



Harford County Public Schools

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Harford shows progress in statewide testing

Vast majority of public elementary and middle schools exceed proficiency criteria to achieve AYP status

Most recent scores on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) show Harford County Public Schools improved in every category compared to the previous year, and local scores remain significantly higher than state averages. The MSA test is taken by third through eighth graders in the subject areas of reading and math.

In Harford, 11 of 32 public elementary schools improved their composite reading scores by five percent or more; and ten of the 32 schools saw their math composite scores increase by at least five percent. For the 2008-09 school year, more than 90 percent of Harford's public elementary schools achieved AYP status, while half of their middle school counterparts met the proficiency criteria.

"Middle School Improvement Teams will be working with their school communities to analyze individual student data in an effort to identify what interventions or acceleration programs will best serve the needs of individual students," commented David Volrath, executive director of secondary education. "As our school system continues to move toward ensuring that all students meet and exceed state standards, we realize that our teachers continue to work hard in differentiating instruction."

This year, nine Harford County Public Schools – Joppatowne, Riverside, and Bakerfield elementary schools; and Aberdeen, Edgewood, Magnolia, Fallston, North Harford and Havre de Grace middle schools did not reach their Annual Measurable Outcomes (AMO) in at least one of the subgroups; in almost all cases, each school met in all subgroups but one.

William Paca/Old Post Road and Hall's Cross Roads elementary schools, both of whom failed to reach their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals for the 2006-07 school year, achieved and, in most areas, exceeded proficiency in both reading and math this year. Harford County public elementary schools realized a 91% achievement of meeting AYP.

Special education students' reading proficiency rates increased in every grade level. In mathematics, special education students achieved a proficiency rate gain of 10% in grade 3 and positive changes in all but one of the other grades. Even in light of the significant increases in the special education sub-group, all but one school, out of the nine Harford public schools that failed to meet AYP, fell short only in the area of special education.

“Through the offices of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Office of School Improvement, we will provide additional support for data analysis and interventions to the school improvement teams in order to facilitate focused assistance to those smaller populations that are in need,” stated Pat Skebeck, executive director of elementary education, in response to steps taken to assist schools in improvement. “We also designate additional funds to support each schools intervention program, to include necessities such as transportation.”

The Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires all schools, school systems, and states to show that students are making AYP in reading, math, and one other criteria. In Maryland, student progress in reading and math is measured by the Maryland School Assessment (MSA). The state uses attendance rates for elementary and middle schools as the other measure.

To meet AYP in Maryland, all students within a school, as well as eight student sub-groups within that school (African-American, Asian, White, Hispanic, free and reduced price meal (FARMS), limited English proficiency, and special education students) must reach the annual achievement targets in both reading and math.

New this year, Maryland implemented a pilot program for Differentiated Accountability under NCLB in order to maintain continuity and strengthen current intervention efforts. Maryland is one of six states selected by the U.S. Secretary of Education (USDE) to implement the pilot program. This pilot will allow the State to direct resources and interventions to specific needs and take a more aggressive approach to those schools that are chronically underperforming.

Under the new pilot program, schools will be identified in two pathways:

- Comprehensive Needs or
- Focused needs.

The Comprehensive Needs pathway is intended for schools that do not make the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) in the “all students” category for reading or math and/or have not met targets in three or more subgroups for both subjects.

The Focused Needs Schools, the two Harford County schools in need of improvement fall in this category, achieved proficiency in the “all students” category in reading and math but have not achieved in both subjects in one or two sub-groups, or the attendance rate, which serves as the other academic indicator for elementary and middle schools. Harford County schools have never had an issue with achieving the attendance indicator.

“We are pleased with the significant progress made by most of our students in regards to the MSA testing for our third through eighth graders,” said Superintendent Jacqueline C. Haas. “The improvements in our special education subgroup scores made during the last five years of MSA testing, indicates the school system is on the right track for success.”

Only two schools deemed in improvement, as defined by the Differentiated Accountability Pilot, have been placed in the focused developing and priority pathways. Aberdeen Middle School is placed in the 2009 Developing Schools Stage of the Focused Needs Pathway. Similarly, Edgewood Middle School will be placed in the Priority School Stage of the same pathway.

As No Child Left Behind continues to be phased in through the 2013-14 school year, the annual targets will rise incrementally until 100 percent of students in all test areas and in all sub-groups are required to meet standards.

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