More than ever, if we want our children to succeed and our country and communities to prosper, students must graduate from high school with high-level knowledge and skills in math, science, and language. Whether a student wants to go to college or get a good job, laying the strongest foundation in high school is essential. Even if students don’t know what they want to do after high school, taking the right courses right now will allow them to follow any path they choose later on.

With Maryland’s new higher standards, an army of talented, dedicated teachers, and parents who want the best for their children, what’s keeping some of our students from achieving? For many, it’s a lack of motivation and a clear understanding of how the skills and content they’re learning in school will affect their ability to earn a decent wage and live the life they want.

The Motivating Factor
In a recent national survey of high school dropouts, nearly 7 in 10 cited “lack of motivation” as the primary reason for not completing high school. Nearly the same number said they could have graduated if they’d tried. Two-thirds said they would have worked harder in school if more had been demanded of them.

More than 8 in 10 dropouts surveyed said there should be more opportunities for real-world learning and that students need to see the connection between school and getting a good job. Nearly all regretted their decision.

For these young people, it’s an uphill climb. For today’s students, the future could be brighter.

Maryland Scholars
The Maryland Scholars program offers students what they need and, apparently, what they want—credible reasons, good information, and a vision of what is possible for them. With MSDE and the Governor’s Office, the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education is promoting Maryland Scholars, which encourages students to complete a rigorous and specific course of study—with an emphasis on math, science, and foreign language (see Maryland Scholars: Course of Study).

But Maryland Scholars isn’t just a set of courses. The program mobilizes parents, teachers, school counselors, community leaders, employers, and business volunteers to inspire, motivate, and help students to achieve academic—and, ultimately, professional and personal—success.

Strong Messages, Credible Messengers
We are reaching students—in classrooms, online, and in print—with strong messages and believable messengers about the critical connection between achievement in school and success in life.

• In classrooms: Two-thousand volunteers from varied backgrounds and careers talk with 8th and 9th graders about where they want to go in life and how rigorous courses and hard work in high school will help them get there.

Maryland Scholars: Course of Study
Courses in red are not currently required for a Maryland High School Diploma.

• English: 4 credits
• Math: 3 credits—algebra I; geometry; algebra II
• Science: 3 lab science credits—biology; chemistry; physics [preferred]
• Social Studies: 3 credits—U.S. history; world history; government
• Foreign Language: 2 credits—both in the same language

Students must have a 2.5 GPA to qualify for the program. Students graduating with a GPA of 3.5 or higher receive extra recognition.

• Online: BeWhatIWantToBe.com engages students in a teen-focused, interactive exploration of careers and the academic preparation required for them. The site—designed for and by teens—includes profiles of people in interesting careers; tips for getting into and financing college, preparing for a career, saving money, and making the most of the high school years; and a variety of activities and links that motivate students to take real, next-step actions.

• In print: Students receive Be What I Want To Be magazine from the speakers who visit their classrooms. The magazine reinforces the speakers’ messages, highlights material from the Be What I Want to Be Web site, and encourages students to visit the site and start planning their future.

Tuition Incentives
Students and educators alike have told us that incentives are important motivators. And money may be the most effective incentive of all. Pell-eligible students who complete the Maryland Scholars course of study could qualify for a federal Academic Competitiveness Grant, worth up to $750 for...
college freshmen and up to $1,300 for college sophomores. Plus, college
juniors and seniors who major in math, science, engineering, technology, or
specific foreign languages—and who carry at least a 3.0 GPA—could
qualify for up to $4,000 in federal grant money.

It’s Working
By encouraging rigor, demonstrating relevance, building relationships, and
providing incentives, Maryland Scholars is creating an environment where
students understand and appreciate the value of a good education and are
willing to make an investment in their own future.

Data collected in Frederick and Harford counties—districts that began
piloting Maryland Scholars in 2003—show a substantial increase in the
number of students completing rigorous math and science courses,
particularly among minority and low-income students. For example, in
Frederick County, 429 more students completed algebra II in 2005 than did
in 2003 (a 20-percent increase), and 531 more students completed a 4th
science course (a 64-percent increase). The number of African-American
students completing chemistry increased by 55 percent and the number of
Hispanic students completing algebra II doubled.

And in June 2006, 1,974 Frederick County seniors—more than two-thirds
of the graduating class—received Maryland Scholars certificates along with
their diplomas.

All of which goes to show that, working together, it is possible to get all
students to achieve at higher levels.

Maryland Scholars is offered in all 24 school systems.

For more information about the program, contact Kathy Scay at
kathy@mbrt.org. Kathy is deputy director of the Maryland Business
Roundtable for Education.

Percent Increase in Rigorous Course Completion
Fredrick County, 2003 to 2005

88% of all U.S.
8th graders expect to go to college.
But, once in high school, just 47% of them take
a college-prep coursework.

Seventy-two percent of all U.S.
high school graduates go to college
within two years of graduating.
But 40% of four-year college students and
63% of community college students
have to take at least one remedial
course once they get there.

— Betraying the College Dream
Stanford University’s Bridge Project
The Maryland Business Roundtable for Education launched Be What I Want to Be in 2004 as part of Maryland Scholars, a program designed to show students the connection between achievement in school and success in the workplace. Be What I Want to Be is an interactive Web site and a supporting annual magazine. It sustains the Maryland Scholars conversation with high school students in many ways, and moves students from mere interest in careers to actively preparing for them. Be What I Want to Be boosts student motivation by highlighting exciting careers and explaining what has to be accomplished in school to qualify for them.

During the 2005-06 school year alone, more than 40,000 visitors explored BeWhatIWantToBe.com, and more than 1,100 students created personal accounts on the site.

**BE WHAT I WANT TO BE**

Read about people all over Maryland in great jobs and what they had to do to get them.

(It doesn’t always mean going to college.)

- Learn how to write a professional résumé that will get you noticed.
- Search colleges by the program of study you’re interested in.
- Find out what different jobs really pay and what you can expect to earn over your lifetime.
- Get tips on applying for college scholarships and financial aid.
- Take a career self-assessment and see what fits you.
- Find out what local college admissions officers look for in their applicants. (What do you think they say matters most? SAT or GPA? See Answer #8 in “What do you say?”)
- Explore the true “cost of living” and build your own budget online.
- Find out what courses you’ll have to take, year by year, to get into the job or college you want.
- Test your college and career knowledge with quizzes.
- Tell us about yourself by answering our online poll.

**WHAT DO YOU SAY?**

1. A term of college admissions is better to be
   a) deeply involved with a few school groups or spread the wealth among many?
   b) What percentage of jobs today can be filled by workers with a high school diploma or less?
   c) On average, how much does it cost each year to attend a private four-year college/Public four-year college/ Public two-year college?
   d) True or False: Your high school grades can be a sign of how much money you’ll earn later.
   e) Three-quarters of company officials in Maryland said everyone they hire must have... what will?
   f) What proportion of employers say they check job applicants’ high school transcripts?
   g) Most high school students say they’ve picked their chosen career because...
      a) it makes doing something they like or
      b) they’ll make good money doing it.

2. What obstacle did you face growing up, and how did you overcome it?
   "I didn’t have the money to go to college."
   "I had a lot of people that taught me a lot of different skills."
   "I had a lot of guidance counselors that helped me."
   "I found people who really believed in me."
   "I found a mentor who helped me."

3. What choices have you made that helped you get where you are today?
   "I decided to focus on my education and do positive things."
   "I met people who have been very good to me."

4. What do you say?
   "What do you think they say matters most? SAT or GPA?"
   "What do you think matters most? SAT or GPA?"
   "What do you think matters most? SAT or GPA?"
   "What do you think matters most? SAT or GPA?"
   "What do you think matters most? SAT or GPA?"

5. What is your dream job?
   "I want to be a doctor."
   "I want to be a lawyer."
   "I want to be a teacher."
   "I want to be a pilot."
   "I want to be a chef."

6. What do you do?
   "I’m a software engineer."
   "I’m a sports sales representative."
   "I’m a commercial real estate lawyer."
   "I’m a educator."
   "I’m a lawyer."

7. What obstacle did you face growing up, and how did you overcome it?
   "I had a lot of people that taught me a lot of different skills."
   "I had a lot of guidance counselors that helped me."
   "I found people who really believed in me."
   "I found a mentor who helped me."

8. What does the future hold for you?
   "I want to keep on learning and become more knowledgeable."
   "I want to keep on learning and become more knowledgeable."
   "I want to keep on learning and become more knowledgeable."
   "I want to keep on learning and become more knowledgeable."
   "I want to keep on learning and become more knowledgeable."

9. What is your dream job?
   "I want to be a doctor."
   "I want to be a lawyer."
   "I want to be a teacher."
   "I want to be a pilot."
   "I want to be a chef."

10. What do you do?
    "I’m a software engineer."
    "I’m a sports sales representative."
    "I’m a commercial real estate lawyer."
    "I’m a educator."
    "I’m a lawyer."

When you create a free personal account, you’ll automatically enter to win prizes—prizes like books, games, gift cards, and iPods. Maryland students who log in to the account can register for completing activities in the site and building up your points. Student- and school-based contests will be held throughout the year, and you can earn up to 100 points per day! Get a friend to sign up and earn another $2. Fill out your career goal sheet when you sign up and earn 50 more. Contest prizes are announced throughout the year. For more information, visit BeWhatIWantToBe.com.