



Harford County Public Schools

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Harford class of '09 shows solid HSA progress

Seniors close to achieving core course proficiency; ready to graduate

Harford County Public School twelfth grade students are demonstrating a high rate of proficiency on the Maryland High School Assessments (HSA) in four subject areas; English, Algebra, Government, and Biology . The proficiency status of students following the spring 2008, administration of HSA was released today by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) following their analysis of trends in performance.

The class of 2009 will be the first graduating class required to pass the HSAs in all four subject areas or to earn a composite score of 1602 scale score points in order to receive a Maryland diploma. Harford County exceeded the state average by three points with nearly 93 percent of seniors having completed the requirement as of May 2008. Of the 2,659 Harford County seniors, only 190 students still have tests to take or pass before the end of the year. With three administrations of HSA scheduled this school year, state officials project that the class of 2009 appears to be fully on their way to graduating on time this May.

More than half of all Harford County high schools achieved 90 percent or more of their seniors having completed the HSA requirement for graduation. Bel Air High School outpacing all of their local counterparts with 98.2 percent of its seniors having passed the HSAs; C. Milton Wright, Fallston, Harford Technical, and North Harford also scored in the top ten percent. All remaining high schools are well on their way above 80 percent, with the exception of the Alternative Education Center falling in the 60th percentile.

Out of those students who have taken all four tests and have met the requirement, Harford County ranks fifth among the 24 districts in the state, with an achievement rate of 95.3 percent. The Class of 2010 is not far behind with a rate of 90.5 percent of those who have taken all four tests having met the requirement with two years left in their high school career.

“The state data shows incredible results with more than nine out of ten students (90.2%) of those who have taken the tests completed the requirement with one full academic year to go,” stated Dr. Nancy Grasmick, state superintendent of schools. “The Bridge Plan for Academic Validation summer pilot has been extremely successful with most students close to project completion.”

Multiple mechanisms for meeting the HSA requirement have been put in place including the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation and the Combined-Score option. Students become eligible for the Bridge Plan after failing to pass an HSA on two attempts and having participated in locally-administered interventions, passing the HSA-related course, and making satisfactory progress toward graduation. As of the May 2008 HSA administration, there were approximately 122 Harford County seniors eligible for Bridge Plan projects. Those seniors have been working with school administrators and teachers to select the appropriate option for their needs.

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“We are delighted with the progress being made by our students on the High School Assessments and a large part of that success can be attributed to our administrators and teachers, as well as the parents who are working together with our staff to sufficiently prepare their children for the exams,” said Superintendent Jacqueline C. Haas. “We have a handful of students who are within reach of achieving the prerequisite for graduation and we will continue to work with those students.”

Two of the HSA tests – English and Algebra -- along with the Maryland School Assessments (MSAs) – are used as a part of the Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability program. The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status for high schools, which takes into account the graduation rate and the HSA scores, will be released by MSDE next week.

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