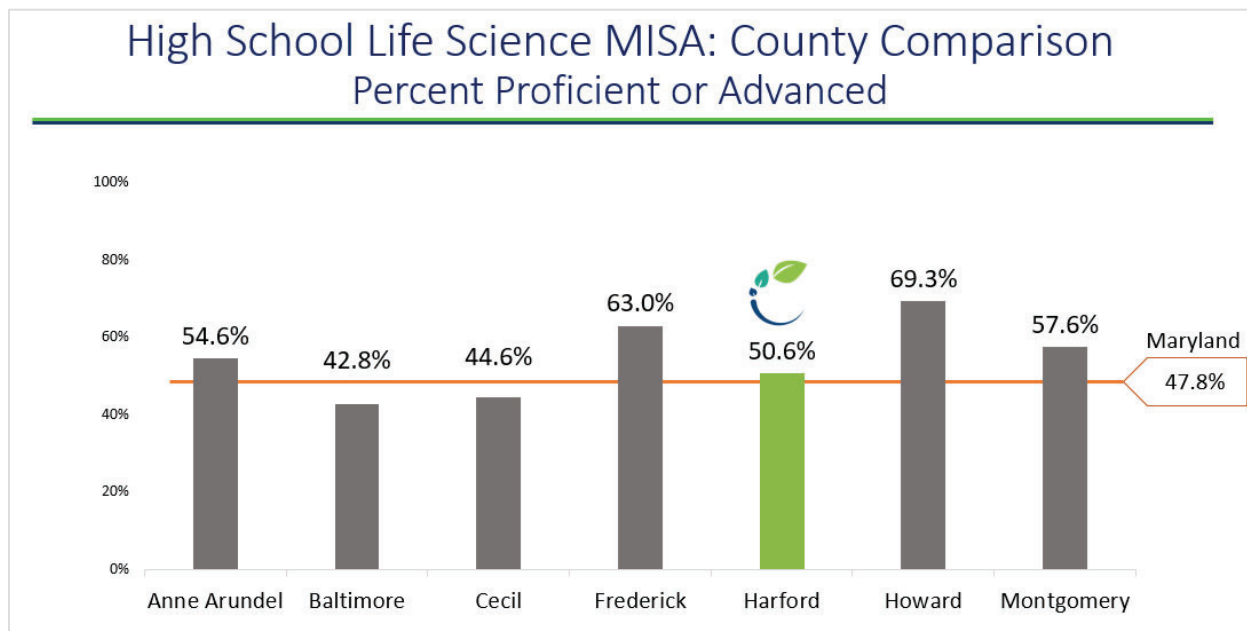
The Life Science MISA assessment serves as the final exam for the high school biology course, measuring life science standards. Passing the biology course is a graduation requirement for all Maryland students. This assessment is required for all students and counts as 20% of a student's overall final 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 (see Figure 29.)

Figure 29. *HCPS High School Life Science MISA*



In figure 30, HCPS has outperformed Baltimore and Cecil in LS MISA in the 2025-26 school year.

Figure 30. HCPS High School Life Science MISA, County Comparison



High School Life Science Findings:

Student success on the LS MISA can be attributed to several factors including the third year of impact on student grades. Student performance on the Life Science MISA directly impacts student grades, increasing student buy-in for success. All life science teachers have access to InnerOrbit assessment items and were required to give the common assessment for each instructional unit. All secondary science teachers received professional development in the Crosscutting Concepts at the start of the 2025-26 school year, and it continues to be a focus during this upcoming year.

6. Findings and Implications

The 2025–26 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 in grades K through three are universally screened three times a year utilizing the DIBELS, 8th edition assessment for literacy. Students in grades K to one take locally designed math diagnostic assessments three times per year. i-Ready Inform is also used for reading and math to support instructional improvement throughout the year. 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 and College and Career Readiness.
- 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.

7. References

- Maryland State Department of Education. (2025). *Maryland Report Card*. Retrieved from <https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/>
- HCPS Strategic Plan
- HCPS Blueprint Plan