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FINAL MSA RESULTS RELEASED

DATA USED TO INFORM INSTRUCTION DURING TRANSITION TO NEW ASSESSMENTS NEXT SCHOOL YEAR

BALTIMORE (July 11, 2014) – The final administration of the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) scores yielded an expected across-the-board drop in 2014, as school systems shifted instruction to new college and career-ready standards, according to data released today by the Maryland State Department of Education.

The transition continues next school year with full implementation of the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) assessments, which are aligned to the new standards and serve as a total reset of the State’s accountability system. Maryland successfully field tested the new online advanced assessments this spring as the final MSA tests were completed.

“Our schools have fully implemented the new Maryland College and Career Ready Standards, so we knew going into this assessment period that the standards and the curricula being taught were not completely aligned,” said State Superintendent of Schools Lillian M. Lowery. “However, school systems can use the MSA data to continue analyzing the achievement of specific student groups, classrooms, and schools. These results, where we still have some groups of students performing better, can point us to best practices grounded in analytical thinking skills.”

The percentage of elementary students scoring at the proficient levels in reading on the MSA was 84.3 percent this year compared to 86.4 percent in 2013, while the percentage of elementary students scoring at the proficient levels in mathematics was 75.8 percent compared to 83.9 last year. The percentage of middle school students scoring at proficient levels in reading was 79.6 percent compared to 84.3 percent in 2013, while mathematics scores were 63.1 percent this spring and 72.2 last year.

The results of the final MSA administration speak directly to the important changes that have been taking place in Maryland classrooms. The change in sequence and instructional shifts to higher standards are most apparent in mathematics.

The percentage of students scoring at proficient levels in MSA science also was affected by changes in standards, as schools moved toward implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The percentage of elementary students scoring in the proficient range in science fell 2.8 percentage points between 2013 and 2014, while the percentage of students scoring at the proficient range in middle school science dipped 2.0 points.
The Maryland State Board of Education in 2013 adopted the NGSS, which are aligned with the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards. School systems began implementing those new science standards this past school year, with full implementation by 2017-18. New assessments based on the NGSS are in development.

**How the MSA Data Will Be Used**

Federal law requires that states assess all students annually. While the MSA is an imperfect measure, there are no school improvement consequences due to Maryland’s No Child Left Behind waiver, and Maryland educators can use the final MSA data to help strengthen instruction, and pinpoint interventions for students.

“For example, if reading scores dipped 10 points at one school, but just two points at a neighboring school with similar student demographics, I’d want to know why,” said Dr. Jack Smith, MSDE’s Chief Academic Officer. “It also is important to dig behind the numbers and see how students in different subgroups performed. Assessment results should prompt questions and further discussions.”

Those questions and subsequent discussions will help educators as they prepare to better serve student learners in 2014-15, Dr. Smith added.

Maryland has been a national leader in accountability and has strengthened standards before. The State launched the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) in 1991, which first provided State assessment data disaggregated by race and special services, such as English language learner and special education. That program was succeeded by the MSA in 2003, which included individual student scores. The PARCC test next year will provide even more information that educators and parents can use to help boost student performance.

**Transition to New Standards and the PARCC Assessment**

Maryland adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010 and MSDE provided all 24 county school systems with a new State curriculum framework for the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards based on the Common Core. MSDE also held three years of summer training sessions for Maryland teachers and principals, before fully implementing the new standards this past school year. To continue supporting schools, MSDE staff and teams of master teachers worked with every county school system to continue improving implementation of the new standards. Hundreds of classroom educators, instructional leaders, administrators, and higher education representatives continue to assist State officials to support implementation of the new standards.

In addition, Maryland schools took part in the PARCC field test this spring, with at least one class in nearly every school taking part. The new tests, under development by Maryland and 14 other states plus the District of Columbia for the past five years, measure the critical content and skills embedded in the new standards.
More than 40,000 students in Maryland participated in one of the two PARCC assessments that were field tested – 21,090 in English and 18,887 in mathematics.

The new standards increase rigor and complexity, building for students a foundation for success in the rapidly changing 21st century economy.

The PARCC assessments were built to measure a full continuum of student abilities, including the performance of high- and low-performing students. The new assessments will test writing skills at every grade level, as well as critical thinking and problem solving skills in an in-depth manner.

In addition, the PARCC exams are computer-based, which will allow for timely snapshots of student knowledge that provide parents and students with richer information about performance, and give educators the opportunity to adjust instruction to better support learning.

**Strong History of Improvement**

The State witnessed dramatic improvements in student achievement statewide during the lifespan of the Maryland School Assessment.

Since 2003, there has been a 22.3 percentage point gain in elementary reading – from 62 to 84.3 percent proficient; a 15.8 percentage point gain in elementary mathematics – from 60 to 75.8 percent proficient; a 19.7 percentage point gain in middle school reading – from 59.9 to 79.6 percent proficient; and a 23.5 percentage point gain in middle school mathematics – from 39.6 to 63.1 percent proficient.

**Complete Results**


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