

Preparing World-Class Students

Maryland's Plan for Education Reform



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Foreword

“A world-class education is the single most important factor in determining not just whether our kids can compete for the best jobs but whether America can out-compete countries around the world.”

— President Barack Obama, July 18, 2011

Maryland’s public education system has been ranked number one in the nation four years in a row for one simple reason—it does not stand still. Over the past three decades, Maryland has built a strong foundation, policy by policy, through two waves of reform to achieve national status as a leader in educational excellence.

Today, Maryland is engaged in its Third Wave of Reform, and the State’s mission could not be more clear—create a world-class education system that prepares all students for college and career success in the 21st century.

With the financial assistance provided by the \$250 million Race to the Top federal grant, Maryland’s Third Wave of Reform is taking a comprehensive approach to improving the State’s education system by implementing rigorous academic standards and assessments; building a robust data system to support instruction; supporting great teachers and leaders; turning around the lowest-achieving schools; and increasing STEM education and resources for all students.

The State’s ultimate goal is to have its public education system open its doors in school year 2013–2014 with these new reform initiatives well underway—starting with its youngest students in pre-kindergarten to students preparing to graduate. As you read this publication, you will find that Maryland’s education reform plan will prepare world-class students to successfully enter college and career pathways and compete in today’s global economy.





A History of Maryland's Education Reform Movement

For several decades Maryland has been engaged in strengthening its education system to meet changing social and economic conditions. Maryland's education reforms have been designed to pave a path for all students to have the skills and academic success to compete in the changing, technology-based, 21st century world.

Maryland's Project Basic Program in 1977 established a level of minimum skills that all students would have to achieve to graduate. The focus on basic skills and minimum competencies led to functional tests in reading, writing, mathematics, and citizenship that became prerequisites for high school graduation.

In 1987, Governor William Donald Schaefer created the Commission on School Performance chaired by Walter Sondheim. The 1989 landmark Sondheim Commission Report placed a compelling emphasis on systemic school reform and education restructuring. The Commission called for new measures of school accountability for higher academic performance by all students. It was Maryland's First Wave of Education Reform.

The Maryland School Performance Program implemented the recommendations of the Sondheim Commission by providing information about school progress to school improvement teams and the public; expectations for what students should know and be able to do; assessments of those student expectations; standards of school performance; and procedures for State intervention in schools that fail to progress toward the standards.

Work began immediately on developing an assessment program that would become a driving force of school improvement. The Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) was designed to move beyond traditional tests to assessments that were closer to the demands of a modern workplace. MSPAP, administered to students in grades 3, 5, and 8, was developed to measure *school performance*.



Maryland's Second Wave of Education Reform began in 2001 with the creation of the Visionary Panel for Better Schools, charged with providing a new vision for school improvement. In 2002, it released "Achievement Matters Most," the Report of the Visionary Panel, which set forth eight recommendations to increase student performance. This phase of school reform included the Bridge to Excellence Act (2002), the Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the Voluntary State Curriculum, the consolidation of early childhood programs within the Maryland State Department of Education, and the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) and High School Assessment (HSA).

To conform to NCLB's requirement to provide individual student data, MSPAP was retired to make way for the MSA, which set reasonable grade level academic standards for what teachers are expected to teach and for what students are expected to learn. In compliance with NCLB, Maryland has administered the reading and mathematics tests annually to students in grades 3, 5, and 8 since 2003 and to students in grades 4, 6, and 7 since 2004. Since 2007, Maryland has administered a science test annually in grades 5 and 8 and biology in high school.

To raise high school standards and accountability, the State Board of Education approved phasing in the High School Assessments as one set of criteria for graduation. Students who entered high school in 2005 were the first graduation class that had to meet the HSA requirement for all four tests (English, biology, algebra, and government) to receive a high school diploma.

Maryland has one of the nation's most honored systems of public education, but for the State to continue to be competitive our schools must continue to improve. With this in mind, Maryland applied for and was awarded of the federal government's coveted Race to the Top grants, providing the State with \$250 million to support the implementation Maryland's Third Wave of Education Reform.





“In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity – it is a pre-requisite.”
— President Barack Obama



Maryland’s Third Wave of Education Reform: Moving from National Leader to World-Class

Through the decades of reform that have brought Maryland to its current status as national leader, one thing has remained constant—Maryland’s commitment to continually improving the education and achievement of all students.

Today, spurred by the Race to the Top competition, Maryland has entered its Third Wave of Education Reform. The State’s goal is to create a world-class education system that prepares all students for college and career success in the 21st century.

To reach world-class status, Maryland will work to ensure every student receives a challenging curriculum, a meaningful diploma, and a career and college pathway. Implementing a new, challenging, internationally benchmarked curriculum will provide students with a strong educational foundation. Upon graduation, they will receive a diploma that reflects their academic achievements in passing more rigorous courses and graduation requirements. Maryland students will leave high school with a world-class education that gives them a clear path to succeed as they enter college or the workforce.



Maryland's Plan for Every Student:

- ✓ A Challenging Curriculum
- ✓ A Meaningful Diploma
- ✓ A College and Career Pathway

Maryland did not reach its first-place national ranking by standing still, and the State will not become world-class by resting on its prior achievements. In order to move forward, the State must focus on improving all levels of achievement while ensuring that standards and expectations remain high. This means closing the achievement gaps that continue to exist in far too many schools and addressing the needs of all students, including special education, English Language Learners (ELL), and children in poverty.

To fully prepare students to excel in college and the workforce in the 21st century, Maryland has focused its efforts around four areas of reform: higher standards for curriculum and assessments, robust data, effective educators, and strategic help for struggling schools. The State is also committed to strengthening Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education across all four reform areas. Once fully implemented, these comprehensive reforms will provide all students with a world-class education that gives them the skills and knowledge they need for future success.







Preparing World-Class Students
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HIGHER STANDARDS

Maryland's Goal: Ensure that all students are fully prepared for college and career in the 21st century.

In order to be prepared for the challenges of work and college, Maryland students must graduate from high school equipped with the knowledge and skills to help them succeed.

Maryland has led the nation in establishing strong academic standards and accompanying curriculum, but to achieve world-class status the State must continue to raise those standards and improve the achievement of all students.

To accomplish this, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will revise the Maryland State Curriculum PreK-12, assessments, and accountability system based on the Common Core State Standards to assure that all graduates are college and career ready.



To prepare world-class students, Maryland will:

Implement the Common Core State Standards

In June 2010, Maryland adopted the Common Core State Standards, national education standards that define the skills and knowledge that students should master during their K-12 education. The standards provide increased academic rigor, are internationally benchmarked, and are aligned with college and work expectations.

Develop the new Maryland Common Core State Curriculum

To meet its goal of preparing all students for college and careers, Maryland must ensure that these rigorous, new standards make their way into every classroom. This means translating the Common Core State Standards into a challenging and engaging curriculum. State educators are working to develop a new State Curriculum from these standards, defining what students should know and be able to do at each grade level and focusing on depth of content and skills rather than breadth.

Develop assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards

Maryland is a member of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC), a multi-state consortium working to develop high-quality assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards. The assessment system will be computer-based and provide teachers with timely information on student progress. PARCC's goal with the new system is to advance student, educator, school, and district accountability, help educators improve classroom instruction, and reduce achievement gaps.







ROBUST DATA

Maryland's Goal: Use data to support teaching and learning.

To ensure that all students are on track for academic success and, ultimately, to graduate ready for college and careers it is imperative to be able to track student progress and use that information to inform instruction in the classroom.

Maryland's goal is to have a continuous record of each student's growth and achievement from pre-kindergarten through college and beyond. By tracking student performance, teachers will be able to tailor classroom instruction to meet the needs of their students, and the State will be able to develop a clear picture of just how well Maryland is meeting its reform goals and preparing students for future success.

"We owe it to our students, parents, teachers and administrators to uphold the highest standards of accountability and transparency, and that starts with establishing quality education data systems to ensure Maryland students graduate high school prepared for college and highly-skilled careers."

— Governor Martin O'Malley



To prepare world-class students, Maryland will:

Strengthen and expand the statewide data system

Collecting better, more comprehensive student data is key to understanding how Maryland students are being prepared for college and career. MSDE is working to expand and enhance the capability of its Longitudinal Data System to track student progress over time, from PreK-12 into postsecondary education and the workforce.

By linking data from local school systems, MSDE, higher education, and the workplace, Maryland will be able to monitor individual students' progress to college- and career-ready goals and track larger educational trends at the school, district, and State levels.

Provide accessible, real-time data to a variety of education stakeholders

The wealth of educational data collected through this initiative will be organized into easy-to-use online tools to help teachers, parents, policymakers, and other education stakeholders interpret and use this new information.

At the classroom level, teachers can use this information to adjust instruction to the needs of their individual students and ensure that they stay on track for success. At the State level, this information can provide insight into the success of educational reforms.



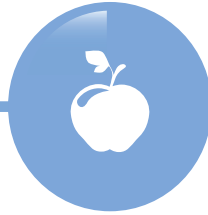
Use data to improve instruction

All Maryland teachers will have on-demand, 24/7 access to real-time student data and the tools to use this information to tailor instruction to their needs and enhance achievement. Tools are being designed to help struggling students catch up, on-track students accelerate their progress, and every student to be prepared for college and career.

The Online Instructional Toolkit will equip teachers with curriculum information, model lessons, formative assessments, and professional development resources. Teachers will also receive progress reports and automatic screenings (called “alerts”) to notify them when a student is in need of intervention or additional challenges.







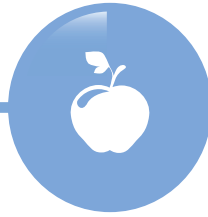
EFFECTIVE EDUCATORS

Maryland's Goal: Develop and support Great Teachers and Great Leaders.

If Maryland is going to ensure that all students are college and career ready, every school—especially those where students need the most support—must have teachers and principals who are effective at increasing student achievement.

Maryland understands that investing in and supporting teachers and principals will result in an equally effective investment in all students. The State must make sure that every student has an effective teacher, every school has effective leaders, and every teacher and leader has access to the preparation, ongoing support, recognition, and collaboration opportunities he or she needs to succeed.

Maryland is working to redesign the model for the preparation, development, retention, and evaluation of teachers and principals to develop a comprehensive system of educator effectiveness and the strongest educator corps in the country.



To prepare world-class students, Maryland will:

Build a new statewide teacher and principal evaluation system

To be effective, teachers and principals must show they can successfully improve student learning. In Maryland's new statewide educator evaluation system, student growth will account for 50 percent of the evaluation for teachers and principals.

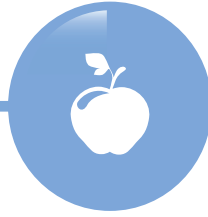
The new evaluation system was developed by Maryland's Council for Educator Effectiveness—comprised of teachers, principals, experts, and elected officials—to be rigorous, transparent, and fair and provide for flexibility at the local level.

At the core of the new evaluation system is professional development. The evaluations will provide a more detailed look at educator performance, allowing for timely professional development to be targeted to the specific needs of each individual teacher and leader.

Increase the equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals

Maryland must ensure that the most talented teachers and principals are placed in the schools and subjects where they are needed the most, specifically in high-poverty, high-minority schools, in the hard-to-staff areas, such as STEM, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and special education.

To reduce the teacher quality gap among high-poverty and low-poverty schools, the State will use the new evaluation system to identify the most effective educators and provide staffing reforms and recruitment efforts that encourage them to lend their talents to the neediest schools. Maryland will also create targeted programs and incentives to increase the number of teachers in STEM areas, world languages, special education, and ESOL.



Provide high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals

Maryland is working to improve teacher and principal preparation programs to ensure that all graduates truly have the skills and knowledge to be effective or highly effective teachers and leaders in Maryland's schools.

The State will expand the educator preparation and credentialing options and programs that are successful at producing effective teachers and principals. Maryland will also develop a high-quality teacher induction program to ensure all new teachers successfully transition to the classroom and learn to be effective. New principals will have access to highly-qualified mentors who can help to improve their effectiveness.

Expand professional development opportunities for teachers and principals

Meaningful professional development is key to creating effective educators and increasing student achievement. It is essential that teachers and principals are provided with ongoing and high-quality professional development that invests in building their skills, knowledge, and capacities.

Maryland is working to improve the overall quality of professional development in local school systems and at the State level and provide deeper levels of support to teachers and principals. When the new teacher and principal evaluation system is in place, evaluation results will be used to identify and implement individualized professional development goals and plans.





STRATEGIC HELP FOR STRUGGLING SCHOOLS

Maryland's Goal: Turn around the lowest-achieving schools.

To ensure that all Maryland students graduate college and career ready, the State must take strong and immediate action to improve the lowest-performing schools. Through its reform efforts, Maryland will work to significantly improve the performance of these schools and set them on a path for continued improvement by fully implementing the innovative Breakthrough Center approach for transforming low-achieving schools and districts.

MSDE's Breakthrough Center coordinates, brokers, and delivers support to districts and schools across the State. The Center was created in 2008 to provide a coherent strategy for leveraging and coordinating the State's services to build the capacity of schools and local school systems to lead and sustain student achievement gains.



To prepare world-class students, Maryland will:

Focus on teachers and leaders

The core work of turnaround is getting the most effective educators with the children who need them the most. Low-achieving schools cannot be turned around unless effective teaching is available to students. Maryland is developing new pipelines to deliver effective teachers to the State's neediest children and working to ensure that any teacher who leaves one of the State's lowest-achieving schools is replaced with an effective educator.

Identify root causes and customize support

One-size-fits-all strategies fare poorly in the dynamic of turnaround efforts. Understanding the specific challenges and causes of a school's persistent low-performance and working to address those issues ensures that the needs of children and educators are the top turnaround priority.



Address non-academic challenges

The non-academic issues of behavior, safety, and health become academic issues when they undermine a child's ability to learn. Maryland knows that engaging with parents and other members of the school community is an important factor in the turnaround process. Community organizations, parents and parent organizations, and health and mental health providers can offer important services for students when coordinated for individual and school-wide needs.

Expand support to feeder schools

Maryland understands that many patterns of low achievement begin before students reach the secondary level. More proactive approaches are needed to deliver support to feeder schools that, themselves, exhibit low levels of performance.





SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS (STEM)

Maryland's Goal: Prepare students to enter the national and global STEM workforce.

In today's innovative and technology-driven world, an education that provides students with a strong foundation in STEM is critical. Jobs in STEM are growing rapidly and skilled STEM workers are in high demand. Yet even outside of the STEM fields, the jobs of the 21st century increasingly rely on a technologically literate workforce.

To prepare students for this new reality, Maryland is developing a rigorous STEM curriculum that will give them the skills and knowledge to think critically and solve complex problems. This robust foundation will ensure that all Maryland students are prepared to pursue careers and college-level study in STEM disciplines and have the skills to succeed in the careers of today and tomorrow.

"Students with STEM backgrounds are in demand today, so they can fill the jobs of tomorrow. Every student deserves a chance to excel in those fields."

— Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski



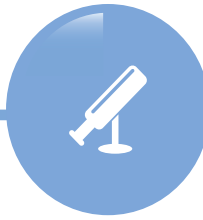
To prepare world-class students, Maryland will:

Develop an interdisciplinary STEM-based curriculum

To prepare all students for postsecondary success, Maryland is working to align its PreK–12 STEM curriculum with the real world expectations that students will face upon entering college and the workplace. The State is developing rigorous, interdisciplinary STEM curriculum and educational resources that address the Common Core State Standards. Another step Maryland is taking to prepare its students for success in today’s global environment is establishing a world languages pipeline, providing instruction in Arabic, Chinese, and Hindi, and dual-language Spanish/English.

Increase the number of STEM teachers in the State and provide additional resources and professional development to current STEM teachers

Maryland will work to triple the number of teachers prepared in the State for high-need STEM disciplines. For those STEM teachers already hard at work in the classroom, Maryland will provide professional development and access to a wealth of educational resources to ensure that all mathematics and science teachers have the knowledge and skills to help all students successfully complete the college- and career-ready curriculum. Maryland will also enhance the basic STEM skills of more generalist teachers, especially those in elementary and early childhood classrooms.



Provide students with the opportunity to participate in internships, cooperative education, or lab experiences

Maryland is working with STEM professionals statewide to provide opportunities for students to gain real world experience in the STEM fields. Interested high school students will have the opportunity to participate in internships, cooperative education, and lab experiences in STEM to jump-start their successful transition to the workplace.



MARYLAND WELCOMES THE CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE.

“Without question, we are determined that every student in our public schools receive equal access to a high-quality public education; that they have the tools to be successful; and that they will find themselves on a successful college or career path.”

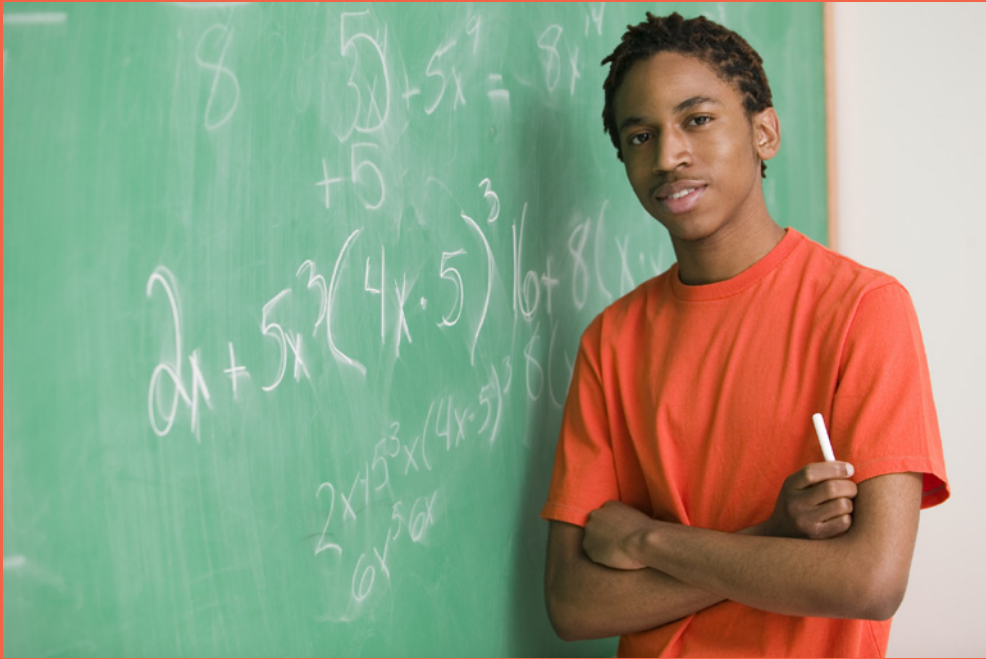
— Bernard J. Sadusky, Ed.D., Interim State Superintendent of Schools

“In Maryland, we believe in making the investments needed to build the nation’s best public school system to help us create jobs, expand opportunity, and move forward in this challenging new economy. The investments we make in education are investments in the future we all share.”

— Governor Martin O’Malley, January 12, 2012

“Make Maryland a model for adopting the world’s most successful approaches to schooling. Virginia and Maryland are near the top of many measures of school performance. But Maryland . . . has been the more consistent innovator. No state is better equipped, politically and culturally, to embrace systems that have helped Singapore, Japan and Finland lead the world in teaching children. The changes would include significantly raising the standards for admission to public schools, teacher training programs and deepening those programs—ideas with widespread support in Maryland.”

— Washington Post, Jay Mathews’ Five Wishes for DC-Area Schools, December 7, 2011



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