MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Achievement Matters Most

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TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D. llowery

DATE: July 24, 2012

SUBJECT: Maryland School Assessment (MSA) Results 2012

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this action is to inform the Board of the 2012 Maryland MSA Results and the implications for the new accountability system under Maryland's ESEA Flexibility.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The Maryland School Assessment (MSA) is a series of end of course tests designed to measure and report student mastery of State content standards. Maryland has administered the MSAs for ten years now. The assessments and standards have not changed. MSA assesses reading and mathematics aligned with the Maryland Content Standards in grades 3-8. Approximately 367,700 students were tested in school year 2011-2012. Students are given a score of basic, proficient or advanced on the assessment. Traditionally, the MSA data has been used to fulfill the federal requirements for accountability.

The MSA data release marks the first under Maryland's recently granted flexibility regarding the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. Under NCLB law, all students must be scoring at proficient levels by 2014, and progress toward that goal was gauged by a statewide measurement known as Adequate Yearly Progress. Under Maryland's new "School Progress" plan, each school is measured against more realistic and achievable targets, and must work to strengthen achievement across all subgroups.

This year's data begins a new baseline, and schools and systems will work to cut in half over the next six years the percentage of students not scoring at proficient levels on the exams. As in the past, the accountability system measures all students as well as racial subgroups and groups of students receiving additional services, such as special education, English language learners and FARMs. Schools and systems must work to meet improvement targets, known as annual measureable objectives (AMOs). AMOs will be calculated for the "all student" population in each school as well as in special service and racial subgroups.

SUMMARY:

We are pleased that elementary and middle school students continue to demonstrate high rates of proficiency in reading and mathematics. Nearly 90 percent of elementary school students are demonstrating proficient or better performance in reading and mathematics. Among our middle school students, more than 80 percent met the proficient standard in reading and 43.9 percent exceeded that standard. In mathematics, more than 75 percent of middle school students met the performance standard and 31.8 percent exceeded it. As Maryland students attain these high rates of proficiency, the steep increases that occurred in the early years of MSA have predictably leveled off.

ACTION:

This is for informational purposes only.

LML/mg