

TESTING IN MARYLAND

A Parent's Guide to the Maryland School Assessment for Grades 3, 5, 8, and 10

October 2002

Message from the State Superintendent

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I know that you want the very best education possible for your child. For our students to be successful in today's world, they need to know and be able to do more than ever before. We need to be able to measure how well your child is learning so we can be sure that he or she has every opportunity to succeed. If we don't know failure, we can't correct it, and if we don't know achievement, we can't applaud it. This is why testing is such an important part of your child's education.



This spring Maryland will introduce the first phase of a new testing program called the **Maryland School Assessment**. Whereas our previous assessment program, MSPAP, focused on **school** performance, our new test will sharpen our focus on **individual students**. The new test will replace MSPAP. It will also be a high-quality test, aligned with Maryland standards, which will provide accurate, useful, and timely information on **individual students**. The new **Maryland School Assessment** will fulfill recommendations made by a state panel of parents, legislators, educators, and business and community leaders (the Visionary Panel for Better Schools) and will also meet the new federal testing requirements of President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act. It will launch a new decade of progress for our students.

Let me tell you a little bit about the new test, which will be given in March 2003 to students in grades 3, 5, and 8 in reading and mathematics, and to students in grade 10 in reading. It will be shorter than MSPAP. Students will work independently, not in groups. The test will include both multiple-choice and short-essay questions. We expect to have sample test items available on our Web site around the end of November so you will be able to see what the test will look like.

You will receive your child's test results in late summer 2003. In future years, we will get your child's scores to you before the school year ends. Scores will show you how well your child is learning the reading and mathematics skills specified in our Maryland Content Standards. You will also learn how your child's performance compares to other students across the nation.

You will find the answers to "Frequently Asked Questions" about the **Maryland School Assessment** on the reverse side of this page. More information about the **Maryland School Assessment** will be available on our Web site at marylandpublicschools.org. You can access up-to-the-minute information by clicking on "News Releases" or on "MSDE-TV," which provides information in a video format. I encourage you to check the Web site periodically for updates on our progress. Your local public library is a great source of information and has computers and trained staff available to assist you. You may also contact us with any questions you might have on our Toll-Free Parent Line (1-888-246-0016). Please be assured that I will continue to communicate with you as we move forward, together, to improve teaching and learning for all students in Maryland.



Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Is testing only in reading and math?

A. The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires Maryland to test in reading, math, and science. Reading and math tests will begin in the spring of 2003. Science field tests will begin in 2005.

Q. In what grades will the tests be given first?

A. In the spring of 2003, students in grades 3, 5, and 8 will take reading and math tests, and students in grade 10 will take a reading test. High school students who complete the geometry course will take the High School Assessment in geometry. The geometry test will fulfill the federal requirement for a math test at the high school level.

Q. Will other grades have to take the tests, too?

A. In the spring of 2004, students in grades 4, 6, and 7 will also have to take reading and math tests. Science tests will be phased in beginning in the spring of 2005. High school students will take the end-of-course High School Assessments in geometry and biology after they complete those courses. These assessments will fulfill the federal requirements for high school tests in math and science.

Q. Will the High School Assessments be affected by the new federal testing requirements?

A. High school students will still be required to take the High School Assessments. These are not affected by the federal legislation. Maryland has received permission from the United States Department of Education to use the High School Assessment in geometry for its math test and the High School Assessment in biology for its science test. These two tests fulfill the federal requirement for testing in math and science at the high school level.

Q. How much time will students be involved in the testing?

A. Students will take the tests for approximately 90 minutes each day. There will be four days of testing—two days for reading and two days for math.

Q. What will the tests include?

A. The tests will include multiple-choice and brief-answer questions. Each student will be asked to complete all test questions independently. There will be no group work.

Q. Will students who receive special education services take the tests?

A. Students who receive special education services will also take the tests, unless their Individualized Education Program (IEP) states that they will take the IMAP, an alternative assessment. Accommodations for the Maryland School Assessment will be consistent with those provided during classroom instruction and testing and designated in the IEP for a student with a disability or in the plans for eligible 504 or limited English proficient students.

Q. Will the public see copies of the tests?

A. Sample test items are expected to be available on our Web site (marylandpublicschools.org) around the end of November.

Q. How soon will scores be available after students take the tests?

A. Scores from the tests given in March 2003 are expected to be available in late summer. In future years, we will get your child's scores to you before the school year ends.

Q. What will the scores indicate?

A. Scores will indicate two things: How well the student has learned the reading and math content that Maryland has determined all students should know, and how the student did in reading and math compared to other students nationally.

Q. How can I get more information on content standards, academic expectations, or other assessments?

A. Check the Maryland State Department of Education Web site at marylandpublicschools.org. There you can access recent news releases or click on the television icon for "MSDE-TV," which provides information in a video format. You can also obtain information from your local public library, which has computers and trained staff to assist you.

Call your school principal or the MSDE public information line at 1-888-246-0016 or 410-767-0600.

Additional publications, including a handbook for parents, will be available in the near future.



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