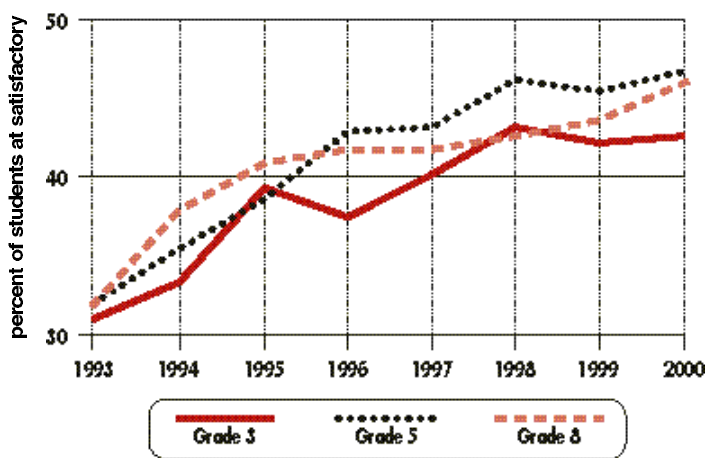


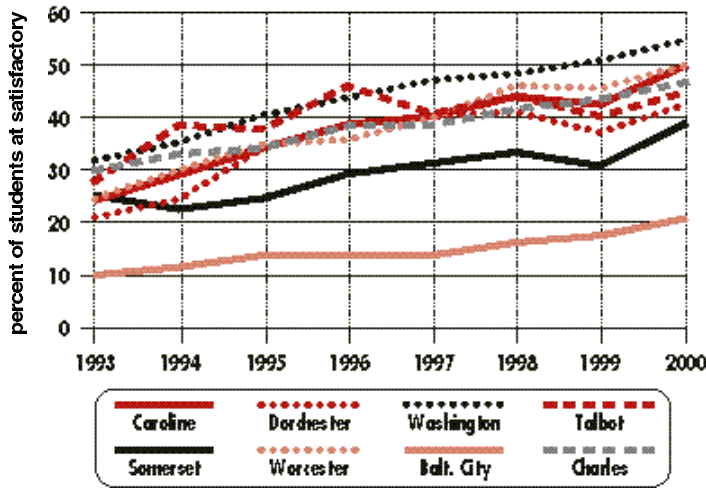
Where We Stand MSPAP Composite Scores by School System: 1993-2000	School System	1993	2000	Gain	School System	1993	2000	Gain	School System	1993	2000	Gain
	Allegany	26.5	47.4	20.9	Charles	30.1	46.7	16.6	Prince George's	21.5	31.0	9.5
	Anne Arundel	36.6	47.5	10.9	Dorchester	21.0	42.7	21.7	Queen Anne's	34.4	50.8	16.4
	Baltimore City	10.4	20.5	10.1	Frederick	44.5	51.0	6.5	St. Mary's	27.7	49.4	21.7
	Baltimore Co.	34.9	50.9	16.0	Garrett	35.6	48.2	12.6	Somerset	25.3	38.7	13.4
	Calvert	34.6	55.0	20.4	Harford	38.4	55.7	17.3	Talbot	28.4	44.4	16.0
	Caroline	25.1	49.8	24.7	Howard	48.7	61.4	12.7	Washington	31.9	54.4	22.5
	Carroll	42.0	54.1	12.1	Kent	32.6	62.0	29.4	Wicomico	26.3	43.0	16.7
	Cecil	32.4	51.5	19.1	Montgomery	46.4	55.4	9.0	Worcester	25.3	50.2	24.9

Maryland Composite Grades 3, 5 & 8



2000's Top Composite Gains

(LEAs with '99-'00 gains over 3 percentage points)



SNAPSHOT

The 2000 Report Card

- ✓ 19 (of 24) school systems improved their composite scores over last year and 17 set new record-highs.
- ✓ The most improved school systems since 1993 are Kent (29.4 points), Worcester (24.9), and Caroline (24.7) counties.
- ✓ Kent County met the *excellent* standard in third-grade writing, math, science, language usage, and social studies. Its third-grade composite (78.0) was the highest in the state.
- ✓ Howard County had the state's highest fifth- (63.5) and eighth-grade (61.0) composites.
- ✓ Following top-performing Rock Hall Elementary (89.0 composite) in Kent County were Cold Spring Elementary (85.8) in Montgomery County and Summit Park Elementary (83.4) in Baltimore County.
- ✓ 83 schools posted a composite of 70% or better. Baltimore County had the most with 26 schools, followed by Montgomery (24) and Howard (14) counties.
- ✓ Howard County's Triadelphia Ridge Elementary met the excellent standard in all 6 fifth-grade content areas and 5 of the 6 third-grade areas.
- ✓ Howard's Burleigh Manor Middle recorded the state's highest scores in 3 of the 6 eighth-grade content areas.

Power Writing

Anne Arundel County

Bodkin Elementary

Last year, Anne Arundel County's Bodkin Elementary surprised most education-watchers when it posted a 1-year, 25-point composite gain and slid into the most coveted position in the state – highest-performing school. This year, Bodkin proved it's no flash in the pan. With a composite score (79.1) just 3.4 points below its 1999 high, the school is still very much a top contender.

Bodkin principal Rocco Ferretti was one of the few not particularly surprised by such success. He attributes school gains to consistent instruction. Several years ago, for instance, he and his staff noticed that students were having difficulty expressing themselves in writing. So teachers visited Howard County's Worthington Elementary for new ideas and came away impressed with the school's continuity in writing

instruction. Now, all of Bodkin's teachers use a few agreed-upon strategies and graphic organizers for teaching writing. The strategies are reinforced in each grade and even in non-assessed content areas, such as math, physical education, and music.

Among other techniques, teachers encourage children to use Power Writing, a strategy that helps students organize their writing and support main ideas with details. Ferretti emphasizes that the writing instruction is not rigid, saying, "The kids are being more creative now. They produce some really fantastic writing, and they are starting to use these strategies independently." He knew the school's focus had hit home when he received a letter from students requesting changes to the cafeteria menu. The letter was written in the Power Writing style.

Maryland Classroom

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2000 Maryland School Performance Report

With 19 of 24 school systems improving their Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) scores this year, the state composite rebounded to 45.3 percent, a 1.5-point increase over last year and the highest score to date. State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick announced the 2000 state, system, and school scores at last month's 11th annual release of the Maryland School Performance Report.

Kent County (62.0) – home to Rock Hall Elementary (89.0), the state's highest-performing school – repeated as the system with the top aggregate score. Kent was followed by Howard County (61.4), which, two years ago, was the first system to break 60 percent.

Ten more counties topped 50 percent: Harford (55.7), Montgomery

(55.4), Calvert (55.0), Washington (54.4), Carroll (54.1), Cecil (51.5), Frederick (51.0), Baltimore (50.9), Queen Anne's (50.8), and Worcester (50.2).

Baltimore City (20.5) recorded its fourth consecutive year of improvement – and its largest 1-year gain – by posting a composite score 3.5 percentage points higher than 1999's. Behind the city's rise are schools like Mt. Royal Elementary/Middle (47.7), whose 5th-graders posted the state's highest math composite score (97.1), and Pimlico Elementary (69.3), whose dramatic improvement made it the first Baltimore City school to be removed from the state's reconstitution-eligible list. Some of Pimlico's most impressive gains came in 3rd-grade science (6.6 percent in 1993 to 79.5 percent in 2000), social studies (10.5 to 76.9), and math (9.2

to 66.2); and 5th-grade reading (2.3 percent in 1993 to 59.0 percent in 2000), science (10.2 to 88.5), and social studies (8.0 to 66.7).

Last year, Prince George's County's Thomas Stone Elementary – with a 19.6-percent LEP rate, 77-percent FARM rate, and 14.8-percent composite – was named eligible for state takeover. This year, the school surpassed the state composite with a 46.0-percent score. The 31.2-point gain was the largest recorded in 2000, and, along with a performance index that now exceeds the state average, enough for removal from the reconstitution-eligible list. New principal Sheila Murray attributes the school's success to increasing staff collaboration and teaching and planning time, and to 120-minute blocks of reading instruction each morning.

Success in unlikely places is what



Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick releases the 2000 Maryland School Performance Report.

Dr. Grasmick found most encouraging among the largely favorable performance data. "When you look at an urban school like Dallas Nicholas Elementary, where statistics say students will most likely fail, and you see a [composite] score above the state average, you know the principal is doing something right," she said. "When you see 61 percent of the school's 5th-graders achieving in science, 51 percent achieving in math, you know the teachers and the aides and the volunteers who tutor the students are doing something right. And that 'something' transcends children's race, wealth, and address."

MSPAP – given annually to students in grades 3, 5, and 8 – measures students' proficiency in reading, writing, language usage, math, science, and social studies. This year, MSPAP results were supplemented in the Maryland School Performance Report with results from the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS/5), a national norm-referenced test that assesses students' reading, language, and math skills. For the first time last spring, CTBS/5 was administered to all 2nd-, 4th-, and 6th-graders statewide.

For 2000 state-, system-, and school-level data, including demographics, composites, trends, and disaggregated results, visit MSDE's report card site at www.msp.msde.state.md.us.

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

All the News That Fits

Every year, *Maryland Classroom's* Report Card edition profiles schools succeeding or improving on MSPAP. But no matter how tightly we pack the pages, no matter how small we make the type, four tabloid sheets have never been enough to accommodate all the news worth sharing – especially this year, when 612 schools bettered their 1999 scores and 83 exceeded state standards. So, while this column presents similar space constraints, I'll use the rest of it to highlight schools that didn't make the following pages.

Thomas Stone Elementary wasn't the only Prince George's County Title I school to make dramatic gains this year. Right behind it was Forest Heights Elementary, which improved its composite score 29.4 points and eclipsed both county and state averages. This year, 57.8 percent of Forest Heights' students (three-quarters of whom qualify for free and reduced-price meals) met the satisfactory mark. Grade 3 reading alone rocketed to 57.1 percent, up from 9.4 percent last year.

Since 1997, we have chronicled the middle-school malaise, most evident in stagnant 8th-grade reading scores. But reading scores at John Hanson Middle in Charles County are anything but stagnant. The school has not only raised its scores, it's nearly closed the reading gap between white and black students. A 37-point reading gain since 1993 means that 46.4 percent of the school's African-American 8th-graders now score at satisfactory – 2 percent fewer than their white classmates. At Washington County's Hancock Middle/Senior High, a literacy specialist meets with teachers for 45 minutes, twice a week, to share reading strategies and gauge progress. It's an initiative to

which the staff credits Hancock's 53.3-percent reading composite – nearly two and a half times the composite posted last year.

Then there are the schools whose stories mean more than individual success. Told together, they herald system-wide improvement. Perryville and North East elementary schools, tucked into the northeast corner of the state, are two such schools. Among Cecil County's 16 (of 24) improving elementary and middle schools, they helped drive the district composite up to 51.5 percent. Despite the fact that more than one-quarter of Perryville's students receive free or reduced-priced meals and nearly one in three is enrolled in special education, the school's composite rose 13.2 points last year – 38.2 since testing began – and is now within 3 points of the state standard. North East, a Title I school about seven miles east of Perryville, posted a 50.3-percent composite this year, up 12.6 points from last year and 32.9 points since 1993.

With little space left, I thank all those who have contributed to the successes recounted here and on the next three pages. More importantly, I thank those to whom these stories sound familiar, those who have cleared the same obstacles and scaled the same heights – without the same recognition. I thank all those who have, each year, reassessed, regrouped, and recommitted to the goal that all children will learn.

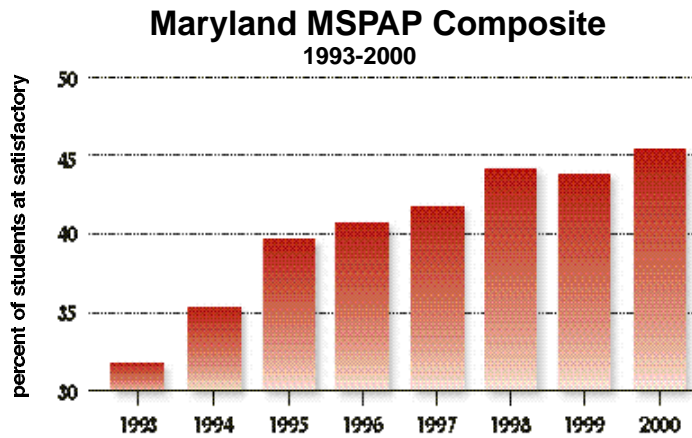
Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

Inside the Classroom...

- ✓ School Reform Where It Counts
- ✓ Report Card Highlights

School Reform Where It Counts: 2000

The following stories were plucked from the pages of *School Reform Where It Counts*. For the full edition, visit www.msde.state.md.us.



Parent Involvement **Caroline County**
Preston Elementary

Ninety-seven percent of Preston Elementary's parents had at least one face-to-face parent-teacher conference last year. And the year before that. When asked how she comes by such impressive participation, principal Susan Frank says rather simply, "It's an expectation." That sentiment, however, belies the effort and vigilance Frank and her teachers devote to the goal.

Frank gives credit to the parents, the majority of whom, she says, are eager participants. She also employs a para-professional three hours a day to act as a parent liaison. The liaison arranges transportation for parents who have difficulty getting to school or schedules home visits instead. And Frank holds teachers accountable for results. "I want to know how many conferences they've scheduled, who they've seen, who they haven't seen, and why not."

In fact, through Preston's Readers from Birth program, Frank and her staff cultivate this contact with parents long before their children enter school. The program, designed to develop early literacy skills and to build early

home-school relationships, starts every time a child is born. That's when Preston's parent liaison pays a visit and drops off a book, along with other educational materials.

Then, twice a month, the parents are invited to school for story time. While the children engage in post-story activities, their parents learn how to develop literacy and pre-literacy skills. And at the end of the session, everyone gets another book to take home. Before being split into morning and evening sessions to accommodate both working and stay-at-home parents, the program routinely drew 20-30 children at a time. Now in its fourth "real" year of operation – the first was dedicated to gathering materials and money – Readers from Birth also attracts child care providers and their charges.

The greatest benefit, says Frank, is that parents – even parents whose children aren't students five days a week – feel as though the school is their own. Another benefit? A 64.1-percent composite score.

Portfolios

Montgomery County

Ronald A. McNair Elementary

With an enrollment of 1,030 students – nearly double that of a typical elementary school – Ronald McNair is the largest elementary school in Montgomery County. Principal Michael Kline emphasizes the need to keep track of every student's progress at such a large school. That kind of careful monitoring is just one reason Ronald McNair's MSPAP composite jumped 12 percentage points this year.

"I've always required portfolios of student work, which include data as well as samples," says Kline, now in his third year as principal. "A baseline is created in September and throughout the year the information is used by teachers, students, and parents. If you know what the bar is, then you can jump over it."

The portfolios are designed to travel with students as they move through each grade so that a body of information is available to help them reach their potential. A 58.1-percent 5th-grade composite serves as a pretty good indicator that the portfolios are working.

Teachers, support staff (which includes reading and staff development specialists), and Kline rely heavily on data gleaned from a variety of measures, including MSPAP and the school system's criterion-referenced tests, to make the instructional changes necessary to ensure that students understand the material. Kline works with teachers individually, as does the school's staff development specialist, to analyze data and "hone in on specific student or class needs."

Baltimore County

Parallel Block Schedule

Harford Hills Elementary

When principal Susan Hershfeld arrived at Baltimore County's Harford Hills Elementary two years ago, she and her staff were uncomfortable with the school's practice of combining different grades within classrooms. So, Hershfeld encouraged teachers to visit other schools and find out how they organized teachers and grades.

The teachers found what they were looking for in Fifth District Elementary's "parallel block schedule." Using this model, small groups of students receive a block of direct reading instruction while a larger group of students simultaneously receives a block of content-area reading instruction.

Harford Hills first piloted the new schedule with 3rd-graders and, after encouraging results, expanded it to 2nd and 4th grades. Since then, the school has not only discontinued combined-

grade classes but has reduced reading class sizes to about 8-14 students.

According to 3rd-grade teacher Alexandria Arnold, grade-level teams meet often to plan instruction.

"We really integrate reading with content," she says. "Whatever I'm teaching in science and social studies we try to incorporate into the direct reading instruction. If students are learning about the weather, we'll read about it in science and social studies. Then, in reading class, they may read stories with weather elements."

From 1998-2000, Harford Hills' MSPAP composite increased more than 10 percentage points.

While the school's overall score came within half a point of the state's 70-percent standard this year, 3rd-graders actually met that standard in all content areas.

SCHOOL SYSTEM HIGH

Consistency

Caroline County Public Schools

In Caroline County, consistency is the key to helping students read and write well. Part of the consistency process is ensuring that the school system's curriculum aligns with state content standards. Another part is whittling down the number of teaching strategies used systemwide. After a middle school survey revealed that teachers were using 164 different strategies to teach reading/language arts, the district narrowed them down to a core of six strategies that research shows are most effective. University of Maryland professor Peter Dewitz was then hired to teach those reading strategies to staff at the county's two middle schools.

"If you don't have a well-trained staff, you can't make progress," says Helen Schmidt, Caroline County's supervisor of elementary schools. "We're ensuring that teachers across the county use the same language in teaching the strategies, and we're really trying to

"We aren't doing anything terribly innovative. We're just using good professional sense to teach more effectively..."

– Helen Schmidt, Elementary Schools Supervisor

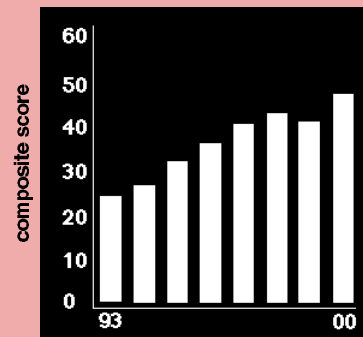
address what children have to do in terms of the curriculum outcomes."

Even though the changes are systemic, Schmidt says the credit for good results and improved learning rests with hardworking classroom teachers and dedicated school administrators. Students also benefit from the solid foundation laid by Caroline County's all-day kindergarten program. The system even provides prekindergarten for at-risk children.

"We aren't doing anything terribly innovative," insists Schmidt. "We're just using good

professional sense to teach more effectively, to stay focused, to monitor student progress, and to give teachers feedback."

"The support and leadership of Larry Lorton [superintendent of schools] and Cynthia Spicer [director of elementary/middle schools]," she adds, "have enabled the school system to concentrate its energies on doing a few things well."



Staff Development**Baltimore City****Dallas F. Nicholas, Sr. Elementary**

Dallas F. Nicholas, Sr. Elementary sits in the heart of Baltimore City, a block above one of its busiest thoroughfares. Nearly all of its students qualify for subsidized meals. But neither setting nor poverty keeps Dallas Nicholas' students from achieving.

Since 1993, the school's MSPAP composite has more than doubled, and, at 45.9 percent, now exceeds the state average. The school's success is due in large part to principal Irma Johnson's single-minded focus on staff development. "Our emphasis has been instruction, and only instruction," says Johnson. "Smart teachers create smart kids."

In 1996, when not one 3rd-grader was performing at grade level in math, Johnson and her staff zeroed in. The school started participating in Baltimore City's MARS (Mathematics: Applied Reasoning Skills) program, which provides intensive training in math instruction. Teachers met regularly to share techniques and to discuss books they were reading as a group. This year, 3rd- and 5th-grade

math scores jumped more than 20 points apiece to 46.8 percent and 51.2 percent, respectively.

With the math improvement program thus set in motion, the staff has focused the last two years on writing. Johnson attended the University of Pennsylvania last summer to become a facilitator in Reading, Writing, and Speaking Across the Curriculum. Now, after school twice a month, Johnson shares what she learned with about 20 Dallas Nicholas teachers in her own for-credit course.

This intensive staff development program (whose year-long, content-area focus is decided every August) is supplemented with Experience Corps volunteers. Through this partnership with the Johns Hopkins University, senior citizens volunteer two hours daily, helping out in classrooms and tutoring students after school.

What remains a challenge at Dallas Nicholas? Strengthening the home-school connection. "With more parent involvement," says Johnson, "our kids will soar even higher."

Differentiated Instruction**Cecil County****Elkton Middle**

"Our success on MSPAP has been a school-wide effort," says Elkton Middle School principal Bob Gerard. "It's not just an 8th-grade test, it's a 6th-, 7th-, and 8th-grade initiative." The school, located in rural Cecil County, has once again posted impressive achievement gains.

Last year, Gerard and his staff focused on boosting reading and writing skills – with great success. The school's 2000 reading and writing scores increased 6.8 and 10.3 percentage points, respectively, over 1999.

According to Gerard, the school "tore apart" its school improvement plan and rebuilt it with specific expectations as to how much and how often students should be reading and writing in different subjects. Language arts class sizes were reduced to an average of 18 students.

Gerard has also focused on math, increasing staffing so that for the past two years students have had daily 90-minute blocks of both language arts and math. The result? In 2000, 53.7 percent of Elkton's stu-

dents met the state satisfactory standard in math, a 20-point gain over 1999. The school also improved its CTBS/5 math scores and posted the highest 6th-grade Functional Math Test pass rate in Cecil County.

Differentiated instruction is a critical component of Elkton's academic and staff development programs. While classes are grouped heterogeneously, according to Gerard, teachers are committed to challenging all students appropriately, not just "teaching to the middle."

Language arts teacher Melissa Freil explains. "We decided to cluster our very top, 'challenge' students. For example, last year I taught three 90-minute classes, and in one of those classes I had a small cluster of about 5 challenge students. Sometimes these students worked together, and other times they were spread out among the rest of the class. I keep the groupings very flexible." Right now, teachers are reading a book on differentiated instruction and have formed study groups to discuss it.

Kent County**Data Analysis****Chestertown Middle**

"Our teachers work very hard," says Chestertown Middle School principal Herb Mills. "I'm also lucky to have really great students – I'm so proud of them." He has every reason to be. This year, 8th-grade reading and writing scores at the diverse Kent County school soared to 60.2 and 80.4 percent, respectively.

Asked to explain the school's gains, Mills says, "Over my past few years as principal, I've found that a performance-based assessment is something you prepare for all year. It's a way of life for us."

"We don't pull out practice tasks a month before the test," he adds. "What we do is integrate reading and writing across the curriculum. We're really stressing to students the importance of reading."

To staff, Mills stresses the importance of data. After MSPAP scores

are released each year, Kent County schools come together to analyze them. "We really pick them apart," says Mills. "The following week, we come back together to make instructional decisions based on the data."

Chestertown students having difficulty with reading and math receive academic intervention three times a week after school or for several weeks during the summer. Last year, Mills made academic intervention mandatory for 8th-graders not meeting reading and math expectations. This year, he expanded the requirement to 7th-graders. But no one is as delighted with the program's declining enrollment as is Mills himself. Fifteen students were identified for extra help last year. By the end of the year, that number dropped to four.

After-School Tutoring**Worcester County****Buckingham Elementary**

Staff at Buckingham Elementary in rural Worcester County committed themselves to improving achievement among minority students. That commitment gave rise to Project Outreach, an after-school tutoring program held in three community churches. "It's a wonderful program because of all the involvement," says math resource teacher Wynette Morris, "not only from the community, but from administrators and even cafeteria workers, who prepare snacks for the kids. Everyone, in one way or another, is involved in helping our children succeed."

Resource teachers like Morris float among the three Project Outreach centers and deliver reading and math instruction. Two home-school facilitators, who also work full-time at the school, help run the centers. And vol-

unteers – senior citizens, high school students, and retired teachers, among others – provide instructional support. This kind of staff and community involvement allows each center to serve about 30 children three times a week. Services are targeted primarily to African-American boys in grades 1-4 with deficiencies in reading and math.

"When children see us coming into their community and spending time with them after school hours, that sends a powerful message that we really do care that they succeed academically," says Morris.

The Title I school earned a 40-percent composite this year and saw African-American students' writing and language usage scores jump 18 and 20 percentage points, respectively, over last year.

SCHOOL SYSTEM HIGHLIGHTS**Resources****Worcester County Public Schools**

Worcester County's composite MSPAP score topped 50 percent for the first time this year (nearly doubling the system's 1993 score) and gave staff another milestone to mark on their way to the 70-percent standard.

The county's primary education reform vehicle is the School Improvement Plan (SIP). Each school meticulously crafts its annual SIP with guidance from the system. In fact, each school improvement team has on it at least one school system staff member.

According to Richard Walker, assistant superintendent of instruction, Worcester's number one priority is to find for schools the resources they need to implement their SIPs.

Many times, those resources are found in grant money. Thus far, Worcester has won grants to fund after-school programs, parent involvement initiatives, and staff development activities.

It was a Goals 2000 grant that helped Buckingham Elementary improve minority achievement and community involvement. Project Out-

reach, an off-site tutoring program targeting African-American boys, won for the Worcester County Board of Education the *American School Board Journal's* Magna award (see Buckingham Elementary, above).

It's not just a facility with grant writing that's driving success in Worcester. Schools also freely share what works with each other. For instance, a new grant-funded program at Pocomoke Elementary builds on Buckingham's success. According to Walker, Pocomoke's after-school program, "reflects the kind of involvement we sought, and got, from Project Outreach. We're trying to draw in the community – to help them understand the problem and to focus on how they can become a part of the solution."

Worcester County is also committed to quality professional development. Last year, school system staff trained each middle school teacher in content-area reading instruction during his or her team planning session. Teachers then chose a time to have central office staff visit their classrooms

to see the new strategies in action. This exercise, strengthening staff development's classroom application, was such a success that Worcester expanded the inservice to high schools this year.

In all, the system's approach to school reform is fairly simple, says Worcester's superintendent Jon Andes. "What we're trying to do is drive all of our resources to the school level to support the teacher-child interaction we call learning."

