

MARYLAND SCHOOLS

Getting Results in Special Education

5 Schools Share Strategies for Improving Student Success



Maryland State Board of Education

EDWARD L. ROOT
PRESIDENT

DUNBAR BROOKS
VICE PRESIDENT

LELIA T. ALLEN

J. HENRY BUTTA

BEVERLY A. COOPER

CALVIN D. DISNEY

RICHARD L. GOODALL

TONYA MILES

KARABELLE PIZZIGATI

MARIA C. TORRES-QUERAL

DAVID F. TUFARO

BRIAN W. FRAZEE
STUDENT MEMBER

NANCY S. GRASMICK
SECRETARY-TREASURER OF THE BOARD
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

RONALD A. PEIFFER
DEPUTY STATE SUPERINTENDENT
ACADEMIC POLICY

A. SKIPP SANDERS
DEPUTY STATE SUPERINTENDENT
ADMINISTRATION

JOANNE CARTER
DEPUTY STATE SUPERINTENDENT
INSTRUCTION AND ACADEMIC ACCELERATION

CAROL ANN BAGLIN
ASSISTANT STATE SUPERINTENDENT
DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION/EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

MARTIN O'MALLEY
GOVERNOR

THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, SEX, AGE, NATIONAL ORIGIN, RELIGION, OR DISABILITY IN MATTERS AFFECTING EMPLOYMENT OR IN PROVIDING ACCESS TO PROGRAMS. FOR INQUIRIES ALERTED TO DEPARTMENTAL POLICY, CONTACT THE EQUITY ASSURANCE AND COMPLIANCE BRANCH, MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, 200 WEST BALTIMORE STREET, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201. PHONE (410) 767-0425, TTY/TTD (410) 333-6442, FAX: (410) 333-2226

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION1

SCHOOL PROFILES

Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Elementary School, Charles County3

Easton Elementary School, Talbot County.....9

Guilford Elementary School, Howard County.....15

Logan Elementary School, Baltimore County.....21

Viers Mill Elementary School, Montgomery County27

CONCLUSIONS33

APPENDIX37

About the Maryland School Assessment38

Website Resources.....39

INTRODUCTION

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is pleased to share with you a story about five elementary schools that are bringing about dramatic academic progress for all students – especially those with disabilities. Inspired by what the assessment data was saying, MSDE's Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services completed this report in recognition of the many actions that Maryland schools and school systems are undertaking to meet the performance requirements of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Maryland Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act, and the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). These laws focus on the academic performance of students in eight subgroups, thus ensuring that aggregated data is not masking the underperformance of any individual student subgroup. Although Maryland has been including special education performance in the state accountability system for over a decade, the renewed emphasis brought about by recent state and federal laws has inspired additional opportunities for special and general educators to bring about changes in instruction and learning that many practitioners and policymakers see as a compelling story of success.

Within the pages of this report, you will read what leaders at five Maryland elementary schools said they and their school staff did that led to significant changes in school climate, teacher involvement in learning and increased student achievement, with a particular focus on the progress of students with disabilities. Schools were selected based on our review of performance data on the state website, www.mdreportcard.org, with special consideration to schools that were challenged by diverse populations in terms of socioeconomic status, ethnicity and a history of having struggled to meet high standards of performance. Note that three years of trend data was available through Maryland's new state assessments begun in 2002-2003 and known as the Maryland School Assessment (MSA). See the Appendix for more information on the testing program.

The cooperation and special talents of the principals who welcomed us and gave their time to talk about what had changed their school or former school was invaluable. The sample of schools is not intended to be all-inclusive as there are many schools that could have been a part of this report. In addition, a special thank you goes to the students and parents of those students who attend or attended the schools included. The impact of their contributions of hard work, caring and support should also not be underestimated.

The document is based on a series of interviews with school leadership in which principals and/or assistant principals reported what had brought about the increasing academic progress over the previous three years. Each principal had an opportunity to review and comment on a written draft of their interview. Note that year four test results were not available until June 2006, well after principal interviews were conducted. Therefore, common themes and the 2006 test results have been summarized in the Conclusions section with a final section of Website Resources that readers may use to link to national sites for information about some of the strategies and interventions that was discussed by school leadership.

Sincerely,

Rhona Fisher, PhD
Chief, Student Achievement and Results Branch
Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services

Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Elementary School

CHARLES COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1

- ▶ READING SCORES FOR STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION INCREASED FROM 18.8 PERCENT IN 2003 TO 56 PERCENT IN 2005.
- ▶ FIFTH GRADE READING SCORES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES INCREASED FROM 37.5 PERCENT IN 2003 TO 66.7 PERCENT IN 2005 – AN INCREASE OF 29.2 PERCENT.
- ▶ THE FIFTH GRADE READING GAP DECREASED FROM 27.9 PERCENT IN 2003 TO 4.3 PERCENT IN 2005 BETWEEN REGULAR EDUCATION STUDENTS AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.

DR. SAMUEL A. MUDD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Charles County Public Schools



BY THE NUMBERS

437 students Pre-K-5
12.4% special education students
48.8% free/reduced meals
73.3% minority
24.1% mobility
100% Title I

Principal Robert Opiekun

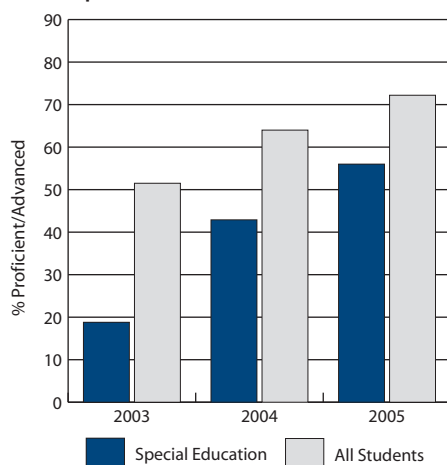
With a strong focus on effective screening, early intervention, comprehensive student support, parent education and involvement, Principal Robert Opiekun, has lead the Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Elementary School to unprecedented academic achievement among its 437 regular and special education students. Under his leadership, the school has adopted targeted professional development, strategic use of funds, and collaboration and community partnerships to create an environment where all students can learn and grow. By supporting children from birth through fifth grade with appropriate services and utilizing innovative outreach to parents, Dr. Mudd has created an environment where children and families flourish.

Our School, Our Students

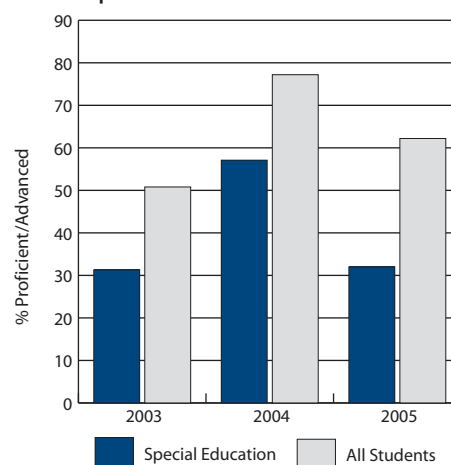
An economically and racially diverse school located in fast-growing Charles County, Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Elementary School, with just under 50 percent, has the highest percentage of students receiving free and reduced meals in Charles County. The school is also home to a Judy Center and Head Start program, both of which are designed to stimulate learning in

young children. The programs are believed to have contributed to the increased achievement of all students, and decline in the number of referrals for special education services. There is strong support for screening, early intervention, comprehensive student support, and parent education and involvement as strategies to enhance each child's ability to meet the future challenges of academic rigor.

MSA Reading 2003 to 2005 – Dr. Samuel A. Mudd
Special Education vs. All Students



MSA Math 2003 to 2005 – Dr. Samuel A. Mudd
Special Education vs. All Students



“Everything at Dr. Mudd is designed to focus on student achievement,” said Principal Robert Opiekun. During the 1999 – 2000 school year the school had over 750 office referrals and more than 100 out-of-school suspensions. As a result, a discipline committee and school-wide set of behavioral expectations was established for both students and teachers.

With the creation of an In-School Suspension Room in 2001, suspensions dropped so that in the school year 2004-2005 there were 14, and fewer than 200 referrals were made to the in-school program. “By creating a calm environment in the In-School Suspension Room, students who experienced difficulty in the regular classroom were able to focus on learning in a small setting with individual attention from an adult,” said Principal Opiekun. When a student with disabilities is sent to the In-School Suspension Room, the special educator goes with the student to ensure that special education services are provided according to the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Establishing the school’s positive climate is only one element of the improvement process. A dynamic Instructional Specialist was hired to oversee the construction and implementation of the school improvement plan with the principal.



Student Achievement

Earlier state testing for the 2001-2002 school year showed that less than 31 percent of all third and fifth grade students met proficiency in reading or math. Since beginning the Maryland School Assessments (MSA) in 2003, all students at Dr. Mudd have shown significant gains in reading performance, but especially those in special education.

Improved Scores

Special education students have scored advanced or proficient on the Maryland School Assessment for reading with increases from 18.8 percent in 2003 to 56 percent in 2005. **Fifth grade reading scores for students with disabilities increased from 37.5 percent in 2003 to 66.7 percent in 2005 – an increase of 29.2 percent. The gap between regular education students and students with disabilities in fifth grade reading has decreased from 27.9 percent in 2003 to 4.3 percent in 2005.**

Effective Screening

A Student Support Team (SST) provides early intervention services

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES*

- ▶ Inclusion classes grades 1-5. Weekly professional development for teachers and instructional assistants.
- ▶ Use of dynamic Instructional Specialist monitoring school improvement.
- ▶ Additional weekly 75 minutes of teacher planning time that is coordinated with the Instructional Specialist for the purpose of monitoring student work.
- ▶ Strong in-school suspension program.
- ▶ Screening and recommended interventions by the Student Support Team.
- ▶ Computer training for parents whereby parents keep the computer upon completion of training.
- ▶ Each child receives a book bag with six books for the child to keep.

*Effective Practices are some of the activities, strategies and attitudes that we saw during our visit to the school that appeared to be part of the fabric of the school’s success.

DR. MUDD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Charles County Public Schools



DR. MUDD HAS ONE OF THE COUNTY'S LARGEST AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS THAT OPERATES FROM 3:45 TO 4:30 TWO DAYS A WEEK. THERE IS A 12-WEEK SESSION IN THE FALL AND A 10-WEEK SESSION IN THE SPRING.

to students who may be referred for academic, social, behavioral, eating problems, changes in behavior, and other concerns. Teachers may refer a child to SST, but not before October; and must document what steps they have taken to address the student's needs prior to the referral. The SST team, which includes the principal, psychologist, classroom teacher, parents and special educator, meets to review the student's work, assessments that may have been completed, observations, and the parent's concerns. A plan is then developed to support the student and address identified needs. *The Pre-referral Intervention Manual* published by Hawthorne Educational Services is used to identify interventions that may address the student's needs. Also, the team may include some IEP-like elements in the plan. In a few cases students may be referred for evaluation to determine if they require special education services. Approximately 35 students were screened for disabilities in school year 2005, and plans developed for those students. Of those students, seven were referred for evaluation and six were identified for special education.

Inclusion Classes

Dr. Samuel A. Mudd has inclusion classes for students in first through fifth grades, with an instructional assistant and only 18 students in

each class. Of the five inclusion classes, dually-certified teachers teach three. A regular educator and a special educator teach the other two classes jointly. Students in the classes are heterogeneously grouped for cooperative instruction that includes a high level of student interaction, and peer tutoring. Classes include students with a variety of disabilities, including autism, mental retardation, emotional disturbance and learning disabilities. Of all students with disabilities residing within the school's boundaries, only one student does not attend Dr. Mudd due to the need for specialized daily therapy.

Supplemental Instruction

Dr. Mudd has one of the county's largest after-school programs that operates from 3:45 to 4:30 two days a week. There is a 12-week session in the fall and a 10-week session in the spring. The program is funded with Title I funds, with a student-teacher ratio of 8:1 with an assistant. Teachers use the Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC) to pull objectives and develop fun activities for the students. In addition, an early morning session meets the needs of students that just cannot stay after school, allowing the school to reach 30 more students.

The school has two *Reading Recovery* teachers who work with groups of five students each. Students are selected based on need, and

due to effective early intervention, teachers are able to accelerate student learning and ultimately provide services to more students.

Early Childhood Education

Dr. Mudd is fortunate to have a Judy Center that provides parenting classes, play groups for children two years and younger, and playgroups for two to three year olds. The center provides an opportunity to observe children and possibly identify those who may need early intervention services. In comparing the students who came through the Judy Center with students who did not, staff found that Judy Center students' scores on the county assessments averaged five points higher than the students who did not attend the Judy Center. The schools' Judy Center Coordinator, Mrs. Cheryl DeAtley was recognized for her efforts by the Maryland State Department of Education and Congressman Steny Hoyer, for the most improved partnership of any Judy Center in the state.

Dr. Mudd also offers a full-day Head Start, pre-kindergarten with a half-day arrangement with a local child care center, and full day kindergarten classes. Before full day kindergarten was offered, 28 of the 70 kindergarten students were referred for *Reading Recovery* in first grade. Last year only seven of 75 kindergarten students were referred for *Reading Recovery*.

How We Made Improvements

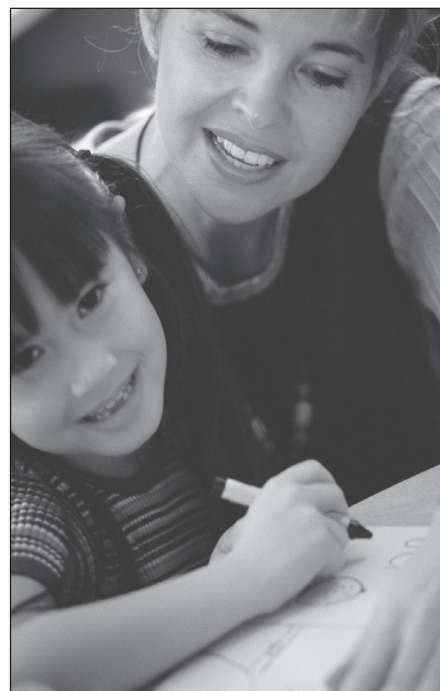
Instructional Planning and Support

An Instructional Specialist and Instructional Leadership Team support and monitor teachers and provide professional development targeted to teachers' needs.

Every effort is also made to involve parents in their children's education. An adult education program provides computers with adult curriculum software to families, and a teacher provides parents two hours of training each week for 16 weeks. At the end of that time if parents have participated in all sessions they may keep the computer along with children's educational software.

In addition, ample time is provided to teachers to analyze student learning and fine-tune instruction to address individual student needs. Grade level planning time is viewed as very important to improving student achievement. In order to give grade level teams a block of uninterrupted time for planning, the school schedules all related arts for a single grade in a continuous block. As each class rotates through art, physical education and music, classroom teachers for that grade level concentrate on reviewing student work and team planning for each student.

Teachers are also required to spend 60 minutes planning with the Instructional Leadership Team, reviewing samples of student work with the grade level teams and



determining appropriate strategies to accelerate student learning. The Instructional Leadership Team includes the Instructional Specialist, a full-time Reading Specialist, and a Gifted Specialist assigned to Dr. Mudd two days per week.

The Instructional Specialist provides support to teachers and helps ensure adherence to the Voluntary State Curriculum such that a strong system of teacher support and professional development has been established. "In the past we have had a high turnover in classroom teachers," said Principal Opiekun. "With these improvements, our school no longer has the wholesale attrition that it once had on a yearly basis. In fact, in the 2004-2005 school year, only one teacher left the school." In addition, the Instructional Leadership Team has a planning area for teachers and a resource room with approximately

DR. MUDD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Charles County Public Schools

6,000 leveled books that teachers use to supplement core materials.

Professional Development

Teachers meet weekly for 50 minutes for staff development. Staff development is also imbedded into the school day, based on team-identified needs that includes coaching and modeling in the classroom. Participation in staff development is mandatory. Instructional Assistants participate in the same staff development provided to Dr. Mudd teachers.

Ongoing assessment of student learning is conducted on a quarterly basis, with teachers assessing all primary grade students, and those students in grades 3-5 who are below grade level. Students are assessed using the *Rigby PM Benchmark Assessments*, running records, pre- and posttests, and the county assessments.

A four block reading schedule was implemented using *Balanced Literacy* through Houghton-Mifflin texts. *Riverdeep* software and *Orton-Gillingham* interventions are provided in classrooms daily for targeted students. All Special Education teachers, Inclusion teachers and Instructional Assistants are trained

in *Orton-Gillingham and Reading Recovery*. Kagan Structures is used to promote cooperative learning. A teacher/leader model is used to expand these strategies to new staff and a county resource person provides training after school up to 10 times per year.

Summer School

Over 200 of the school's 437 students attended the 2005 summer school program. The summer program has several components including an early childhood program with about 40 students in grades pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten. Head Start runs all summer, and the Summer Quest focuses on students with challenging behaviors providing assistance with reading. Students who complete the Quest program are mentored throughout the following year.

Student Motivation

Dr. Mudd acknowledges students' positive behavior and provide a variety of rewards including "Caught Being Good" buttons (any teacher can "catch" any child being good in one of three different areas including citizenship, personal responsibility and kindness), the ACE Club (Attitude, Conduct and Effort), and the Principal's Club that recognizes good citizenship-children that follow every rule, every day.

The school is also working to strengthen relationships between students and their teachers. A core belief is that if teachers know children on an individual basis – who the child is including the child's role in their house, and the activities the child participates in outside of school, they can establish more personalized interactions with each student. Part of this belief is that this understanding will foster relationships on a personal level and increase student engagement in learning. School administrators and teachers have worked closely with Dr. Janice Wilson, the Vice President of the Charles County local NAACP chapter to educate teachers on the importance of developing bonds with students of all backgrounds.

Sustaining Success

In the future, Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Elementary School plans to provide more technology resources and tools to students, including increasing the number of computers in each classroom, and having nine computers in each of the three fifth grade classes. The school also plans to continue using and deepening the effective practices described by the principal and that are helping Dr. Samuel A. Mudd showcase its students and staff achievements.

Easton Elementary School

TALBOT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2

- ▶ TEAM TEACHING AND DIFFERENT MODELS OF CO-TEACHING.
- ▶ LARGE SCHOOL DIVIDED INTO THREE DISTINCT LEARNING COMMUNITIES WHERE TEACHERS REMAIN WITH THE SAME STUDENTS FOR UP TO FOUR YEARS.
- ▶ SCHOOL MANAGER POSITION HANDLES DAILY OPERATIONS, FREEING PRINCIPAL TO BE THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER.
- ▶ DAILY PRINCIPAL WALK-AROUNDS AND USE OF EXCEL SPREAD-SHEET OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE FOR EACH CLASS.
- ▶ GENERAL EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS RECEIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON USE OF INTERVENTION PROGRAMS.

EASTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Talbot County Public Schools



Principal Kelly Griffith

Under the leadership of Principal Kelly Griffith, Easton Elementary School has emerged as one of the pearls in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay. Since her arrival five years ago, Griffith has professionalized the teaching staff that once had included 27 non-tenured teachers and significantly reduced office referrals for student misbehavior. Today, reading and math scores for all students have improved and continue to reflect the increasingly high expectations for all students, especially those with disabilities. In fact, according to the 2005 state test results for third graders; the percentage of special education students at proficiency was 1.1 percent higher than for regular education students. Here is how Principal Griffith and her staff put Easton Elementary on the road to a dramatic and enduring path to improvement for all of its students.

BY THE NUMBERS

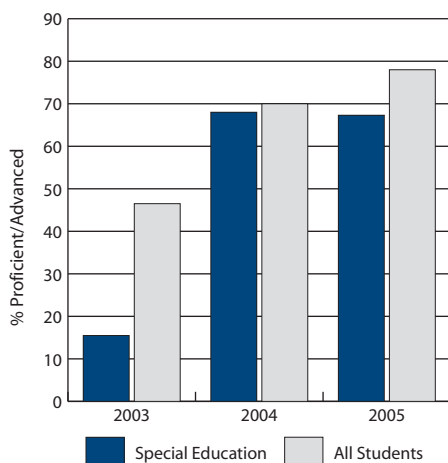
967	students Pre-K-5
13.8%	special education students
41%	free/reduced meals
42%	minority
20.6%	mobility
7.5%	limited English proficient (LEP)
100%	Title I

Our School, Our Students

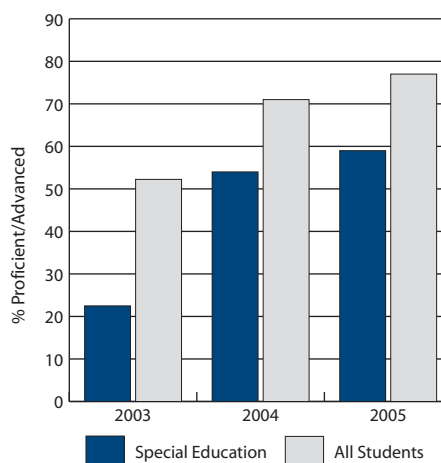
Located on Maryland's Eastern Shore, Easton Elementary School is a diverse school with 967 students in grades Pre-K to five. Forty-one percent are eligible for free and reduced meals (FARMS), 100 percent are Title I-eligible, and 7.5 percent are limited English proficient. Additionally, 13.8 percent or about 133 students,

receive special education services. In 2003, the baseline year for the new Maryland School Assessment (MSA), 46.5 percent of all students and 16.7 percent of students with disabilities were proficient in reading. In 2003, 52.7 percent of all students and 23.3 percent of students with disabilities were proficient in math. Most troubling was the subgroup student

MSA Reading 2003 to 2005 – Easton
Special Education vs. All Students



MSA Math 2003 to 2005 – Easton
Special Education vs. All Students



performance results that showed less than one-third of African-American, FARMS, Special Education, Hispanic or limited English proficient students met proficiency in reading. It was a wake-up call in 2003 when the school was identified by the state as “in need of improvement.” Many will want to know what the principal and the school staff has done to improve the academic achievement at Easton.

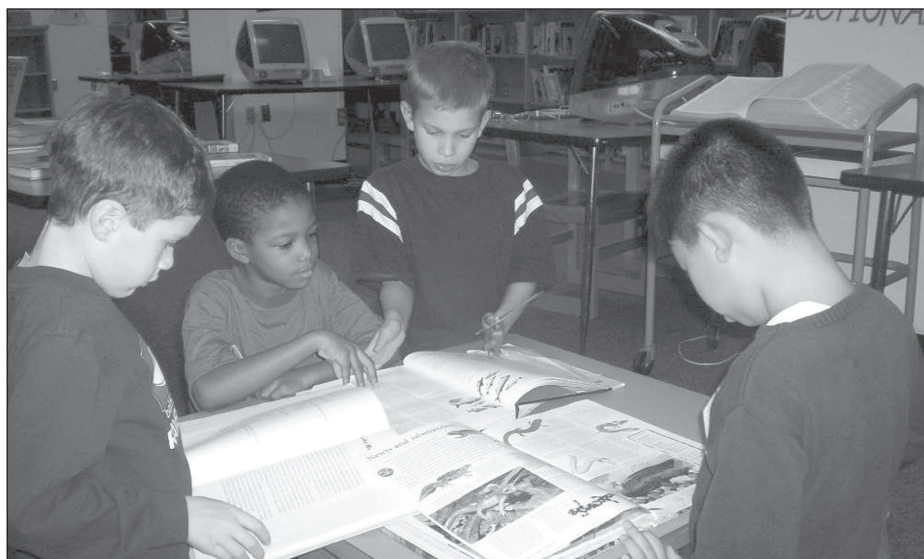
Student Achievement

Over the past four years the level of student achievement as measured by the Maryland School Assessment has improved dramatically for all students, especially the performance of students with disabilities.

MSA Reading Scores

Third grade Special Education reading scores increased 59 percent points from 2003 to 2005, such that the percent of students proficient increased from 7.7 percent to 66.7 percent. The gap between special education and regular education grade three reading decreased from 36.2 percentage points in 2003 to a reverse gap in 2005. **The percentage of special education students at proficiency was 1.1 percent higher than for regular education students.**

Fifth grade Special Education reading proficiency increased from 9.1 percent to 68.4 percent – an increase of 59.3 percentage points. Regular education proficiency increased from 56.5 percent to 83.1 percent. **The achievement gap in fifth grade reading decreased to 14.7 percent**



in 2005, from an earlier gap of 47.4 percent in 2003.

MSA Math Scores

Third grade math scores for Special Education increased 47.5 percentage points from 2003 to 2005 testing. Regular education proficiency increased 12.4 percentage points from 62.6 percent to 75 percent. **The gap between Special Education and regular education for third grade students in math narrowed from 39.5 percentage points to 4.4 percent.**

Fifth grade math scores for Special Education increased from 0 percent in 2003 to 36.8 percent in 2005. Regular education scores increased from 51.4 percent to 79.7 percent. As a result, the fifth grade gap in math performance between Special Education and regular education students was reduced from 51.4 percentage points to 42.9 percentage points.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES*

- ▶ Large school divided into three distinct learning communities where teachers remain with the same students for up to four years.
- ▶ Hands-on leadership from the principal focused on the daily use of data to inform all staff.
- ▶ School manager position handles daily operations, freeing principal to be the instructional leader.
- ▶ Master scheduling with the needs of diverse learners and teacher planning time coming first.
- ▶ Common planning time that includes special education teachers.
- ▶ Team teaching and co-teaching.
- ▶ Multiple reading interventions with training on their use for all teachers.
- ▶ Double dose of reading instruction.
- ▶ Summer assignments mailed home to students and corrected by staff.

*Effective Practices are some of the activities, strategies and attitudes that we saw during our visit to the school that appeared to be part of the fabric of the school's success.

EASTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Talbot County Public Schools



IN THREE YEARS, MATH ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL STUDENTS INCREASED FROM 52.7 PERCENT TO 74.5 PERCENT, AND FROM 23.3 PERCENT TO 57.6 PERCENT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.

How We Made Improvements

Kelly Griffith became principal of Easton Elementary School in 1999, and spent her first year addressing a number of management challenges that included professionalizing the teaching staff and getting student behavior under control. “I inherited 27 non-tenured teachers and a record 1400 office referrals for discipline,” says Griffith. “I had to get a handle on the environment and make sure we were meeting the learning needs of our students.” In her fifth year as of 2004-2005, Principal Griffith has reduced office visits from 1400 to 200, professionalized the teaching staff, and built an organizational structure of learning communities that support student achievement.

Teaching and Staffing

A subset of Easton’s students – 610 students in grades 2 through 5 – is divided into three learning communities with ten teachers and approximately 200 students in each community. The students stay with these ten teachers for the four years they attend Easton, and the teachers have a common planning, both vertically and horizontally each week. “This concept has improved communication and relationships among students and staff, as well as behavior school-wide,” says Griffith.

Easton’s instructional groups include students of various age levels with the most challenging students distributed appropriately across teachers

and grade levels. Currently, there are three different models of co-teaching, with class size ranging from 18 to 22 students. Appropriate time is allocated for instructional planning, and the master schedule is adjusted to meet the learning needs of students. In the process, Easton has discovered that as instruction became more differentiated and more targeted to student needs, the percentage of identified students with disabilities has decreased.

Reading

Easton has three reading specialists, and uses a core reading program by *Houghton Mifflin* and a number of reading intervention programs to supplement learning for students reading below grade level. Teachers use *Lindamood Bell Visualizing and Verbalizing*, *Soar to Success*, *Early Success*, and *Corrective Reading*, as well as the *Phonemic Awareness Assessment* and the *Primary Reading Adventures* software. Intervention enrichment is held every morning and students are grouped according to their need, based on *Rigby PM Benchmark* reading assessments. Students that are two or more years **above** grade level in reading participate in a Book Club activity where they discuss books they have read.

During core reading instruction, all students are in small groups. “Intervention students” return to classrooms and work in designated small groups

according to their reading diagnostic conducted by the classroom teacher. Both general teachers and specialist teachers receive training on reading interventions. Students also participate in summer school including classes in *Lindamood Bell Verbalization and Visualization*, offered for students who need to accelerate reading skills.

Mathematics

Easton uses *Everyday Math* instructional material. Each student receives a pre-and posttest to identify abilities and weaknesses. Students scoring below 30 percent accuracy on the pretest are reacquainted with the prerequisite skills. An instructional plan is developed with a math specialist based on individual student need so they can keep pace with the entire class as it progresses through each math unit.

Talbot County Public Schools measures Easton's success using the Group Math Assessment of Diagnostic Evaluation, also known as G-MADE. Looking at the correlation of the G-MADE and Maryland School Assessment, Easton teaching staff determined the math learning that students needed to accomplish.

Math remains a school-wide focus through a weekly 'Mathketball' activity implemented from October through February each year. Although introduced as a "game" for students, Math-



ketball provides teachers ongoing assessments of students so they can adjust instruction for the week.

For six weeks during the summer of 2005, packets of math and reading assignments were mailed to each student to be completed and returned to the school in an enclosed school-addressed and stamped envelope. Once completed, staff scored the assignments and a new homework packet was mailed. Easton students loved getting mail and the parents enjoyed having special assignments for their child. The effort was a big success with 77 percent of 615 eligible students participating.

Student Motivation

Principal Griffith has built a model for improving student performance by providing instruction that helps students learn despite having an identified disability, and that uses diagnostic information to plan for each student's instruction. Griffith recounts a visit from state officials where she

IN TWO YEARS, THE PERCENT OF STUDENTS AT PROFICIENCY IN READING INCREASED FROM 46.5 PERCENT TO 74.5 PERCENT FOR ALL STUDENTS, AND FROM 16.7 PERCENT TO 67.8 PERCENT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.

EASTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Talbot County Public Schools

was asked, “Do you know that your kids don’t even know that they are in special education? They call their special education teacher their reading teacher.”

“We try to help each child understand their disability – their special learning style – and then know that there are strategies to use that will allow them to learn,” says Griffith. “We include the child in decisions about their educational program.” She recounts a 4th grader who asked if he could leave his intervention class and go back to his ‘regular’ teacher because he was getting all of the answers correct and working very hard during that time. The student stated that he felt ready. Griffith spoke with the teacher and they agreed to give the student the opportunity of full inclusion, and he is now keeping up with his general education class. “This student’s perception of his learning needs appears to have been right on target,” says Griffith. “At Easton, we encourage this level of self-awareness in ‘how am I doing’ for all students.”

A great deal of vocabulary building is also provided for students who are

not reading on grade level. Students are expected to listen and to respond to grade level materials, with two days a week devoted to these skill building exercises for special education students. Easton also has a large group of volunteers that visit the school twice a week and read with 2nd graders who are in the “almost fluent” category. The initiative is managed by a paid volunteer coordinator through the school’s Medicaid budget.

Sustaining Success

“As principal, I promote ongoing reflection and ongoing data analysis,” says Griffith. “We are always looking at what we are doing and determining what works. But we are not changing strategies or programs every month.” Future plans include becoming a ‘Blue Ribbon’ school; a goal that Griffith says can only be achieved by the students and the data. To stay current, school officials visit schools, keep up with the latest research, as well as changes in the student population. For example, Easton currently has students who speak eight different languages and therefore have a variety of cultural backgrounds. In addition, staff routinely deals with the problems

associated with homeless families and those who require special services for their child. The school hired a grant funded full-time social worker that serves as a family liaison to address such needs.

Progress continues to be made in school organization, climate, instructional accountability and use of data to monitor progress. In Griffith’s fifth year, only four new teachers were hired and these resulted from retirements, a new baby and relocations due to spousal employment. Now, all but four of Easton’s 49 teachers are tenured and certified.

Griffith’s strong belief in each student’s ability is at the heart of Easton Elementary School’s success. “Our philosophy is to do the ‘least’ possible to help students be successful,” says Griffith. “We look at the child’s disability and nature of it, but try to back off from doing too many accommodations. Instead, we advocate for self-regulating behavior and to show students how to be independent learners.” It achieved a great deal of success for Easton Elementary School and its students.



Guilford Elementary School

HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

3

- ▶ SPECIAL EDUCATION IS A PRIORITY IN ALL SCHOOL-WIDE DECISIONS.
- ▶ FULL INCLUSION WITH HIGH EXPECTATIONS IS A SCHOOL-WIDE PRACTICE.
- ▶ WHEN DEVELOPING IEPs, THE TEAM BACK-MAPS THE CURRICULUM TO ADDRESS GAPS AND ACCELERATE EACH STUDENT'S LEARNING.
- ▶ STUDENT DATA IS FREQUENTLY REVIEWED TO REGROUP STUDENTS FOR INSTRUCTION FOR THE PURPOSE OF ACCELERATING LEARNING.
- ▶ USE OF ON-LINE STUDENT SUPPORT PLANS IS PRACTICED TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT.

GUILFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Howard County Public Schools



Principal Genee Varlack

Under the leadership of Principal, Genee Varlack, Guilford Elementary School has made significant gains in student achievement over the past four years, and continued the work to implement full inclusion in the school. "This was a change event for general educators as well as special educators," said Varlack, formerly Assistant Principal at Guilford. "Through staff development and awareness of the rewards inclusion promotes, we have made great gains toward instructing students in their least restrictive environment. Guilford is now an inclusion school and we hold all our students to high expectations."

BY THE NUMBERS

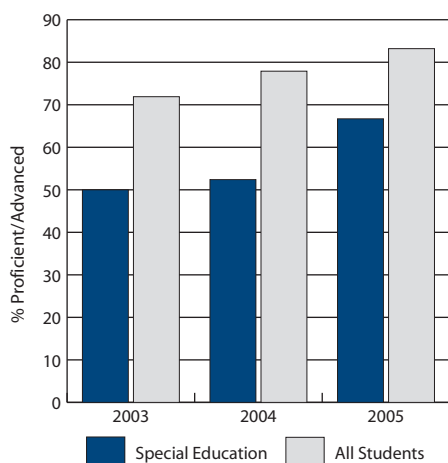
412	students Pre-K-5
9.1%	special education students
23.1%	free/reduced meals
60%	minority
19.2%	mobility
3.1%	Title I

Our School Our Students

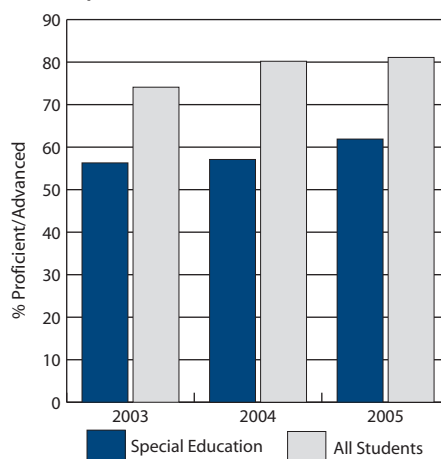
Guilford Elementary School, located in Columbia, Howard County, is an increasingly racially and socio-economically diverse student body. The growing pains and resulting gains of the school are a model of perseverance and commitment to provide all children the opportunity to achieve. Guilford was on Alert school status and a *School In Need of Improvement* in 2003-2004. The following school year Guilford's status changed based

on two consecutive years of increased Maryland School Assessment (MSA) scores. With the leadership and dedication of Guilford's staff, all student groups exceeded the state's Annual Measurable Objectives for reading and mathematics in school years 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. **Third grade reading scores for students with disabilities also increased from 11.1 percent in 2003 to 55.6 percent in 2005.**

MSA Reading 2003 to 2005 – Guilford
Special Education vs. All Students



MSA Math 2003 to 2005 – Guilford
Special Education vs. All Students



WITH THE LEADERSHIP AND DEDICATION OF GUILFORD'S STAFF, ALL STUDENT GROUPS EXCEEDED THE STATE'S ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES FOR READING AND MATHEMATICS IN SCHOOL YEARS 2003-2004 AND 2004-2005.

Student Achievement

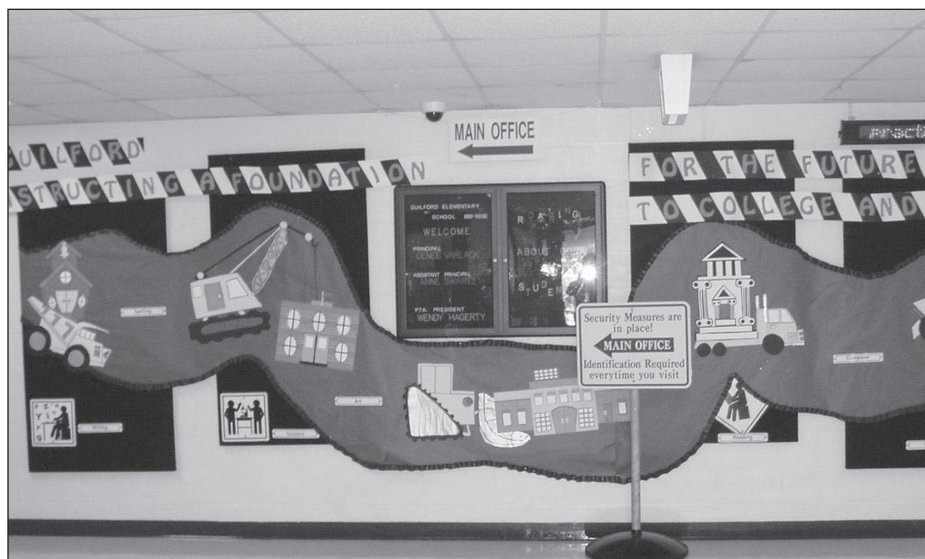
With high expectations for all students, Guilford groups students heterogeneously and provides flexibility to meet students' needs. In Howard County Public Schools, all students who are below grade level have a Student Support Plan.

Reading

At Guilford, the reading intervention team includes representatives of all grades and special education. The team convenes Student Support Team meetings, reviews individual student data and work, and identifies reading interventions appropriate for the individual student. The Student Support Plan includes supports, interventions, and a designated individual to monitor and maintain the plan electronically each quarter and share those data with teachers. The process includes an analysis of subsequent assessment data. In response to the data, a continuation, reconfiguration and/or readdress of interventions is made to move each student forward. Students

may receive a second and third dose of reading to address identified gaps. Guilford provides a variety of interventions such as *Reading Recovery*, *EdMark*, *Wilson Reading*, *Orton-Gillingham* and *Soar to Success*. The team also reviews literature on differentiated instruction, brain research, and motivating materials for additional strategies and interventions to accelerate learning for each student.

Individual grade level teams, under the direction of the Reading Support Teacher, Ms. Susan Skarin, and the Math Support Teacher, Mrs. Kelly Krownapple, review the quarterly report of all students. The reports include developmental information, progress on benchmarks, and student achievement in relationship to the student's grade level. Intermediate students are given quarterly assessments that include Selected Response questions and Brief Constructed Response questions. Following those assessments, the administration provides



EFFECTIVE PRACTICES *

- ▶ Special education is a priority in all school wide decisions.
- ▶ Use of on-line Student Support Plans is practiced to promote individual achievement.
- ▶ Student data is frequently reviewed to regroup students for instruction for the purposes of accelerating student learning.
- ▶ Use of "Kid Talk Teams" where teachers and others discuss strategies and interventions for struggling students.
- ▶ When developing IEPs, the team back-maps the curriculum to address gaps and accelerate the student's learning.
- ▶ Instructional Assistants are involved in every aspect of special education, developing behavior intervention plans, data collection, inclusion classes, and attending IEP meetings.

*Effective Practices are some of the activities, strategies and attitudes that we saw during our visit to the school that appeared to be part of the fabric of the school's success.

GUILFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Howard County Public Schools



GUILFORD UTILIZES SCHOOL STAFF TO THEIR HIGHEST POTENTIAL BY PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANTS AND OTHER SUPPORT STAFF SO THAT THEY CAN SUPPORT STUDENT INSTRUCTION IN GENERAL MATH CLASSES.

substitute coverage so that teachers can work together during the school day to collaboratively score the assessments, and analyze the results to inform future instruction. Primary grades use a summative checklist that includes the guided reading level expected and the actual reading level. Quarterly data reports for each student are sent to the Central Office for further review and support, as needed.

Mathematics

Guilford utilizes school staff to their highest potential by providing professional development to Instructional Assistants and other support staff so that they can support student instruction in math classes for the purpose of acceleration. With the professional development provided, Instructional Assistants become co-instructors in the classroom. Their presence also decreases the ratio of students to

instructors and students see them as another “teacher.”

The daily schedule includes two hours for reading. During that time, students may receive two or three direct interventions. Kindergarten students work with the reading teacher who provides instruction for enrichment and/or acceleration. For reluctant readers there are a variety of motivational and informational texts. Texts at lower reading levels ensure that students have access to grade level content in every grade. There is also a focus on developing content area vocabulary.

Guilford offers an Academic Intervention Summer School as well as Extended School Year (ESY) special education services. The services are provided in an inclusive summer school setting. Among interventions provided are *Soar to Success*, and social opportunities and language enrichment for students with autism.

How We Made Improvements

Before a student can be referred for special education, the teacher must have exhausted all interventions. “We have “Kid Talk Teams” where teachers and other staff meet to discuss strategies and interventions for a specific student,” said Principal Varlack. “We look at the whole child, academically, socially, behaviorally, and culturally.

These teams meet a minimum of two times a month.”

Focus on Inclusion

Inclusion is school-wide at Guilford and all students are held to a standard of high expectations. The belief is that exposing students to higher level skills and grade level curriculum is critical for students with disabilities. Planning for students, including the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and curriculum design, helps to address gaps and accelerate student learning. Also, students are paired with positive student role models for academics and behavior and social skills.

The entire administration is very involved in special education, attending all IEP team meetings. Special education is a priority in all school-wide decisions. Special education is in the forefront of the school’s scheduling to ensure that any changes to the schedule meet the needs of all students. There is also strong collaboration between general educators and special educators, with an emphasis on co-teaching and co-planning, recognizing that “two heads are better than one”.



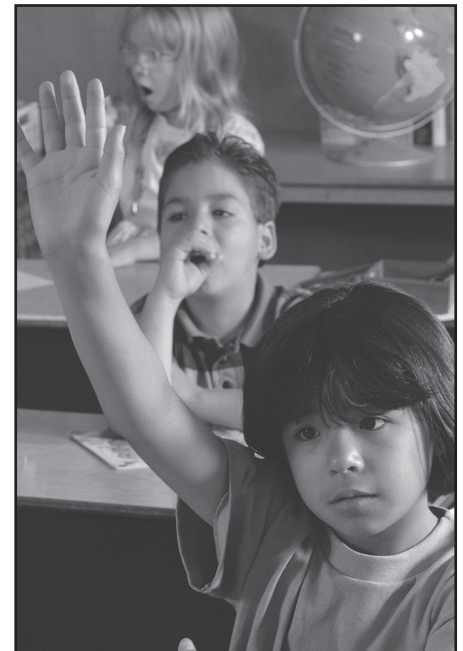
Professional Development

Professional development activities provide teachers and Instructional Assistants an opportunity to learn the latest techniques in their field. Teachers then explore how they can branch out and apply that learning to other students. Professional development is practical, providing new skills and the opportunity for teachers to develop lesson plans based on the new skills. The provision of substitutes for teachers and off site trainings allow teachers to focus on the professional development activity. Central Office Specialists also provide support for professional development.

Student Motivation

Guilford has Instructional Assistants for both regular education and special education. Instructional Assistants for special education are allocated

**SPECIAL EDUCATION IS A PRIORITY
IN ALL SCHOOL WIDE DECISIONS.**



GUILFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Howard County Public Schools



GUILFORD HAS MANY STRENGTHS, THE FIRST BEING ITS ACCESSIBILITY TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE LEARNING COMMUNITY. MEMBERS SUPPORT AND MENTOR EACH OTHER.

based on the caseload and provide support for co-teaching in the general education classes. Assistants are involved in every aspect of special education, including developing behavior intervention plans, data collection and attending IEP meetings. They also encourage students to become as independent as possible. Working with the Director of Special Education quarterly plans are developed to gradually fade support from special education students with more significant disabilities while still providing close adult supervision so that students can remain in their home school. Also, data is collected to support decisions regarding these plans; for example, documentation of the amount of time the student was on a task to measure progress toward

IEP goals. The data is then graphed for use in discussions with parents.

Sustaining Success

As Principal of Guilford Elementary School, Genée Varlack continued the work of the former Principal to implement the practices of full inclusion of special education students. Through staff development and awareness of the rewards inclusion promotes, Guilford has made great gains toward instructing students in their least restrictive environment.

Guilford has many strengths, the first being its accessibility to all members of the learning community. All members of the school family support and mentor each other. Guilford employs a modified Baldrige approach using data to monitor progress and employs several Ruby Payne strategies, focusing on the development of relationships and student accountability. There is a great deal of collaboration with parents, and the school provides training to parents to help them support their children's learning. "Parents are always welcome in the school," said Varlack. "With the leadership and dedication of the Guilford staff, parents and other supporters, we will continue to have high expectations for all of our students and provide needed supports for their success."

Logan Elementary School

BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

4

- ▶ FOR THIRD GRADE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES PROFICIENCY IN MATH ON THE MSA INCREASED FROM 43 PERCENT IN 2003 TO 100 PERCENT IN 2005.
- ▶ FIFTH GRADE MATH SCORES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES INCREASED FROM 9.1 PERCENT IN 2003 TO 75 PERCENT IN 2005.
- ▶ SIMILARLY FIFTH GRADE READING SCORES INCREASED FROM 9.1 PERCENT IN 2003 TO 50 PERCENT IN 2005.

LOGAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Baltimore County Public Schools



Principal Karen Blannard

Principal Karen Blannard and Assistant Principal Sally Barbieri joined the Logan Elementary School family in 2000, initiating a Leadership Team model that has accelerated student learning and increased parent and community involvement. Their visionary leadership combined with a standard of excellence, teacher support, empowerment and professional development, and family and community participation has unearthed a new standard of achievement for students in the southeastern Baltimore County school. Under their leadership, math and reading scores have increased for all students, and dramatically for students with disabilities. A school-wide discipline program was instituted that reduced suspensions from 300 a year to less than 20. And, data-driven decision-making and targeted academic and behavioral interventions have made this team and their staff a success.

BY THE NUMBERS

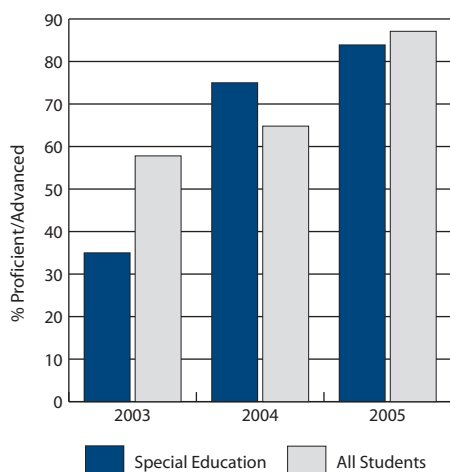
511	students Pre-K-5
14.3%	special education students
70%	free/reduced meals
50%	minority
25.1%	mobility
100%	Title I

Our School, Our Students

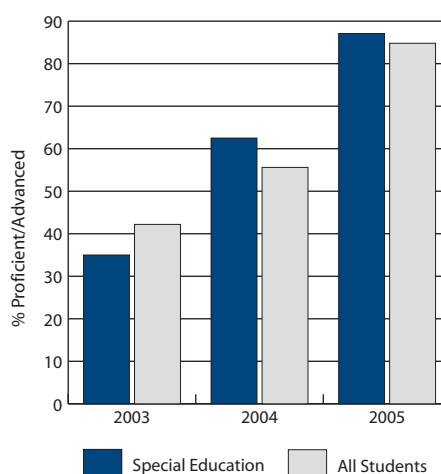
Tucked in a small neighborhood in the Southeast section of Baltimore County, Logan Elementary School is a racially and socio-economically diverse Title I school with a 50 percent minority population and 70 percent of students eligible for free and reduced meals. Logan is a full inclusion school, and many of its initiatives apply to

and benefit all students, especially those with disabilities. Every effort is made to communicate expectations to students and parents including explanations of behavior codes. Each student is provided an agenda book that parents can review every night to learn about regular classroom assignments.

MSA Reading 2003 to 2005 – Logan
Special Education vs. All Students



MSA Math 2003 to 2005 – Logan
Special Education vs. All Students



Commitment to Inclusion

Logan has a young, dynamic special education team that is totally committed to inclusion. Students in 5th grade who are reading on a 3rd grade level are in their regular classroom for reading so that they are exposed to the grade level curriculum, content and vocabulary. Students are not pulled from their classrooms. Logan has two self-contained Life Skills classrooms, and those students are included in related arts, field trips, and all other aspects of the daily school routine.

A Welcoming Place for Everyone

The administration has also made the school a welcoming place for parents and dramatically improved the community's perception of the school. Logan sponsors Honor Roll Breakfasts each quarter at 7:45 am where hundreds of parents attend to celebrate their children's achievements. During the 2004-2005 school year, Logan had 158 adults volunteer in the school, and doubled the number of Parent Conference participation over the previous year to 792.

Student Achievement

"When Assistant Principal Barbieri and I arrived at Logan Elementary, we had a shared vision of where we needed to take the school," said Principal Karen Blannard. "We divided the school's initiatives. Ms. Barbieri assumed responsibility for academics, and I took responsibility for special education and behavior. After four years, our performance clicked."

Student achievement at Logan Elementary is impressive. **Third grade students with disabilities scoring**



advanced or proficient on the math Maryland School Assessment (MSA) increased from 43 percent in 2003 to 100 percent in 2005. Fifth grade math scores for students with disabilities increased from 9.1 percent in 2003 to 75 percent in 2005. Fifth grade reading scores increased from 9.1 percent in 2003 to 50 percent in 2005.

Addressing Discipline Problems

To make these improvements, the administration had to address the challenge of 300 suspensions per year, numerous other behavior problems, and a 25 percent mobility rate with many children moving back and forth across the nearby city and county line. This made it especially difficult to institute a school wide code of conduct that was known and accepted by all. An additional barrier to developing an effective learning environment was that a number of students with

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES *

- ▶ Data-driven decision-making is used consistently.
- ▶ Academic interventions include professional development, Wilson, SIPPS, and Reading Fluency.
- ▶ Pro-Social Skills program reduced suspensions.
- ▶ Targeted incentive programs and weekly "Preferred Activity Time" recognize positive student behavior.
- ▶ The school follows Baltimore County's Assessment and Intervention Model (AIM), to reduce the number of students referred to special education.
- ▶ Despite a 25 percent mobility rate, use of a consistent code of student conduct and strong parent/community outreach has helped Logan to focus on raising achievement.

*Effective Practices are some of the activities, strategies and attitudes that we saw during our visit to the school that appeared to be part of the fabric of the school's success.

LOGAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Baltimore County Public Schools

AN ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION MODEL SCHOOL (AIM)*, LOGAN STRIVES TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS IDENTIFIED FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION BY PROVIDING EARLY LITERACY SUPPORT AND INCREASING THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS READING ON OR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL BY THE END OF SECOND GRADE.

disabilities transferring into the school had outdated or incomplete Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), so that a lot of reassessing was required at the start of each school year. The school handled this latter issue by being prepared to review and update, as needed all records of students new to Logan.

Currently, Logan has less than 20 suspensions a year, and has instituted a school-wide discipline system that focuses on character education and school-wide positive behavioral incentives. The school originally instituted a Saturday School for disruptive students who had missed class work. Recently, they changed to an after school

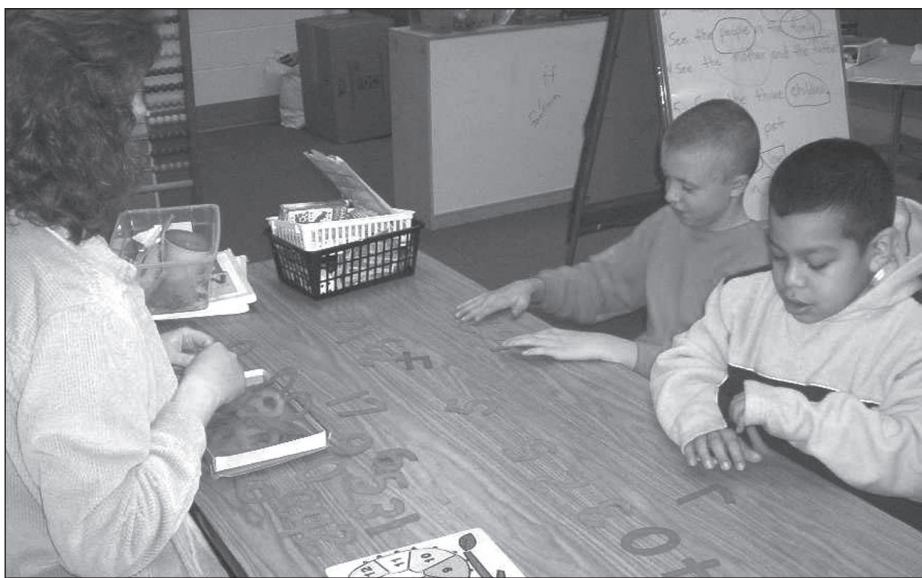
model two days a week at teacher request, because staff wanted to work more closely with their own students. The school also provides a late bus for those students.

Additionally, Logan staff receive Pro-Social Skills training and the school hired a social worker to assist students and their families. The Baltimore County Public Schools Behavior Intervention Specialist provides Crisis Intervention Training to Logan staff.

How We Made Improvements

Principal Blannard utilized her vast skills in data driven decision-making and team building to increase academic interventions for students in need to increase student achievement. Interventions include year round math and use of *Wilson, SIPPS (Systematic Instruction in Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words)*, and *Reading Fluency* for reading. Struggling readers receive an additional dose of reading daily with embedded science and social studies content. Students not on grade level by 3rd grade receive an hour of *Wilson Reading* daily in both classroom and pullout settings.

Additionally, teachers have been included in decision making about allocation of resources. As a Title I school, Logan receives extra funding to support instruction, and when possible, uses those resources to reduce class size.



As an Assessment and Intervention Model School (AIM), Logan strives to reduce the number of students identified for special education by providing early literacy support to increase the number of students reading on or above grade level by the end of second grade. The model provides ongoing professional development, four levels of assessment, core reading materials, and supplemental and intervention materials.

Logan has also instituted a block schedule with departmentalization in grades 3 through 5. This has empowered teachers to do more in-depth planning for fewer subjects, and allowed them more opportunity to differentiate instruction to address the needs of all students. Primary grades have 90 minutes of reading daily, with an additional 30 minutes for at risk students.

Assessments and Interventions

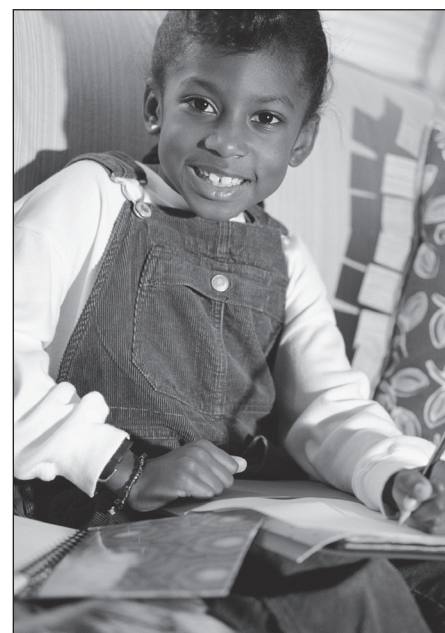
Assistant Principal, Barbieri handles most of the special education issues and is very familiar with the students with disabilities. As part of the AIM Intervention, students are frequently assessed and students grouped based on instructional need. Logan has flexible groupings for reading and can move students to different instructional groups throughout the school year. If there are concerns about an individual student, the Student Support Team meets to review the concerns,

samples of student work and other relevant information. Appropriate interventions for the student are identified and implemented for 90 days. The team then meets to review the impact of the intervention. Changes can be made at that time. Generally, students are not referred to the special education evaluation process until other interventions have been exhausted, usually no earlier than 3rd grade. The use of early, targeted interventions has effectively reduced the number of students referred for special education.

“We base our decisions on an understanding of the student and carefully determine what accommodations the student really needs,” said Blannard. “The accommodation must be required in daily instruction and must be needed for the student to access the general curriculum.” At Logan, all accommodations are considered in the decision-making process. A few students require verbatim reading of



**THE STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM
RECOMMENDS INTERVENTIONS FOR
STRUGGLING STUDENTS WHICH ARE
REVIEWED AFTER 90 DAYS. CHANGES
CAN BE MADE AT THAT TIME.**



LOGAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Baltimore County Public Schools

materials or scribes – this is a change from previous years when students were routinely given verbatim reading of materials and scribes for completion of tests. The school also has laptops and Kurzweil software available, if needed.

Teaching and Staffing

To address the high teacher turnover rate, 18 new teachers were hired and provided with hands-on support. The administration worked with the teachers on planning and sent new teachers to observe classes in some of Maryland's Blue Ribbon Schools.

Teachers also received a significant amount of professional development in reading and math provided by Baltimore County Public Schools specialists. At the time of this interview, many of these new hires have remained with the school.

A daily common grade level planning time was instituted with the principal, resource staff, reading specialist, reading teacher and mentors providing support to newer staff. Experienced teachers plan more in grade level teams with less support, although additional assistance is always available.

Sustaining Success

“We will continue to collect and analyze data and make decisions for instruction and resource allocation based on what the information tells us,” says Principal Blannard. “We will also look at services for next year based on our students’ needs.”

Logan has plans to bring on a part-time Reading Coach and a part-time Gifted and Talented Specialist to work with the increased number of students qualifying for that program. They also plan to adopt the McGraw-Hill math series, *Everyday Math Counts* for the primary grades.



LOGAN HAS PLANS TO BRING ON A PART-TIME READING COACH AND A PART-TIME GIFTED AND TALENTED SPECIALIST TO WORK WITH THE INCREASED NUMBER OF STUDENTS QUALIFYING FOR THAT PROGRAM.

Viers Mill Elementary School

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

5

- ▶ ALL STUDENTS SCORED ABOVE THE ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE FOR READING AND MATH IN THE 2005 MARYLAND SCHOOL ASSESSMENT.
- ▶ VIERS MILL WENT FROM BEING A 'CHALLENGE INITIATIVE SCHOOL' TO A *MARYLAND BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE IN 2004* AND A *NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL* IN 2005.
- ▶ IN 2005, 72.8 PERCENT OF THIRD GRADE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES SCORED ADVANCED OR PROFICIENT IN READING AND 90.9 PERCENT SCORED ADVANCED OR PROFICIENT IN MATH.

VIERS MILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Montgomery County Public Schools



Principal Jamie Virga

*Under the strong leadership of Principal Jamie Virga, student achievement at Viers Mill Elementary School has soared and transformed the school from a Challenge Initiative School that needed extra help to a Maryland Blue Ribbon School of Excellence in 2004 and the No Child Left Behind **National** Blue Ribbon winner in 2005. A Title I school with a diverse, and economically disadvantaged population, Viers Mill credits leadership and a committed, caring staff for its achievement. "We hire people who like the challenge of working with diverse kids," said Principal Virga. "As a result, the people who are selected to join the staff are people who want to work here, people who have a passion for working with a diverse student body."*

BY THE NUMBERS

656	students Pre-K-5
10.6%	special education students
68.8%	free/reduced meals
86%	minority
20.4%	mobility
36.7%	limited English proficient (LEP)
100%	Title I

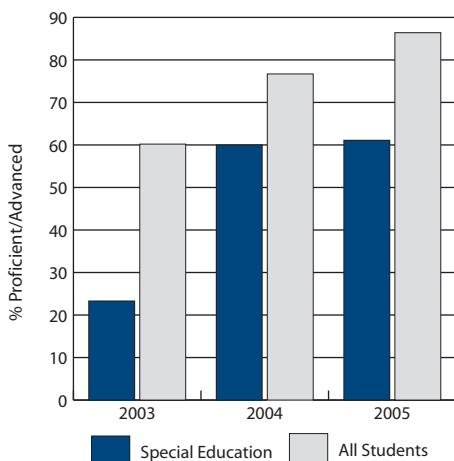
Our School, Our Students

Located in Silver Spring, Maryland, Viers Mill Elementary is a large, historically diverse school with over 80 percent minority students, including 54 percent Hispanic enrollment, and over one-third Limited English Proficient students. Viers Mill students come from more than 44 countries and speak at least 32 different languages.

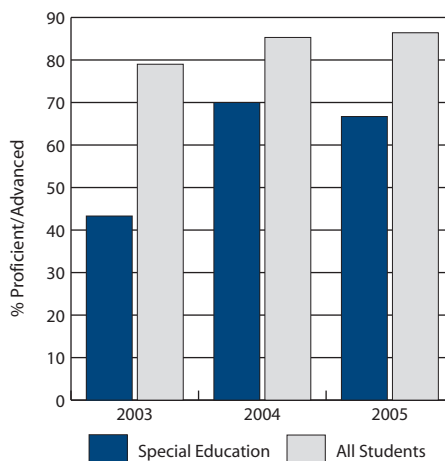
Student Achievement

In a school where all students and all subgroups scored above the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) for both reading and mathematics for the 2005 Maryland School Assessment, the transformation from Challenge Initiative School to Blue Ribbon School is a testimony to leadership, commitment,

MSA Reading 2003 to 2005 – Viers Mill
Special Education vs. All Students



MSA Math 2003 to 2005 – Viers Mill
Special Education vs. All Students



and “hiring the right people.” At Viers Mill third grade students with disabilities scored 72.8 percent advanced or proficient in reading on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) in 2005, and 90.9 percent scored advanced or proficient on MSA in mathematics. These types of dramatic improvements on State assessments won Viers Mill state-wide and national recognition.

“A number of factors have contributed to the success of Viers Mill,” says Virga. “The most important is that we hire the right people!” Virga cites a remarkable special education staff that implemented a more inclusive educational setting that began a process to fully include students with disabilities. The special education staff includes teachers in a 2nd/3rd grade LAD (language and academic disability) class and a 4th/5th grade LAD, with special education instructional assistants, special education resource teachers, school psychologist, speech language pathologist, occupational therapist and physical therapist.

Inclusion is now a focus of their School Improvement Plan, and the Instructional Leadership Team drives decision-making when developing students’ speech/language, occupational therapy and physical therapy Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals, and LEP goals.



How We Made Improvements

Teaching and Staffing

Once the decision was made to include students with disabilities, it was not hard to find teachers to volunteer to work with a LAD inclusion class. When the LAD students came into the general program they had support from the special education teacher and instructional assistant. All students have exposure to and mastery of grade level curriculum with appropriate accommodations. This requires teachers to deliver a high level of differentiated instruction. The teachers were aware of the extra challenge they assumed and were willing to provide the required differentiated instruction. In order to do that, they needed extra time with the special education teachers and additional planning time. They created

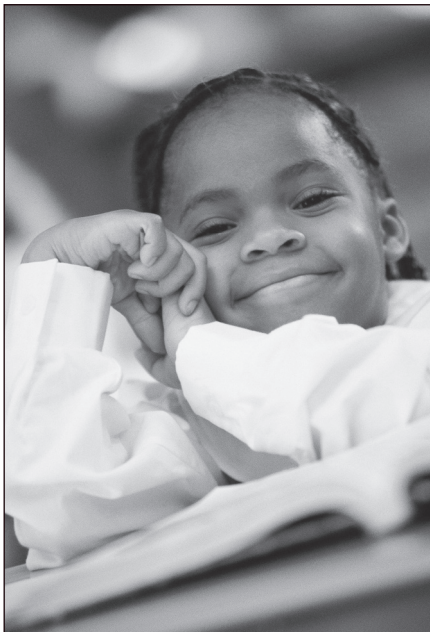
EFFECTIVE PRACTICES*

- ▶ Hiring new staff through a process that includes a team of teachers on the interview panel and establishing a clear understanding of the Viers Mill culture.
- ▶ Supporting teacher planning and collaboration by creating extended planning blocks during the school day.
- ▶ Use of co-teaching and professional development to build and expand school-wide inclusion.
- ▶ All students have exposure to and mastery of grade level curriculum with appropriate accommodations.
- ▶ Creation of grade level content maps to clarify instructional goals and support communication among staff members.
- ▶ Family Learning Nights that combine dinner, educational activities, and PTA meetings, and address the barriers to parent involvement.
- ▶ Linkages to Learning offers a network of community-based services to support children and families.

* Effective Practices are some of the activities, strategies and attitudes that we saw during our visit to the school that appeared to be part of the fabric of the school's success.

VIER'S MILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Montgomery County Public Schools



“THE GREATEST STRENGTHS OF OUR SCHOOL ARE AN INCREDIBLY DEDICATED STAFF, MOTIVATED STUDENTS, AND AN INVOLVED PARENT COMMUNITY.”

a new model for ongoing planning. “For inclusion to work we had to be clear to parents and staff about what we were doing,” says Virga. “Teachers needed time to talk, to look at student work, at IEP goals, and data.”

Initially we had one inclusion class at each level, grades 2 to 5, with daily support from the special educator and instructional assistant. We frequently used a co-teaching model – whole class instruction, small groups, whole class wrap up. Other teachers then expressed interest in being inclusion teachers. Inclusion training became professional develop-

ment for teachers that worked with the special education teachers and the instructional assistants.

Early Childhood Education

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has adopted a number of early childhood education initiatives including, full-day kindergarten, and reduced class size in kindergarten, first and second grades that have made a significant difference in the academic readiness of those students. Following the initial year of all-day kindergarten, Viers Mill first grade teachers stated that they had to revise their lesson plans because the students already knew the things that they had taught to first grade students in previous years. In addition to all-day kindergarten and reduced class sizes, school-level efforts were supported by revisions of the MCPS curriculum, new systems of assessment, and ongoing professional development for staff. In MCPS, all schools have a full-time staff development teacher. Viers Mill’s staff development teacher has played a very important role in its school improvement efforts.



Teaching and Instructional Planning

Viers Mill focuses energy on high quality instructional planning, and teachers meet regularly to plan instruction that is aligned with the MCPS curriculum. Also, the school has instituted strategies to increase instructional clarity and communication, including adopting the use of Content Maps as a tool to capture the essential indicators, vocabulary, and teaching strategies and for each unit. Academic support teachers, LAD teachers, resource teachers, LEP teachers, and reading and classroom teachers worked together to develop the Content Maps for reading and language arts. There are master teachers at each grade level who organize staff, who know the curriculum, and who have had experience at multiple grade levels. Teachers plan based on the MCPS curriculum guides, the Voluntary State Curriculum and data on individual students. Teams expanded the use of Content Maps and now develop them for math and writing. Teams then print the Content Map on enlarged posters and display them in class for teachers and students to refer to during instruction. The maps are also posted on the school computer network and can be accessed by any staff member. As a result, all teachers and paraeducators who work with the students know the “big picture” of the instructional plan and



the strategy gives students a clear idea of what they are working on. Viers Mill also developed common formative assessments to monitor student progress on key reading indicators. Students chart their progress on the front of their monitoring folder that reflects their progress on the indicators.

The administration’s commitment to collaborative teaching teams and instructional decisions based on student performance was the basis for the establishment of Critical Friends Groups (CFGs). CFGs involve staff in ongoing monitoring of individual student learning through the use of key formative assessments that reflect indicators of learning – information is then used for instructional decision-making.

IN A SCHOOL WHERE ALL STUDENTS AND ALL SUBGROUPS SCORED ABOVE THE ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES (AMO) FOR BOTH READING AND MATHEMATICS FOR THE 2005 MARYLAND SCHOOL ASSESSMENT, THE TRANSFORMATION FROM CHALLENGE INITIATIVE SCHOOL TO BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL IS A TESTIMONY TO LEADERSHIP, COMMITMENT, AND “HIRING THE RIGHT PEOPLE!”

VIERS MILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Montgomery County Public Schools



VIERS MILL ALSO PARTICIPATES IN LINKAGES TO LEARNING, A SCHOOL-BASED COLLABORATION AMONG THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND NON-PROFIT, COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICE PROVIDERS.

Sustaining Success

To support the collaboration between the school and families, Viers Mill surveyed parents about why they weren't coming to PTA meetings. Parents said that the meetings interfered with dinner; that they had no transportation or childcare; and needed translation, as many do not speak English. In collaboration with the PTA, Viers Mill started Family Learning Nights. Buses pick families up at 6:00 p.m.; serve pizza at 6:30 p.m. and at 7:00 p.m. students in Pre-K through grade 5 go to classrooms for reading activities that are directed by teachers who have signed up to work with a group. Younger siblings are cared for by employees of a nearby child care center. Parents remain in the all-purpose room for a 30-35 minute parent mini-workshop, and 20-25 minutes of PTA business. As a result, parents pay close attention at the meetings because they are not distracted by their children. At 8:00 p.m. children return to their parents with a book given to them by the school. Then parents and children read together and a prize (gift card to a book store) is awarded. Average attendance over two years

has been 160 people, including many fathers. While Title I funds are used to support this activity, schools could implement this model using alternate funding and/or donations in return for advertising.

Viers Mill also participates in Linkages to Learning, a school-based collaboration among the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, the Montgomery County Public Schools and non-profit, community-based service providers. The program provides accessible services to children and their families to improve adjustment to and performance in school, home, and community. Prevention and early intervention services include health, mental health, social services and educational support.

"The greatest strengths of our school are an incredibly dedicated staff, motivated students, and an involved parent community," said Principal Virga. "We plan to keep it that way."

CONCLUSIONS

The focus of this report has been on how all students in five Maryland elementary schools – especially those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) – are succeeding at increasingly higher performance levels within a framework of whole school improvement. The information shared is based upon interviews with principals and assistant principals actively leading school staff and students into higher levels of achievement and improved student conduct. The need for such a report grew out of the belief that so much is changing in the field of school improvement under the umbrella of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002 and in Maryland, the state Bridge to Excellence Act, that the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services at the Maryland State Department of Education wanted to share the early and positive results of what is happening for students in special education as school wide efforts for overall improvement initiatives take hold.

One of the encouraging conclusions to be drawn through the telling of each school's story is that special education students as well as the other seven NCLB-identified student subgroups are simply part of each school's improvement efforts rather than earlier approaches when most schools offered special education services as a separate program and/or separate place. For the five Maryland schools that are demonstrating high performance even though serving challenging populations, students with disabilities appear for the most part, to be participating in day-to-day opportunities designed to accelerate learning for all students in need of additional support in order to achieve at the proficient or advanced levels. Principals are quick to point out that all of their students need different kinds of instruction and various structural supports and that all student learning needs to be monitored. Rather than a stand alone function of what schools are expected to do, special education services are an integral part of the school day being driven by the commitment of

leadership and staff to overall school success that uses all resources for all students on an as needed and appropriate basis.

We chose to showcase a subset of schools that primarily serve Title I students and for one school an especially large Limited English Proficient (LEP) population. We wanted to be sure that readers recognized that as the focus on school improvement for all students picks up steam, that every student, especially those who might have been struggling learners in the past, are benefiting from focused school level leadership, expanded state content standards, and a field whereby research in educational practice is informing and changing what were once routine school decisions often based only on what was done before. School scheduling, selection of intervention programs, use of teacher time, ongoing professional development, management of the special education referral process, decisions about where instruction takes place for students in special education, and oversight of all instruction and learning continues to demonstrate new levels of practice. This phenomenon reflects many of the changes underway throughout the field of education.

Much attention nationally is being given to a subset of American schools that serve high poverty students known to be at risk of academic struggles yet continue to outpace the academic performance of other schools with similar demographics in their geographic area.¹

1 For example, reports from The Education Trust, *Gaining Traction, Gaining Ground: How Some High Schools Accelerate Learning for Struggling Students*; a report from the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, *The Power to Change, High Schools That Help All Students to Achieve*; *Inside the Black Box of High-Performing High-Poverty Schools*; from the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute Research and Evaluation Group; *A Student of MCAS Achievement and Promising Practices in Urban Special Education*; and *Similar Students, Different Results: Why Do Some Schools Do Better* released by EdSource. An analysis of the research is available on the National Center on Educational Outcomes website at www.education.umn.edu/nceo/.

Often researchers conclude that certain themes appear consistently in the higher performing schools and that these generally include: 1) strong leadership, 2) positive beliefs, 3) data analysis, 4) effective scheduling, 5) professional development, 6) scientifically based intervention programs, and 7) parent involvement.²

An analysis of what the school leaders interviewed for this report had to say reveals that each of the above-mentioned seven characteristics of effective practices was incorporated into their school's program. Notably, the principals and assistant principal interviewed gave very specific examples as to how they provided strong leadership in instruction and school climate, what the underlying belief of their school was, how consistent and systematic use of data was built into their instructional program, and how all of this was integrated into an ongoing professional development program designed to support very specific needs of their schools. The use of scheduling to allow for teacher planning, appropriate placement of students with disabilities and professional development was uniformly addressed by each of the school leaders. Selection and use of scientifically based intervention programs, driven in Maryland by our participation in the federal Reading First Initiative, is a dramatic change from what many schools were able to offer struggling readers just a few years ago. The concept of matching the intervention program to the specific instructional and learning needs of individual students continues to be a front running strategy for improving academic performance of those students who might have remained below grade level in reading and/or math for most of their academic careers.

2 Many studies identify similar "best practices" in high performing schools with details and examples varying according to the age of the students and other factors. The practices listed above were including in *Teaching All Students to Read: Practices from Reading First Schools With Strong Intervention Outcomes* by Elizabeth Crawford and Joseph Torgesen at the Florida Center for Reading Research.

And because we want to acknowledge and give voice to the inspirational leaders we spoke with, below is a short list of some of the practices we heard about and/or gleaned from our conversations with school staff that for many reasons are contributing to accelerated learning for students with disabilities:

- Maintaining school wide values of collaboration, learning and caring so that all students are valued as able members of the school community
- Establishing a community of learning and ongoing development for teachers that focuses on specific skill development to enhance the performance of diverse learners and teaching practices that build on collaboration
- Ensuring program consistency and alignment with the state content standards
- Ensuring that students with IEPs access the general curriculum and are learning through multiple strategies such as progress monitoring, back mapping the curriculum, co-teaching classes, inclusion classes, differentiating instruction with appropriate accommodations, and ongoing general and special educator training
- Preparing all students for learning, including well-designed early childhood education programs and early intervening services as appropriate
- Instituting school-based support teams or other similar mechanisms for students who are struggling learners and empowering the group to work with staff and to offer intervention programs and instructional plans for students
- Doing systematic assessments of pupil progress for all students, including the use of formative assessments, monitoring of IEPs, use of district-designed individual learning plans, and other measures
- Sharing data publicly so that principals and fellow teachers are involved with the data being used to shape individual and classroom curriculum and instructional decisions
- Protecting time on task with a high premium placed on instructional time for students and planning time for teachers, including team planning

that is both vertical and horizontal and that includes special educators

- Keeping time for small ability groups for instruction with less whole group instruction. The focus also appears to be on small group intervention rather than one-to-one intervention
- Involving parents in the learning process and listening to what parents need in order to participate in their child's school and learning
- Working within a school district that has aligned its curriculum with state content standards and has built an infrastructure designed to continue to build capacity at each of its schools

The challenge remains as to whether or not we will over time see a reduction and, in some cases, an end to persistently failing subgroups, such as special education. When we continue to have the quality of school leadership evident in the five schools featured here, we can begin to see that change is going to continue as part of the school improvement process. Most importantly, these principals are not the only leaders at their schools and may not be the only

one able to lead that school to higher performance levels. We have seen some of the principals move on to other assignments, yet growth continues. And we see leadership and practices from local school systems that support the efforts of their most gifted school-based leaders and create a climate intended to ensure additional successes. In keeping with this, below are two tables that show how each of the five schools performed on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) in reading and in math for the 2005- 2006 school year. Note that for some, progress continued as a linear trajectory while for others performance of students in special education showed a "bounce." We conclude with this reminder therefore, that working with academic achievement for all students remains a dynamic effort, one where students and/or other factors can change from one year to the next. But as you will see below, progress from the starting point of the 2002-2003 school year has improved over time and given this four-year history likely to continue to improve thanks to the hard work of the staff and the families of students at each of these schools and the local school systems where the schools reside.

Exhibit 1*

**2003 to 2006 MSA Reading Scores
Special Education Students in 5 Maryland Schools**

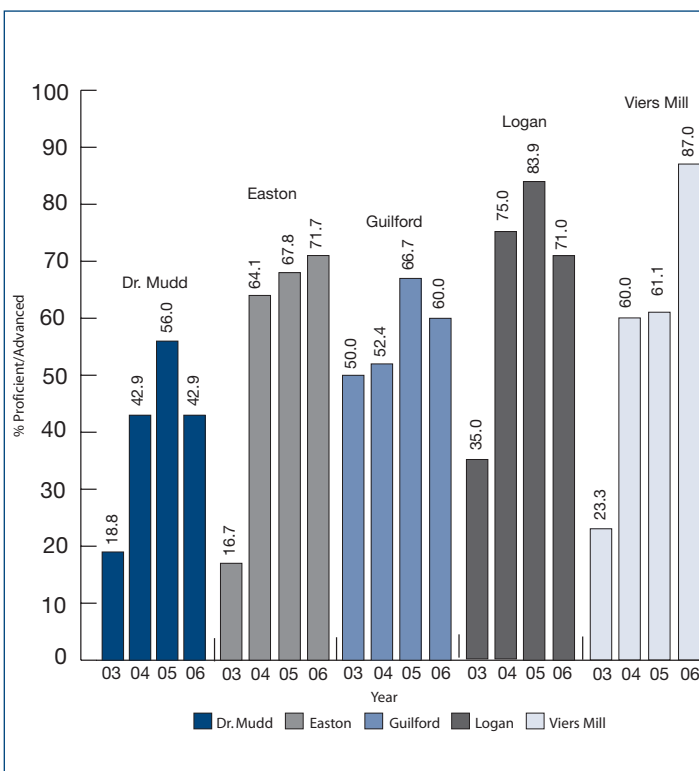
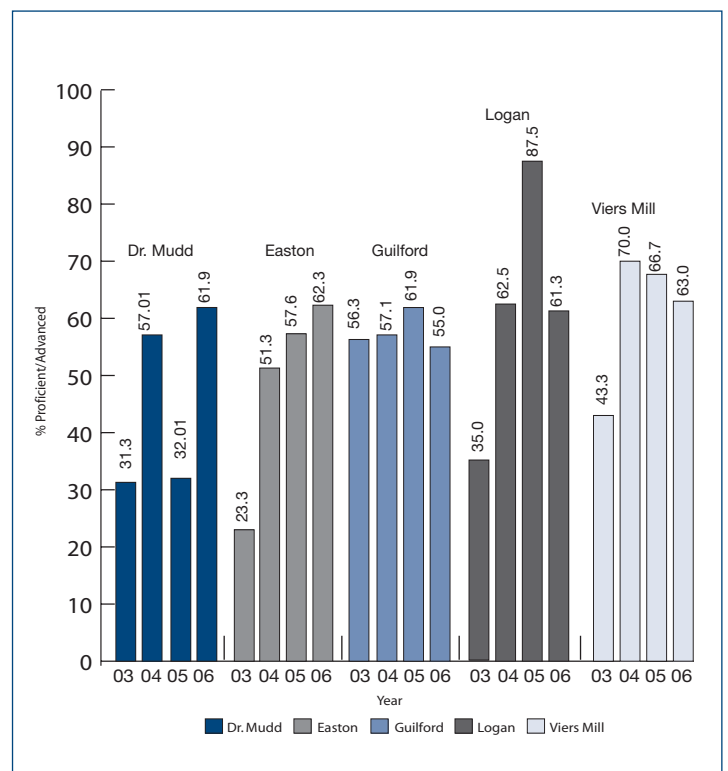


Exhibit 2*

**2003 to 2006 MSA Math Scores
Special Education Students in 5 Maryland Schools**



* Despite the performance "bounce" seen above, each of the five schools made overall AYP for 2006.

Appendix

- ▶ ABOUT THE MARYLAND SCHOOL ASSESSMENT (MSA)
- ▶ WEBSITE RESOURCES

ABOUT THE MARYLAND SCHOOL ASSESSMENT (MSA)

MSA stands for Maryland School Assessment. It is a statewide test that is given each year in reading and math to students in grades 3-8 and as an end-of-course test for secondary students, in English and Algebra/Data Analysis.

Beginning with the 2002-2003 school year, Maryland modified its decade-old testing and accountability system to improve our tests, enrich our web-base reporting, and to strengthen our rewards and interventions for schools not making progress. Under No Child Left Behind, Maryland continues to report publicly participation and performance for all students, including those with disabilities, by grade and content areas, for the Maryland School Assessment and Alternate-Maryland School Assessment. Included are the number of students tested, rates of participation, and performance data for students with disabilities as well as other student subgroups as seen on www.mdreportcard.org.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)
Each year, schools, school systems, and the state are required to measure how much progress students are making in reading and mathematics.

By the end of the school year in 2013-2014, the federal No Child Left Behind

Act requires that 100% of students be proficient or above proficient in reading/language arts and mathematics. Schools, school systems, and the state must make yearly targets in order to reach the 100% goal. This is called Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The yearly targets are called Annual Measurable Objectives.

To make AYP, schools and school systems must achieve the Annual Measurable Objectives in reading and mathematics for the all students group and for each student subgroup, and they must test at least 95% of the students. In addition, elementary and middle schools must meet yearly targets for attendance, and high schools must meet yearly targets for graduation.

Results in Nine Categories
The reading and mathematics results for students are reported in nine different categories. The categories are: all students, students who are receiving free or reduced price meals (FARMS), students receiving special education services, students who know no or very little English (called limited English proficient), and five racial/ethnic groups: American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, African American, White (not of Hispanic origin), and Hispanic.

Results for these groups, the disaggregated data, may be found on the web site of the **Maryland State Department of Education at www.mdreportcard.org**

Proficiency Levels
Each student's performance is graded as Basic, Proficient, or Advanced. Basic is the lowest level of performance. Proficient is the middle level and Advanced is the highest level. The goal is to have all students perform at the proficient or advanced level. Performance is reported as the percent of students in each grade who achieved the Basic, Proficient, or Advanced standard.

The Alternate Maryland School Assessment (Alt-MSA) is taken by less than one percent of Maryland students who have severe cognitive disabilities. Performance is reported as the percent of students in each grade who achieved the Basic, Proficient, or Advanced standard. Beginning in 2005, up to two percent of Maryland students who were identified for special education were eligible to appeal their MSA results under a Mod-MSA process, pending release of federal guidelines to develop a modified state assessment.

Description of MSA Proficiency Levels

Basic Percentage

Reading
Students at this level are unable to read and understand literature and passages of information that are written for students in their grade.

Mathematics
Students at this level show they have only partially mastered the skills and concepts that Maryland expects students to know and be able to do at their grade level.

Proficient Percentage

Reading
Students at this level can read text written for students in their grade, and they can demonstrate the ability to understand literature and passages of information.

Mathematics
Students at this level show they have an understanding of fundamental grade level skills and concepts and can generally solve entry-level problems in mathematics.

Advanced Percentage

Reading
Students at this level can regularly read text that is above their grade level, and they can demonstrate the ability to understand complex literature and passages of information.

Mathematics
Students at this level show they can regularly solve complex problems in mathematics and demonstrate superior ability to reason mathematically.

WEBSITE RESOURCES

Reading Interventions

Linkages to reading interventions reported in use by the schools in this report include:

www.devstu.org/sipps

www.lindamoodbell.com

www.ortongillingham.com

<http://rigby.harcourtachieve.com> (Rigby PM Benchmark program)

www.riverdeep.net (Edmark)

www.schoolirect.com (Intervention for Soar to Success)

www.sra4kids.com (Corrective Reading)

www.wilsonlanguage.com

Maryland State Department of Education

www.marylandpublicschools.org

Final Report: Maryland Committee for Selecting Core Reading Programs; and Final Report of the Maryland Evaluation Committee for Selecting Supplemental and Intervention Programs and Materials

Both reports may be accessed through the dropdown menu for Programs. Click on Reading First and scroll down. The Final Report is intended to guide Maryland users in selecting appropriate Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) core reading programs for use in their schools or school system. The second report (January 2006) provides information on reading interventions. Programs have been identified for students in kindergarten through grade 3, but may be appropriate for special education students and/or other older students reading below grade level.

Big Ideas in Beginning Reading

<http://reading.uoregon.edu/>

Provides definitions, descriptions, teaching techniques, assessment information, and examples of the five Big Ideas of early literacy: phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, and fluency with text, vocabulary, and comprehension. Provides links to other national reading resources

Florida Center for Reading Research

www.fcrr.org

Provides detailed information about supplemental and intervention programs for reading for grades K-3, including programs that are currently being implemented in the five Maryland schools in this report. Provides additional information for administrators, including progress monitoring.

National Reading Panel

www.nationalreadingpanel.org

Provides researched based information on teaching and reading, and free publications and materials.

Reading First Report

www.msde.state.md.us/docs/ReadingFirst.doc

This report provides educators detailed information about SBRR that is essential in reading programs and provides information based on the implementation of REA grants.

The Four-Blocks® Literacy Model

www.wfu.edu/fourblocks

Provides information on the Four-Blocks literacy framework including, Guided Reading, Self Selected Reading, Writing and Words.

The Partnership for Reading

www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading

The Partnership for Reading, a collaborative effort between the National Institute for Literacy, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the U.S. Department of Education, provides detailed findings of evidence-based research on reading.

Mathematics Interventions

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)

www.nctm.org

A paid membership organization, NCTM provides information on teaching mathematics, including free access to the Principles and Standards for School Mathematics.

Stevenson Learning Skills

www.stevensonsemple.com

Provides information on the Semple Math program including adaptations for older students with learning disabilities.

TouchMath.... The Alphabet of Mathematics

www.touchmath.com

TouchMath is a comprehensive program to teach counting, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, time, money and fractions to both general and special education students.

UCSMP Everyday Mathematics Center

<http://everydaymath.uchicago.edu/index.shtml>

Provides information for educators, parents and students on the Everyday Mathematics Program, a comprehensive pre-kindergarten through 6th grade mathematics curriculum developed by the University of Chicago School Mathematics Project. See The What Works Clearinghouse at <http://w-w-c.org/> for a 2006 metaanalysis of research on program effectiveness.

WEBSITE RESOURCES

School Wide Discipline

Aha! Process, Inc.

www.ahaprocess.com/

Provides information about the guiding principles behind The Aha! Process, Inc., founded by Dr. Ruby Pane, as well as information about upcoming trainings, workshops, books, videos and current research.

PBIS Maryland

www.pbismaryland.org

Provides technical assistance to schools implementing PBIS and evaluation services through the Maryland State Department of Education, Sheppard Pratt Health Systems, and Johns Hopkins Center on the Prevention of Youth Violence.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

www.pbis.org

Established by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, to give schools capacity-building information and technical assistance for identifying, adapting, and sustaining effective school-wide disciplinary practices.

General Websites

Just For The Kids

www.just4kids.org/

Provides information about performance levels of students by school and state, including scores of high performing schools. Links to a national study on high performing schools.

National Center on Student Progress Monitoring

www.studentprogress.org

Provides downloadable articles and presentations on the scientifically based practice of student progress monitoring. Housed at the American Institutes for Research and works in conjunction with Vanderbilt University. This is a federally-funded program.

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHY)

<http://nichcy.org>

NICHY connects people with resources on disabilities in infants, toddlers, children and youth, and provides information on public policies, research and effective educational practices for children with disabilities.

National Institute for Early Education Research

<http://nieer.org>

Provides objective, nonpartisan information on early childhood education based on research, and offers independent research-based advice and technical assistance to policy makers, journalists, researchers and educators.

The Access Center

www.k8accesscenter.org

A national technical assistance center that provides information assistance designed to improve educational outcomes for elementary and middle school students with disabilities, including downloadable presentations and user-friendly forms in support of co-teaching and response to interventions. The center is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs.

The Education Trust

www.2edtrust.org

Works to close the achievement gaps that separate low-income students and students of color. Offers research specific to identifying 'achievement patterns among different groups of students.'

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs

<http://idea.ed.gov/explore.home>

Provides links to the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) regulations published in the Federal Register on August 14, 2006 and related information. Of specific interest may be the new provisions for Early Intervening Services and the Identification of Specific Learning Disabilities.

Photographs on pages 4 and 10 courtesy of
Dr. Samuel A. Mudd and Easton Elementary Schools.
Photo credits to Aaryn Michele Fisher on pages 16, 17, 22, 28, and 29.



Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201
410-767-0100 • 410-767-333-6442 TTY/TDD
www.marylandpublicschools.org