



## MSDE BULLETIN

Vol. 19, No. 1, January 16, 2008

### **MARYLAND'S STATE EDUCATION SYSTEM RANKS AMONG NATION'S VERY BEST**

The steadfast quality of Maryland public schools ranks them third in the nation according to an independent national report released last week.

*Education Week*, the nation's leading education newspaper, found that Maryland's state education system—along with systems in Massachusetts and New York—is “leading the pack.” The three were the only systems in the nation deserving of a “B” grade in the newspaper's annual “Quality Counts” study. At the same time, all three state school systems have been led by long-term state superintendents.

Maryland had the most consistent quality of any state system on the six categories assessed in the report. Both student performance and education policies, as in the other two leading states, reflect more than a decade of work on a preK-12 curriculum; state accountability and standards; and work on school readiness, high school reform, and preparation for college and the workplace.

The publication's detailed analysis of state education systems rated academic achievement in Maryland to be second in the nation, just behind Massachusetts. Moreover, it found that Maryland students have a much better chance for success than those in most other states.

“We have taken very seriously our work over the past sixteen years to build a coherent approach to school reform in Maryland. The ‘Quality Counts’ report affirms Maryland's leadership among the nation's most desirable places to live and work,” said State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick. “Maryland students, parents, educators, and taxpayers have much to be proud of when reviewing this report. Our education system's strength augurs well for continued state job growth through base realignment and other business opportunities.”

*Education Week* rated states in the following six performance and policy areas: Chance for Success; K-12 Achievement; Standards, Assessment, and Accountability; Transitions and Alignment; Teaching Profession; and School Finance. Maryland's top individual grades were awarded in Chance for Success, K-12 Achievement, and Transitions and Alignment.

**“Leading the pack, three states received B's: Maryland, Massachusetts, and New York...”**

**--Quality Counts, 2008,  
*Education Week*, January 10, 2008**

Chance for Success captures a number of factors, including early childhood preparation, school performance, and educational and economic outcomes in adulthood.

Maryland received high marks for K-12 achievement, ranking second in the nation with a strong showing on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, high school graduation rates, and Advanced Placement (AP) performance.

The national average for this category was a D+, in comparison with B grades for Maryland and Massachusetts. Maryland was particularly noted for its AP performance, which the report ranked as the nation's best.

**(Continued on Next Page)**

### **AWARD NOMINATIONS ACCEPTED THROUGH JANUARY 23 FOR COMCAST PARENT AWARD**

Know a parent who deserves statewide recognition for his or her work to improve public education? Nominate him or her today!

The Maryland State Department of Education is still accepting nominations for the Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award. **Completed applications must be postmarked by January 23, 2008.**

An eligible nominee is a parent of a child in a Maryland public school who has significantly influenced public education within the last 24 months through his or her involvement in communication, volunteering, learning, decision making or collaboration.

Learn more and download an application at [www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/audiences/parents/pima.htm](http://www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/audiences/parents/pima.htm). Applications are available in English, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese, and French.

The Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award is a new annual award that will recognize one state winner and one parent from each Maryland county and Baltimore City for their outstanding contributions to public education.

The winner will be announced at an awards event hosted by Comcast in April 2008. ■

## **MARYLAND'S STATE EDUCATION SYSTEM RANKS AMONG NATION'S VERY BEST (Cont.)**

This is the first year that *Education Week* graded Transitions and Alignment. This area assesses states on efforts to align K-12 schooling with preK, higher education, and the workplace, and whether the education systems work coherently. Maryland received a B+, third in the nation. The average grade was a C.

As Maryland continues to implement the High School Assessment program, it is notable that the top five states in the "Quality Counts" report all have some form of high school exit exam in place. Also significant is that the top three states have state board-appointed chiefs with the first-, third-, and fifth-longest tenures of the nation's 25 state board-appointed superintendents.

This indicates that state education issues cannot be solved by quick fixes. The most successful states have had long histories in the school reform movement. Maryland, for example, has been a leader in standards and accountability for more than a decade.

Maryland's sustained approach to education reform is integrated rather than piecemeal. For example, it is the first state to bring childcare programs under the State Department of Education, highlighting the importance of early childhood education and preparation for the rigors of today's K-12 classroom. The state's education system stretches a long way, also serving adult learners and young adults with disabilities.

The new *Education Week* report has generated a significant amount of press throughout the country. *The Washington Post* noted that "Quality Counts" "is widely considered to be the most thorough evaluation of school performance because more than 150 data points are used in the report."

The *Post* contacted Christopher B. Swanson, director of the research center at Editorial Projects in Education, the nonprofit organization that publishes *Education Week*. Swanson said he thought it was important for the publication to issue grades as a way of summarizing the many factors that the report takes into account.

Swanson said that of the highest ranked states, Maryland stood out for its strong performances across the board, with no failing grades in any category.

"No state is at the top of the nation on everything, but Maryland comes as close as we've seen to a consistent outstanding performer overall," he told the *Post* on Jan. 10, just after the report was released.

*Education Week* has often spotlighted the strength of Maryland schools in "Quality Counts." The highly regarded report, now in its 12th year, has gone through some major changes over the

### **The Six "Quality Counts" Indices**

	Grade	Score
<b>Chance for Success</b>		
Maryland	B+	88.2
Nation	C+	78.4
<b>K-12 Achievement</b>		
Maryland	B	82.5
Nation	D+	69.4
<b>Standards, Assessment, and Accountability</b>		
Maryland	B	83.9
Nation	B	83.6
<b>Transitions and Alignment</b>		
Maryland	B+	89.3
Nation	C	73.3
<b>Teaching Profession</b>		
Maryland	C-	72.0
Nation	C	73.0
<b>School Finance</b>		
Maryland	B	84.9
Nation	C+	77.6

*Source: Education Week*

past two years, while continuing to assess state progress in a variety of areas key to classroom success.

Most of the state-level data gathered by *Education Week* comes from a policy survey of the states conducted in the summer and fall of 2007. In addition, the publication draws on state-level data from such organizations as the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Bureau of the Census, and the American Federation of Teachers. ■

#### **MSDE BULLETIN**

#### **OFFICE OF ACADEMIC POLICY**

**Nancy S. Grasmick State Education Building  
200 West Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201**

**On the web: [www.marylandpublicschools.org](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org)**

**Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools  
Ronald A. Peiffer, Deputy State Superintendent  
Bill Reinhard, Editor**

#### **MSDE-TV Video:**

**<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/newsroom/videos>**