



September 2002

New Maryland School Assessment Announced

The Maryland Department of Education has announced the Maryland School Assessment will be the new measure of student achievement in K-8 reading and math and grade 10 reading. On September 18, 2002, the Board of Public Works approved the Department's contracts with two testing companies, Harcourt Educational Measurement and CTB McGraw-Hill, to build the new test.

The Maryland School Assessment replaces MSPAP, fulfills recommendations of the Visionary Panel for Better Schools, and meets the new federal testing requirements of President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). **Beginning in March 2003, the state's third-, fifth-, and eighth-graders will take the Maryland School Assessment in reading and math; 10th-graders will take the test in reading only, as high school math achievement will be measured by the Maryland High School Assessment in Geometry.**

"The process we are using to create the Maryland School Assessment is both thoughtful and thorough," said State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick. "Our goal is to create a high-quality test that is aligned with Maryland standards and that produces accurate, useful, and timely information on individual students. CTB McGraw-Hill and Harcourt Educational Measurement will help us achieve that goal."

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Maryland's previous K-8 assessment, MSPAP, was written and scored by Maryland educators with technical involvement from testing companies. Each new test item was developed, field-tested, and revised over a period of years. Under NCLB, Maryland must have new tests in place by 2002-2003, which requires immediate changes to the testing program. By working with educational testing companies, the Department will have access to test items already written and field-tested, allowing it to create a high-quality test quickly. Some new test items must be written by the test vendor this fall to ensure a tight match between the new test and the Maryland Content Standards.

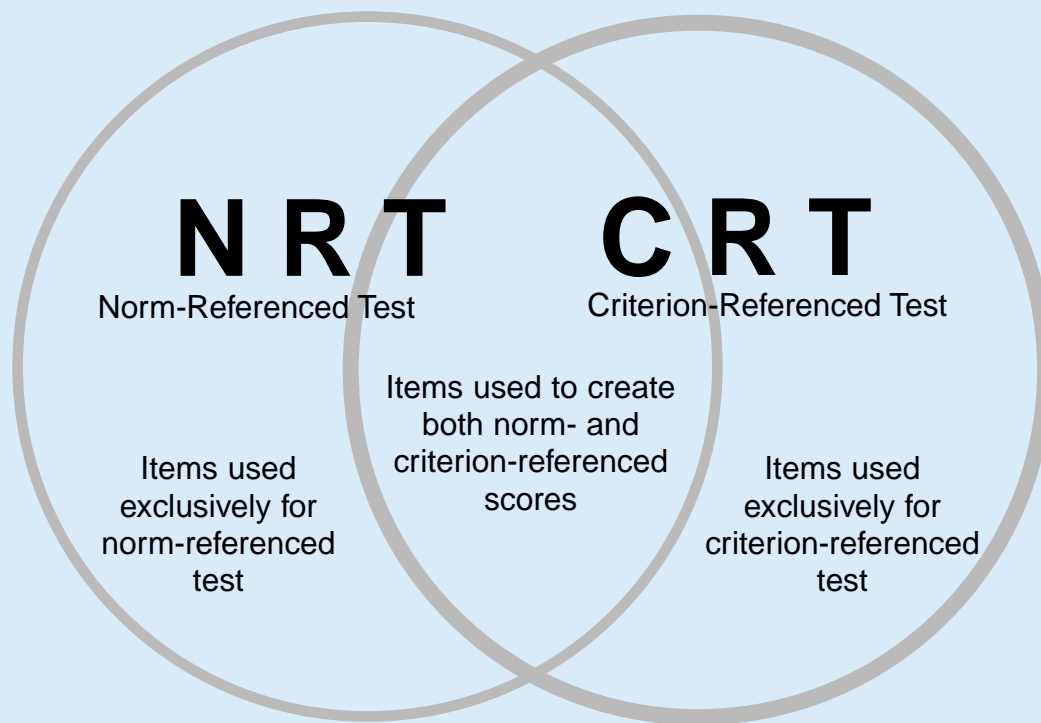
Per pupil, each test will run about \$16 for mathematics and \$14 for reading. More than half of the cost will be paid for with federal funds included in the NCLB legislation. This compares favorably with the cost of MSPAP, which had cost approximately \$35 per student in the last year of the test. MSPAP costs were borne entirely by the state.

SELECTION PROCESS

In June 2002, scores of education stakeholders — state and local content and testing specialists, parents, teachers, and university professors — examined commercial tests from educational testing companies. For days they analyzed test items to determine which commercially available test products best matched Maryland's standards. After the stakeholders completed their analysis and issued recommendations, the Department engaged Achieve, Inc. — an independent, non-profit organization based out of Washington, D.C. — to conduct an additional, in-

Maryland School Assessment

Overlapping of NRT and CRT Items



depth study of the commercial tests and the Maryland Content Standards. Based on the studies involving stakeholders and Achieve, Inc., the Department has engaged CTB McGraw-Hill to build the math and 10th-grade reading portions of the Maryland School Assessment, and Harcourt Educational Measurement to build the 3rd- through 8th-grade reading portion.

NORM- AND CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

In general, there are two types of tests: norm-referenced and criterion-referenced. A norm-referenced test is designed to compare test-takers to a national sample of students, and the test score is often expressed as a national percentile rank. For example, if a student earns a score of the 60th percentile, he/she performed as well as or better than 60% of the national sample.

A criterion-referenced test measures student performance against specified standards and indicates if a student has learned a particular body of content.

MSPAP, for example, was a criterion-referenced test. It measured how well students in a school had mastered the Maryland Learning Outcomes. Scores were expressed in terms of proficiency levels — satisfactory and excellent — based on how well students demonstrated mastery of the content.

The Maryland School Assessment will be a hybrid of these two test types; norm-referenced and criterion-referenced portions will overlap (see diagram above) to produce both types of scores. The test will provide a norm-referenced score that describes how well a student performed in reading and math compared to his/her peers nationally. It will also produce a criterion-referenced score that describes how well a student has mastered the reading and math content specified in the Maryland Content Standards. Score reports will categorize students' and schools' performance as basic, proficient, or advanced. These performance groupings are referred to as proficiency levels.

BUILDING THE MARYLAND SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

To build the Maryland School Assessment, testing experts will begin with a commercial, norm-referenced test. For example, in math, they will start with CTB McGraw-Hill’s *Terra Nova* series math test. These test items will produce a norm-referenced score. Then, test experts will identify test items that match the Maryland Content Standards. Finally, they will write new items to ensure good coverage of the Maryland Content Standards. The criterion-referenced score will be produced from the new test items created as well as those norm-referenced items previously identified as matching the Maryland Content Standards. **The Department will use only the criterion-referenced score to make accountability decisions.**

Students will take the Maryland School Assessment for about 90 minutes per day over four days — two days each for reading and math.

In contrast, MSPAP required about nine hours of testing over five days and produced only a CRT score. The new test will produce both an NRT and CRT score.

The Maryland School Assessment will comprise a mix of multiple-choice and short-essay questions. Students will complete all test activities independently (i.e., there is no group work required) and minimal manipulatives will be used.

TEST ADMINISTRATION AND SCORE REPORTING

The Maryland School Assessment will be phased in over a three-year period. See the chart below for the subjects and grades to be tested each year. Results from the March 2003 administration should be available by late August. In subsequent years, the Department plans to release results before the school year ends, possibly by June 1.

Maryland School Assessment

Subjects Administered By School Year

2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005	
Grades	Subjects	Grades	Subjects	Grades	Subjects
3,5,8 (operational test)	Reading Math	3,4,5,6,7,8 (operational test)	Reading Math	3,4,5,6,7,8 (operational test)	Reading Math
10 (operational test)	Reading	10 (operational test)	Reading	10 (operational test)	Reading
*Varies (operational test)	Geometry HSA	*Varies (operational test)	Geometry HSA	*Varies (operational test)	Geometry HSA
*Varies (operational test)	Biology HSA	*Varies (operational test)	Biology HSA	*Varies (operational test)	Biology HSA
				3, 5, 8 (field test)	Science

* The High School Assessments (HSA) in geometry and biology are administered to students after they complete the appropriate coursework. These tests will fulfill the requirements of No Child Left Behind to test math and science within grades 10-12. They are listed in the chart above for reference purposes, but are separate tests from the new Maryland School Assessment. Because the English HSA is administered in grade 9, it could not fulfill the federal requirement to test reading within grades 10-12.

“Our goal is to create a high-quality test that is aligned with Maryland standards and that produces accurate, useful, and timely information on individual students.”

—Nancy S. Grasmick

Maryland has always broken test results down by gender, race, and other characteristics. The Maryland School Assessment results will be broken down similarly, reporting scores by race, poverty, disability, and English proficiency. The purpose of this type of data — called disaggregated data — is to allow parents and teachers to see more than the average score for a school. The disaggregated data will be used to help schools plan activities aimed at eliminating achievement gaps.

Subject-area scores will be broken into three to five content categories in which student performance will be described. For example, a student’s reading score will be broken down to show how well he or she performed on the comprehension sections of the test.

Students’ norm-referenced and criterion-referenced scores will be sent home to parents.

ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS TARGET

Under NCLB, all Maryland students must be proficient or better in reading and math by 2013-2014. Each school will approach and achieve this goal in its own way and at its own pace. **To help schools set a course for success, Maryland will assign schools an Adequate Yearly Progress target (AYP) for the new test.** In order to be considered improving, schools must achieve their AYP among all populations of students, including minority, special education, poverty, and limited English proficient students.

There will be consequences for schools that consistently fail to achieve their AYP. For example, schools may have to offer parents the opportunity to send their children to another school or provide students free supplemental services like tutoring. Schools may also be named to local or state reconstitution.

VOLUNTARY STATE CURRICULUM

The Department, in cooperation with local content specialists, teachers, and other educators, is developing a voluntary state curriculum — one of the recommendations from the Visionary Panel for Better Schools. Working from the Maryland Content Standards, Maryland Learning Outcomes, and Core Learning Goals, authors will develop a grade-by-grade curriculum for all subjects. It’s expected that the new curriculum will not depart significantly from the Content Standards, but it will provide much more detail and clarity. Curriculum authors will focus on creating an essential curriculum (no methodologies or daily lesson plans) that creates a clear target for teachers. The Department also plans to create supporting curricular products like formative assessments and examples of student work.

The preK-8 curriculum will be finished by spring 2003 so that local school systems have time over the summer to fine-tune their curricula for the 2003-2004 school year. Teachers who have been teaching the Maryland Content Standards and preparing students with the foundational skills needed to achieve the standards will be on target. Also, late this fall or early winter the Department will post sample test items on its Web sites (mdk12.org and marylandpublicschools.org) to help educators and the public better understand the test.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Look for more information on the Maryland School Assessment, voluntary state curriculum, and other important changes in future editions of the *MSDE Bulletin* and *Maryland Classroom*. Up-to-the-minute information can be found in the News Release section of the Department Web site: marylandpublicschools.org. Learn more about test vendors on the Web at www.ctb.com (CTB McGraw-Hill) and www.hemweb.com (Harcourt Educational Measurement).

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