



What MSDE Did Over Summer Vacation

Empty classrooms — packed schedules



Maryland students have just begun a school year that straddles two centuries. "But make no mistake," says Dr. Grasmick, "we're always looking ahead."

It wasn't much of a vacation at 200 West Baltimore Street, that's for sure. In fact, we tackled some of our biggest initiatives of the year over the summer months. In this issue, we'll look at four of the projects that kept us — and hundreds of you — so very busy: content standards, academic intervention, middle grades restructuring, and high school assessments.

Content standards give locals & teachers direction

Eighteen months in development, Maryland's content standards got the State Board of Education's seal of approval in July. The content standards specify what students should know and be able to do in math, science, English/language arts, and social studies by the end of grades 3, 5, 8, and 12. Some local school systems have already begun rewriting their curricula to incorporate the new state standards.

"Standards are the bedrock of school reform and accountability," said State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick. "They lend focus to our vision and credence to our assessments. At the same time, they fulfill our mandate to ensure that *all* children have the opportunity to study equally rigorous content."

Still to come...

- 2000** Produce one document that integrates the content standards with the Maryland Learning Outcomes and Core Learning Goals.
- 2002** Revise state assessments to reflect content standards.

More than 200 teachers and administrators from all 24 local school systems, and education experts from two national groups with standards-development expertise, helped write the standards.

What does a standard look like? Here's a glimpse.

- English:** By the end of grade 3, students should be able to match oral words to printed words.
- Science:** By the end of grade 5, students should be able to use scientific evidence found from data to support conclusions.
- Math:** By the end of grade 8, students should be able to estimate and determine the volume and surface area of solids.
- Social Studies:** By the end of grade 12, students should be able to explain the political, social, and economic origins and impact of populism in the U.S.

(See "Summer Vacation" on page 4)

MSDE's Summer of '99 "To Do" List

- ✓ Finalize content standards
- ✓ Draft preK-12 intervention plan
- ✓ Propose middle years restructuring
- ✓ Write high school assessment questions

Inside the Classroom...

- ✓ Maryland's 24 Teachers of the Year

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE



The Meaning of a Year

A little more than 850,000 Maryland students went back to school this year with all the fanfare that doing just about anything at the end of a century involves.

Beginnings and endings are useful times, because they enjoin us to take stock and recommit — assess where we are and where we're going.

Beginnings and endings also compel us to reflect on our achievements and thank those whose hard work has made these successes come to pass. And so I thank each of you for taking on the challenges that befall you every day and dedicating yourself with enthusiasm and aplomb to a profession that, more than any other, decides the future of our nation. I thank, too, the 24 Teachers of the Year, highlighted on pages 2 and 3, for offering a glowing example of the very best in education.

Never has education occupied the national spotlight, aroused a media blitz, whipped up a public debate, and stirred the political interest the way it has today. The scrutiny is, at times, daunting. But

it says something rather hopeful about our neighborhoods, our state, and our nation. It says that we care about our children and that we believe we have the tools to help them achieve their goals and ours. It says not only that improvement is needed, but that improvement is *possible*.

The initiatives we chronicle in this issue of *Maryland Classroom* represent the smallest sampling of what we have planned for the year ahead and for the first few years of the 21st century. If I have learned one thing with certainty over what is now nearly 40 years in education, it is that continual improvement requires continual change. And change requires, first and foremost, people committed — unequivocally — to it.

And so I wish you a year of growth and examination, of change and discovery. Most of all, I wish you a year that brings, each day, at least one moment that makes you remember why you became a teacher. 🌈

Nancy S. Grasmick
Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

Allegany County

A. William Determan

William Determan says 32 years in the classroom have taught him that teaching excellence is not linked to a single philosophy. He has found the best results are achieved by combining philosophies, adapting methods, and altering programs as demanded by each day's changing circumstances. The 8th grade science teacher at Beall Junior/Senior High School in Frostburg says that students often come into his classroom believing they don't have the ability to achieve in science, so he piques their curiosity with hands-on applications that develop problem-solving skills. His classroom provides a climate for thinking and risk taking, which helps students understand that learning also includes making mistakes. "I hope I'll always be able to give my students the right questions," William says.

Anne Arundel County

Diane Gerrior

Diane Gerrior believes that education lays the foundation for the future, and that it is her responsibility to light the path of learning so that all students may attain excellence daily. A teacher of 6-8th grade instrumental music at Severn River Middle School in Arnold, Diane sees music education as a valuable resource and platform for a child's complete education. Diane enjoys the challenge of channeling students' energy, and her classroom management and teaching styles accentuate the positive. Her desire to spread the power of music goes beyond her classroom. Diane also conducts summer camp music programs, adjudicates at music festivals, and writes music curricula for county schools.

Baltimore City

Katherine N. Chilungu

Neli Chilungu, a 7th grade language arts teacher at Booker T. Washington Middle School, believes some of the most important things she does as an educator come before and after students occupy her classroom. Her success is a product of her preparation for each class — and a thorough self-evaluation to see if that preparation paid off. "In teaching, there will always be crosses to bear and old grievances to revisit," said Neli. "But if I'm not prepared to evaluate the core of who I am each day, I cannot be sufficiently prepared to teach our children." Neli considers it a good day only if both students and teacher come away learning something. "I have great joy," she says, "in celebrating their experiences right along with them."

Baltimore County

Deborah Hope McClintock

While her 3rd graders rarely think more than a few hours ahead, Deborah McClintock makes sure they're headed down the right

1999-2000 Maryland

Last spring, each local school system selected one teacher whose knowledge of general education issues, teaching practices, and recommendations point unanimously toward excellence. "Maryland's 24 Teachers of the Year share many qualities. In October, one of these 24 will be chosen Maryland Teacher of the Year, but to Dr. Grasmick, no further end

path when they leave her classroom at McCormick Elementary School in Baltimore. *Teachers affect the future* — the adage closest to her heart — is reflected in what she considers her primary duty: to help develop life-long learners who are productive, responsible citizens. Deborah fulfills this mission by creating a caring, intellectually stimulating environment where each child is special. She makes hands-on learning the hallmark of her classroom and carefully plans authentic and meaningful tasks to help children achieve. "Teaching is an awesome responsibility but, oh, the rewards are so great," she says.

Calvert County

Daniel Waldheim

Daniel Waldheim brings the wisdom of George Washington Carver to his post as a K-5 learning specialist at Calvert Elementary School in Prince Frederick. Carver once said, "If you love something enough, it will share its secrets with you." With that, Daniel recounts his four essential secrets — the four P's: *Pleasure, Passion, Purpose, and Power*. Things learned with *pleasure* are never forgotten, so he presents material through drama, humor, and storytelling. By possessing a *passion* for his work, Daniel says he sees students grow to love learning as they work together. Students find *purpose* for what they learn through real-world connections. And he *empowers* children by investing them with decision-making authority over their learning environment.

Caroline County

Monica Agapologlou

Because a carefully integrated arts curriculum promotes creative thinking in any classroom, Monica Agapologlou makes sure the students in her charge always have a place for artistic expression. While her students have spanned all grades K-12, Monica now teaches students in grades 6-8 at Lockerman Middle School in Denton and college students at nearby Salisbury State University. Monica mentors new teachers, serves on the School Improvement Team, and has helped craft the school's art curriculum. Through it all, Monica still knows how important it is to impart the basics that will stand her students in good stead no matter what careers they choose. She encourages students to develop good work habits, improve communication skills, and meet project deadlines.

Carroll County

Terri Meinecke

Terri Meinecke is well known not only by her peers at Runnymede Elementary in Westminster — where she teaches 5th grade — but by her peers across the U.S. As an educational consultant with a New York publishing company, she's a

veteran of the national lecture circuit, presenting talks on educational issues and trends. But those experiences, she says, aren't nearly as valuable as her experiences with the children in her classroom. Terri builds classroom experiences around her students' unique strengths. She is known for her humor in the classroom, which she says encourages better attitudes and risk-taking among children.

Cecil County

Susan Higley

Susan Higley, an 8th grade mathematics teacher at Cherry Hill Middle School in Elkton, believes every student deserves an environment where learning is fun and rewarding. To encourage her students to strive for excellence, and maintain interest in a subject that can be difficult for some, she integrates real-world experiences into her teaching and promotes life-long learning through connections to industry. It's not unusual to walk past her classroom and hear Susan talking about art, music, or dance. "Teaching is a work of heart," says Susan.

Charles County

Pete Mahon

"A teacher affects eternity," said Pulitzer Prize-winning author Henry Adams almost a century ago. "He can never tell where his influence stops." That thought, says Pete Mahon, inspires him as he spreads his enthusiasm to all corners of La Plata High School. While his main territory is his social studies classroom, his achievements as a soccer coach and as student council advisor have been recognized as well. In 1997, he received a McDonald's Teacher Achievement Award and a sportsmanship award from the Maryland State Athletic Association. And earlier this year he was honored with the Maryland Association of Student Councils' Advisor of the Year award.

Dorchester County

Alice Mitchell

Alice Mitchell doesn't have a blanket plan for success as an 8th grade teacher at Mace's Lane Middle School. And that, as it turns out, is the key to students leaving her Cambridge classroom with a uniform record of achievement. "I believe, and have always believed, that all children can learn, but they learn at different rates," says Alice. Because children come to her with a variety of *learning* styles, Alice says it's incumbent upon her to use a variety of *teaching* styles. Alice anticipates that students will have difficulty comprehending abstract scientific concepts, so she comes ready with hands-on projects and group activities. "I encourage my students to be creative, to be risk takers and problem solvers," Alice says.

Frederick County

Marcia Nicklas

After a nursing career that offered many opportunities for teaching, Marcy Nicklas returned to college, rediscovered her love of literature and learning, and, in 1989, greeted her first class of juniors. Her English students at Middletown High School are taught to explore new ideas and develop skills relevant to any path they choose to take. Marcy plans fun into her lessons, and enlists her students as able assistants, making their learning as enjoyable for them as teaching is for Marcy. "What I have to offer students is valuable," says Marcy, "and I convey that conviction to my students."

Garrett County

Robert H. Yunker

There's much more to Bob Yunker than 30 years as a social studies teacher at Northern Garrett High School. He created a curriculum allowing Northern students to complete two full years of psychology, a program whose success is documented by the alumni who return with ringing endorsements. Bob also works closely with Frostburg State University as a cooperating teacher and has guided more than 20 students through its internship program. He's an 11-year member of the School Improvement Team, nine-year co-chair of Maryland's Student Assistance, eight-year member of the Crisis Intervention Team, and is co-internal coordinator for Northern's Middle States Evaluation process.

Harford County

Craig Harvey

Craig Harvey believes "the most important aspect of teaching is motivating young people to exceed their potential — to see in them what they are unable to see in themselves." The Fallston High School band director evidently does just that. Fallston's bands have earned more than 100 first-place awards and superior ratings over the last 15 years. Students appreciate Craig's encouragement and high expectations, as well; they voted him Fallston's "Most Admired Teacher." He attributes some of the success of his musical program to the Band Parent Association, which he helped organize, and to vigilant efforts to gain community/business partnerships and sponsorships. As musical director of the Baltimore Colts Band, Craig was frequently featured in national sports and news publications and on television and radio broadcasts.

Teachers of the Year

...ing philosophy, community involvement, suggestions for improving the teaching profession, and colleague...
...ities," said Dr. Grasmick, "but the one that strikes you immediately is the profound joy they find in teaching."
...orsement is necessary. "Each candidate encapsulates perfectly the power of just one exceptional teacher."



1999-2000 Teachers of the Year: Standing, l-r: Marcia Nicklas, Gladys Goslee, State Superintendent of Schools Nancy Grasmick, State Board of Education President Walter Sondheim, Jr., Deborah McClintock, Craig Harvey, Diane Gerrior, Pete Mahon, Leslie Grahm, Robert Yunker, Monica Agapologlou, Ronald Grosche, Kay Wharton, William Determan, Nancy Clayton, Partnerships and Recognition Program Director Darla Strouse, Katherine Chilungu, Daniel Waldheim. Seated, l-r: Terri Meinecke, Carol Reed, Billy Truitt, Evelyn Williams, Shelley Johnson, Susan Higley, Keith Wharton, Alice Mitchell, Joanne Mead.

Howard County Joanne Mead



In Joanne Mead's music and vocals classroom at Clarksville Middle School, learning is an interactive process, where each student's ideas and abilities are respected and developed. Joanne creates a positive, risk-free learning environment, where success is possible for everyone. She has written curriculum for Howard County and the Maryland Music Educators Association, has presented at local and regional conferences, and is involved in many music-oriented extracurricular activities. But Joanne feels her most valuable accomplishments will be found in her classroom. Her teaching style encourages students' creativity, helps them make connections to other disciplines, and addresses their different learning styles.

Kent County Keith A. Wharton



Keith Wharton wants his music programs to be partnerships of mutual respect between teacher and students. "The students and I always expect the best from each other," says Keith. "No one wants to settle for less than that." Keith is credited with developing top-quality instrumental programs at Chestertown Middle and Kent County High schools. "The fundamental principles that guide my work with students are honesty, integrity, discipline, and respect," Keith says. And conscientious attention to these principles — along with a belief that every student can be challenged and every child can succeed — nets tremendous achievements from his students.

Montgomery County Shelley Johnson



Shelley Johnson instills in the art students at Judith Resnick Elementary School in Gaithersburg the freedom to express themselves with individual distinction. Twenty-five years of teaching have taught Shelley to take her discipline beyond the confines of the art room. She enriches the total school curriculum by inviting artists to her classroom, pursu-

ing special grants, and trying out unique programs that enhance and strengthen the learning environment. Shelley designed and implemented an award-winning adaptive art program to facilitate success for special-needs and physically challenged students. And through her "International Night Gala," she provides the school's culturally diverse students the opportunity to showcase their heritages and explore the traditions of their classmates.

Prince George's County Leslie M. Grahm



Leslie Grahm's excitement for teaching has continued to grow over her 22-year career. She is devoted not only to her students, but to her profession. "The greatest contribution educators can make to their profession is ... mentoring fellow teachers," says Leslie, who teaches foreign language at Martin Luther King Jr. Academic Center in Beltsville. Her classroom is enlivened with a variety of creative, hands-on activities that encourage communication, collaboration, and cooperation among students. Outside the classroom, Leslie develops curriculum, serves as a consultant to publishers, and is a frequent presenter at local, regional, and national conferences.

Queen Anne's County Kay Karole Wharton



Kay Wharton's career began 24 years ago in Pennsylvania as a 2nd grade teacher during the school year and a kindergarten teacher during the summer. However, it was home teaching a multi-handicapped student that brought her south of the Mason-Dixon Line in 1971 to teach elementary students with language disabilities. In 1985, she began teaching learning-disabled and other special-needs students at Centreville Middle School, where she currently teaches math/science in grades 7-8. Conducting workshops all over the northeastern U.S., Kay is a pioneer in helping parents and teachers understand the many and varied challenges that learning disabilities pose and how to provide the most appropriate accommodations.

St. Mary's County Ronald Grosche



Ronald Grosche, a culinary arts instructor at the St. Mary's County Technical Center, makes sure his students have an opportunity to demonstrate what they learn — because he knows that more than a grade is at stake for many of them. In addition to arranging an articulation agreement with Johnson & Wales University, where his students receive 15 college credits upon successful completion of his two-year program, Ron is actively involved with the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA). Using the organization's leadership programs, his students "showcase" their talent to employers and college administrators. He is a member of Maryland VICA's Board of Directors and a state officer advisor.

Somerset County Nancy M. Clayton



Nancy Clayton starts every work day with her personal mission in mind — "to be a source of encouragement and support to my fellow teachers each day." The 8th grade teacher of language arts, special education, and regular education at Greenwood Middle School in Princess Anne says arriving at solutions and change *together* is her goal — whether teacher to teacher or student to teacher. She is a member of the School Improvement Committee, has served on the Parent Involvement Committee, and acts as neighborhood coordinator for several charity drives. "Not all of my teaching has been in the public school arena, or even in a classroom," says Nancy, "but, quite simply, teaching is what I do."

Talbot County Carol L. Reed



Carol Reed, who teaches English, creative writing, and drama at Easton High School, recognizes that educating students is not one clever project, well-packaged and

mass produced each year. She maintains that teaching includes "daily time with groups of interesting students; fabulously funny, forthright colleagues; and a hard-working administration. That's what makes educating exciting." Carol enriches her classroom teaching by serving as a county and state Equity Advocate, directing theatrical productions, writing grants, and producing Easton's literary magazine. Last year, she co-produced a violence prevention video and co-chaired the local American Association of University Women's Girls' Summit, a day of workshops on health, self-esteem, and achievement for girls aged 8-18.

Washington County Evelyn Williams



Evelyn Williams says her love affair with teaching "started when I was very young and found I preferred playing school to climbing trees." In an active, adventurous life, Evelyn "has never found anything quite as exciting as helping another human being reach a little higher." The social studies teacher at South Hagerstown High School is constantly evaluating her performance and always learning from colleagues and students. A cardinal principle in her 20-year career has been to write lesson plans — always — in pencil. "Probably the most important lesson I have learned from all these experiments," says Evelyn, "is to keep my sense of humor if my students are less than enthusiastic about my fantastic new idea."

Wicomico County Gladys Billups Goslee



Teaching a foreign language and traveling to foreign countries with her students give Gladys Goslee not only a broader appreciation of other cultures and people, but a powerful reminder that her own classroom is filled with students from these same varied backgrounds. In short, the experiences make Gladys more aware of her students' individual differences. The French teacher at Parkside High School in Salisbury believes that even at the end of a long and hectic day, "a true teacher can smile and say, 'I hope I have made a difference in at least one child's life today, and I will try to do a better job tomorrow.'"

Worcester County Billy Truitt



Ask any Worcester County Career and Technology Center student or graduate about Billy Truitt, who heads the center's Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning program, and the responses are curiously similar. "Mr. Truitt expects 100 percent from me 100 percent of the time." Billy demands that his students preparing for college master science, math, and English — and leave his classes outstanding HVAC technicians. In today's technology-driven world, he says, hands-on skills aren't enough to compete for careers that increasingly require problem-solving and teamwork ability. He is a presenter and trainer at local, state, and national education conferences, a mentor for the integration of technology into the curriculum, and an active community volunteer.

Intervention plan targets at-risk students

In June, MSDE introduced the PreK-12 Academic Intervention Plan to the State Board of Education, whose members said last year that high school assessment implementation would hinge upon such a plan.

The plan was developed over the past year in partnership with the Pew Forum, a part of The Pew Charitable Trusts. Forum members selected the Maryland project because of its potential to serve as a national model for early, ongoing academic intervention.

The plan recommends strategies to prevent student failure through academic intervention; to strengthen teachers' skills and administrators' leadership by improving educator capacity; and to enhance learning experiences for very young children to ensure student readiness. If adopted by the State Board this fall, the state and local school systems will have to reexamine the fundamental systems that affect children's development and learning and focus resources (including time and money) more sharply on individual students who are struggling to meet the state's increasingly rigorous standards.

For example, the plan calls for all local school systems to develop benchmarks and milestones to measure each student's progress toward the new content standards. This requires a system to monitor individual student achievement and a range of assessments to continuously judge each student's performance against these indicators.

By the end of grades 1, 3, 5, and 7, local school systems will have to create individual learning plans that include mandatory extended learning opportunities for students with deficiencies in reading and math. Summer intervention programs will be mandated for students failing to reach locally established proficiency levels by the end of grade 8.

Research indicates that early education holds more promise for *preventing* learning difficulties than remediation does for *reversing* them; therefore, plan writers also made provisions for beefing up early childhood education, which new brain research has shown is so critical. Recommendations include:

- establishing joint professional development among child care agencies, Head Start, and public schools and linking training to academic credit;
- aligning MSDE and Head Start standards with national accreditation standards;
- establishing a statewide career ladder for early care and education providers;
- providing financial incentives to early care and education programs that maintain designated program standards, staff competencies, and staff compensation; and
- establishing an accountability mechanism to measure program effectiveness and determine future funding.

Task force gets tough with middle schools

In July, the Middle Learning Years Task Force proposed nearly two dozen strategies to improve instruction, teacher preparation, and school environment in the middle grades. Specific recommendations include requiring all middle grades teachers and principals to have preparation and licensure specific to early-adolescent education; providing specific reading instruction to all middle grades students; and eliminating ability-grouping practices that prevent access to more challenging courses.

"We intend to change the middle school landscape — where we begin to see significant erosion in students' performance," said Dr. Grasmick. "These recommendations will help bring Maryland middle schools into balance — where academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, and social equity are given equal emphasis."

Among several activities called for in the action plan accompanying the report are establishing a middle grades reform framework in model school sites; hosting a statewide conference to share exemplary middle grades reform models; seeking state and federal funding to initiate reform efforts; and designing a multi-year evaluation plan to measure the reform's success.

Dr. Grasmick convened the Middle Learning Years Task Force in July 1998 as state and national test scores continued to dip for middle school students. Task Force Co-chair Douglas MacIver is the principal research scientist for the Johns Hopkins University and co-chair Alice Haskins is the coordinator of middle grades education for Howard County Public Schools. Members include teachers, administrators, and representatives from the Maryland State Teachers Association, the Maryland PTA, the Maryland Business Roundtable, the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, and the University System of Maryland.

Teachers help write the high school assessment questions

Teachers played a *major* role this summer working with MSDE to develop questions for the upcoming high school assessments. By major role, we mean they helped write 400–500 items for each test. That puts a low estimate of the number of questions written at 2,000 — 400 questions x 5 subject areas (English I, algebra, geometry, biology, and government).

Once test items were written, a different group of teachers checked for accuracy and appropriateness of content, and following revisions, still another group of teachers — called the "sensitivity team" — tested the items for cultural bias. With summer drawing to a close, the tests were sent to the next group in the process — the California Testing Bureau/McGraw-Hill and Measurement Inc., who will develop scoring procedures.

In June, MSDE added sample assessment questions to its school improvement web site at www.mdk12.org. The prototypes also may be accessed through a link to High School Improvement on MSDE's home page at www.msde.state.md.us.

Middle school report calls for better professional preparation

- ✓ Require middle grades administrators and teachers to undergo middle grade-specific training and be licensed by MSDE to teach their content area in the middle grades.
- ✓ Ensure all professional development for middle grades teachers meets National Staff Development Council standards.
- ✓ Train middle grades teachers to provide challenging instruction to diverse populations, including special education, at-risk, and underperforming students.
- ✓ Provide technology training to all middle grades students and teachers.
- ✓ Require Maryland's colleges and universities to develop middle-level preparation programs that correspond to state licensing criteria.
- ✓ Provide all new middle grades teachers mentoring opportunities.

Assessment Schedule

January and May 2000:

Trial tests given to a sample of 9th graders

January and May 2001:

Dress rehearsal — trial tests administered to all 9th graders

January 2002:

Testing as a graduation requirement begins

Spring 2005:

High school diplomas are contingent upon passing the assessments

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