



Harford County Public Schools

NEWS RELEASE

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Harford schools closing achievement gap

HSA scores improve in nearly all subgroups in both reading and math

More than 90 percent of Harford high schools met improvement targets, known as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), according to data released Friday by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Many schools made significant gains on the High School Assessments (HSAs) in critical areas for both reading and math.

This year, nine Harford County Public comprehensive high schools – Edgewood, Joppatowne, Aberdeen, Harford Technical, Bel Air, Fallston, C. Milton Wright, North Harford, and Havre de Grace -- and the John Archer School met, and in most cases, exceeded their Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) in all subgroup categories. HSA results will be published for Patterson Mill High School in 2008-09 however they will not be subject to AYP until their first graduating class exits in 2010.

The Alternative Education Center exceeded their AMOs in both reading and math, but failed to make AYP due to their graduation rate. Now entering their fifth year as a “School in Improvement”, the school will now be placed in Restructuring Planning as part of the Proposed Differentiated Pathways set forth by the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Both Aberdeen and Edgewood High schools made AYP this year and could exit the Improvement process if they achieve AYP status for a second consecutive year in the 2008-09 school year.

In Maryland, to meet AYP all students within a school, as well as eight student subgroups within that school (African American, Asian, White, Hispanic, free and reduced price meals (FARMS), limited English proficiency, and special education students) must reach the AMO in both reading and math, and one other criteria. For elementary and middle schools, the state uses attendance rates as the other measure; and at the high school level, graduation rates are assessed. Harford’s graduation rate remains high at 86.72 percent and the attendance rate remains steady at 94.8 percent.

“We are seeing high school students throughout Maryland reaching for a higher level of achievement,” said State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick. “Educators and parents are working together to make sure students are succeeding.”

Since 2003, test scores across the system in all race/ethnicity and special services categories in both reading and math have continued on an upward trend. This year, the FaRMS subgroup realized the most significant increase. In reading the group realized an increase of nearly 10 points with a score of 65.9 in 2007 and 75.0 in 2008; and in math, the group increased 6.2 points from the previous year.

Harford County Public Schools Achieved AYP for elementary, middle, and high schools but failed to achieve AMOs for Special Education reading and mathematics. The Special Education subgroup continues as an area of

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focus, steadily increasing scores each year in both areas, but failing to meet annual improvement measures.

Meanwhile, Harford students exceeded last year's results in the Maryland School Assessments (MSA) in every category compared to the previous year; and scores remain significantly higher than the state average. The MSA tests – along with two of the High School Assessments (HSA) – are used as a part of the NCLB accountability program.

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.

“Our teachers, school administrators, and other instructional staff are proud of the significant improvements made by our students,” said Jacqueline C. Haas, Superintendent of Harford County Public Schools. “The gains were achieved by intentionally focused work with students, especially in critical areas, to reflect the individual needs of each child.”

According to MSDE, individual high school scores, system-level AYP, and state-level AYP data will be made available in the coming weeks on the MSDE report card web site (www.MdReportCard.org).

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