

Accountability

2008 Annual Bridge to Excellence Report



HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM



From the Superintendent

*T*he Howard County Public School System is committed to good stewardship and to transparency in all operations. Our commitment to fiscal responsibility does not fluctuate with the market. It is our priority during strong as well as lean economic times. It is the way we do business.

While the nature of our work often requires us to respond to temporary circumstances, we do so within the context of continuous improvement and our strategic direction. This is the case from the classroom to the boardroom. The school system employs an ongoing process of monitoring and review throughout the year. We continually question the status quo to determine how and where we might do better and do so more efficiently.

For instance, in 2006 we moved to a self-insurance program for employee health care. This has allowed us to spend less on fixed charges and put more dollars into the classroom. Additionally, the school system joined with Howard County Government in response to new federal requirements concerning Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB). The school system avoided duplication of costs by forming a joint OPEB Trust with the county to ensure that dedicated funds and associated earnings will be available to pay future benefits for retirees, such as health care and life insurance. The school system saved over \$500,000 in the first two years of an Energy Performance Contract with PEPCO Energy Services. These are just a few of the cost saving measures implemented in the past several years.

Of course, our real bottom line is student achievement. Over the past five years, our students have made significant gains in academic performance as measured by the Maryland School Assessments and the Maryland High School Assessments. The instructional initiatives we have implemented, coupled with targeted professional development and the hard work of our talented teachers and staff, are paying big dividends. We are extremely encouraged by the results, which indicate our approach is working.

These are just some of the reasons why the Chamber of Commerce recognized the school system as Howard County's Large Business of the Year for 2008.

I am proud to share our achievements for 2008. I'm sure you will agree that we have accomplished a great deal in the past year and we have done so in a fiscally responsible manner. I thank you for your continued trust and support.



Sydney L. Cousin
Superintendent of Schools



Superintendent Sydney Cousin (center) and Chairman of the Board, Frank Aquino (second from right) accept the Large Business of the Year award from (l to r) Howard County Chamber of Commerce members Pete Mangione, Karen Schonfeld, and Chairman Mark Cissell.



Goal 1: Student Achievement

The first goal of the Howard County Public School System is for each child, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, disability or socioeconomic status, to meet the rigorous performance standards that have been established. For this to be accomplished requires a persistent and dedicated effort on the part of all involved. A review of the data shows the outstanding progress made by all Howard County students. It also reveals that there are still areas where growth is necessary.

Howard County's results on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) continue to outdistance performance for the state, with elementary school students surpassing the percentage of students statewide that scored at proficient or advanced by seven points in reading and six points in mathematics. All elementary schools met the local standard of 70 percent scoring proficient or above in both reading and math on the 2008 MSA. Worthington Elementary School had 100 percent of its students reach proficiency in Reading on the 2008 MSA.

At the middle school level, every school achieved the local standard of 70 percent at proficient or advanced in reading and 15 out of 18 met the local standard in mathematics. Almost 93 percent of our Class of 2009 fulfilled the High School Assessment (HSA) graduation requirement by the end of 11th grade and 2008 SAT scores rose 10 points, from 1633 to 1643, with a 7-point jump in writing.

It Can Be Done! Closing the Achievement Gap

The Maryland School Assessments were first administered in 2003. Over the past five years, Howard County schools have made great strides in closing achievement gaps and ensuring that all students meet state and local standards. Howard County has set a local standard to have at least 70 percent of students score at proficient or advanced levels on the MSA. Progress toward that standard has been consistent and in some cases dramatic. While there is still work to be done, these results indicate our instructional strategies and supports are effective.

At the elementary school level, the performance of African American students has increased by 21 points in reading and 18 points in mathematics since 2003. Hispanic student performance has improved by an incredible 28 points in reading and 18 points in mathematics. Even more amazing is the 39-point jump in reading by our English Language Learners. ELL students improved their math performance by 17 points. Elementary students receiving free or reduced price meals (FARMS) realized a gain of 28 points in reading and 19 in math. All student groups, except special education, met the local standard in reading in 2008. In math, all groups except special education and FARMS met the local standard. Those groups are approaching the standard.



Middle school performance has shown strong growth as well. In reading, African American student performance increased by 14 points, Hispanic student performance increased by 16 points, and ELL student performance by 36 points! The picture in math is equally impressive. African American

student performance is up 32 points, Hispanic student performance increased by 25 points and FARMS students showed a 28-point gain.

Elementary School MSA Reading Performance

Student Group	2003	2008	Difference
Asian	88	96	+8
African American	64	85	+21
White	88	96	+8
Hispanic	57	85	+28
Amer. Ind./Alaskan	54	84	+30
ELL	39	78	+39
FARMS	51	79	+28
Special Education	47	66	+19

Elementary School MSA Math Performance

Student Group	2003	2008	Difference
Asian	91	95	+4
African American	59	77	+18
White	87	94	+7
Hispanic	58	76	+18
Amer. Ind./Alaskan	62	88	+26
ELL	56	73	+17
FARMS	49	68	+19
Special Education	44	56	+12

Middle School MSA Reading Performance

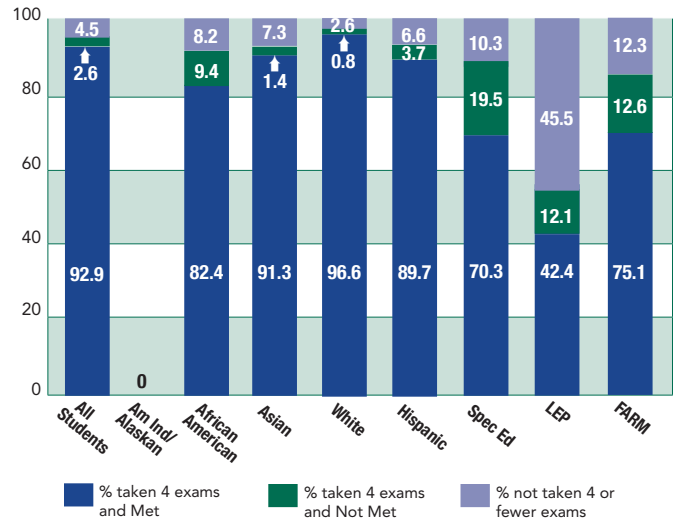
Student Group	2003	2008	Difference
Asian	79	93	+14
African American	63	77	+14
White	88	94	+6
Hispanic	58	74	+16
Amer. Ind./Alaskan	75	97	+22
ELL	16	52	+36
FARMS	53	66	+13
Special Education	43	50	+7

Middle School MSA Math Performance

Student Group	2003	2008	Difference
Asian	83	94	+11
African American	31	63	+32
White	69	91	+22
Hispanic	41	66	+25
Amer. Ind./Alaskan	40	86	+46
ELL	51	62	+11
FARMS	25	53	+28
Special Education	19	43	+24



HSA Participation and Status - Class of 2009 by End of Grade 11



Howard County's graduation rate continues on the upswing. Since 2003 the percent of students graduating has increased from 92.95 percent to 94.87 percent. In 2008, 92 percent of African American students graduated, 98 percent of Asian students, 96 percent of White students, and 89 percent of Hispanic students.

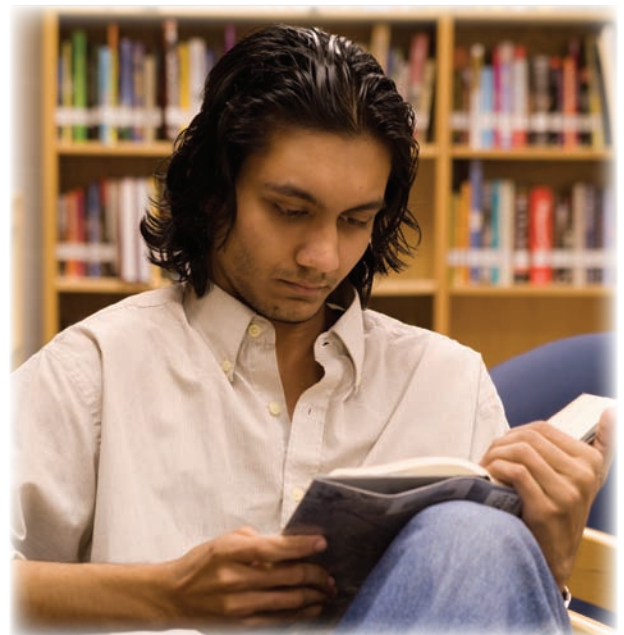
The Maryland State Department of Education commended the HCPSS for its thorough analysis of the performance of limited English proficient students on MSA and HSA.

Beginning with the Class of 2009, all high school students must meet the **Maryland High School Assessment (HSA)** requirement in order to graduate. Based on the data from the 2008 administration of HSA, 92.9 percent of Howard County's Class of 2009 had met the HSA graduation requirement by the end of 11th grade. At nine of Howard County's 12 high schools, over 90 percent of students had met the requirement either by passing all four tests or by meeting the combined score option.

May 2008 data from the Maryland State Department of Education show that 3,329 of Howard County's 3,583 students in the Class of 2009 had already met the requirement. Students have until the end of their

senior year to do so. They can meet the requirement by passing all four tests, by meeting the combined score option or by participating in and achieving a passing score on a Bridge Plan for Academic Validation.

Data show that a large majority of students of all races and ethnicities are meeting the requirement by the end of 11th grade. However, a greater percentage of students with limited English proficiency and who receive free or reduced price meals have not taken all the exams by the end of their junior year.



Comparison of SAT Average Scores Class of 2007 and Class of 2008

	Critical Reading		Mathematics		Writing	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
HCPSS	537	540	556	557	537	544
Maryland	500	499	502	502	496	497
Nation	502	502	515	515	494	494

On the SATs, students in Howard County's **Class of 2008 significantly outperformed their counterparts** in Maryland and across the nation according to data released by the College Board. The average scores for Howard County's 2008 graduates increased in all tested areas, while state and national scores showed very little change from 2007.

Howard County's average score in Critical Reading increased three points from 537 to 540. In mathematics, the increase was one point, from 556 to 557. The highest jump was in writing, where Howard's average score increased by 7 points, from 537 to 544.

The Howard County Public School System uses operating funds strategically to meet the goals of the system, the Maryland Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act, and the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. System-level and school-based improvement strategies are identified and adjusted based on ongoing analysis of student performance data along with other relevant data such as suspensions, attendance, etc.

The Maryland State Department of Education commended the HCPSS for analysis of trend data that highlights progress, shows challenges with identified student groups and notes clear targets for 2009.

How we did it

How we increased reading and mathematics achievement

- Added reading specialists, reading and mathematics support teachers, a middle school mathematics facilitator.
- Provided reading specialists in schools needing additional reading support.
- Provided mathematics instructional support teachers for lower performing middle and high schools.
- Revamped high school mathematics tutoring program to include in-school support for those not passing the High School Assessment.



- Provided teachers and materials for high school Reading Acceleration Program.
- Added in-school intervention in form of high school assessed mastery courses.
- Offered summer school intervention programs and resource materials.



How we did it, *continued*

How we increased the achievement of students receiving ESOL services

- Added ESOL teachers and assistants to keep pace with growing enrollments
- Established the Office of International Students and Family Services
- Provided bilingual liaisons and a guidance counselor to International Student Registration Center

How we increased the achievement of Special Education students

- Increased special education staffing to support the high school co-teaching model
- Added staff to support students taking the Alternative Maryland School Assessment
- Added middle school special education instructional support teachers
- Added staff to support growth in the Infants and Toddlers Program

How we increased the achievement of other student groups

- Increased staff to support enrollment growth in Gifted and Talented Programs and Advanced Placement Courses
- Hired a specialist for Hispanic achievement
- Increased the number of high school Academic Transition Assistants

- Expanded the number of in-school alternative programs
- Increased staff at Homewood Center to support enrollment growth

How we ensure our youngest learners are off to a strong start

- Implemented full-day kindergarten in all elementary schools
- Expanded pre-kindergarten programs
- Targeted funds toward early intervention in reading and math

How we ensure that all of our students are ready for the 21st century workforce

- Added Technology Support Teachers in all elementary schools
- Increased staffing for growing Career Academies Program and the new Automotive Academy
- Provided textbooks for new E-Commerce and Entrepreneurship courses
- Launched a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Initiative to increase the number of graduates with the necessary competencies to pursue STEM professions

Fine and Performing Arts Participation and Achievement

Research shows that students who are actively engaged in arts education are likely to do better academically than students with little exposure to the arts. Through the visual and performing arts, students learn to express themselves creatively and to build upon their natural talents. That's why the arts have always been an integral part of the K-12 education experience in Howard County schools.

Visual Arts

More than 6,000 Howard County Public School System students exhibited artwork in one or more of the 14 county and state exhibition venues. Since 2006, two Howard County public school art students have received the prestigious Presidential Scholar in the Arts Award.

Howard County's Visual Arts Curriculum Program Guides and Assessments have been presented at both state and national levels and are currently serving as a model for Maryland State Department of Education's Voluntary State Curriculum. Technology is being infused into the high school visual arts curriculum with five high school art programs now offering students experiences with digital photo technology.

Music

Howard County's vocal and instrumental music program is recognized as one of the best in the region. During the 2007-2008 school year, 695 students participated in the after-school Enrichment and G/T music ensembles and 219 students participated in the Junior and Senior All-State performance groups

Of the performing groups that participated in music adjudications (rated events) in 2008:

- 55 groups received Superior ratings.
- 37 groups received Excellent ratings.
- 2 groups received Good ratings.

Dance

Approximately 1400 students are enrolled in high school dance courses. The Annual High School Dance Festival is in its fifteenth year and continues to provide a concert format for each high school to showcase its dance program. Five Howard County high schools were selected to perform at the annual Maryland State Dance Showcase at Goucher College.

Theatre Arts

More than 1400 students are enrolled in Theatre Arts courses and more than 3,000 students participate in the co-curricular theatre productions. The Annual High School Theatre Arts Festival, now in its tenth year, provides students and staff with workshops and professional development opportunities to enhance performance and production skills.





Goal 2: Safe Schools

The second strategic goal of the Howard County Public School System is for each school to provide a safe and nurturing school environment that values our diversity and commonality. The system's progress toward that goal is monitored in three areas: Student Attendance, Safe Student Behavior, and School Environment.

All Howard County elementary schools met the **state attendance standard** with an attendance rate of 94 percent or better. At the secondary level, 18 of 19 middle schools and 10 out of 12 high schools met the state standard.

Students who become disengaged in school may develop attendance problems. Therefore, the school system also monitors truancy. A habitual truant is defined as a student between the ages of 5 and 20, who has been enrolled in the school system for at least 91 days and been unlawfully absent for 20 percent or more of the days enrolled. The number of habitual truants decreased from 152 to 134 in 2008.

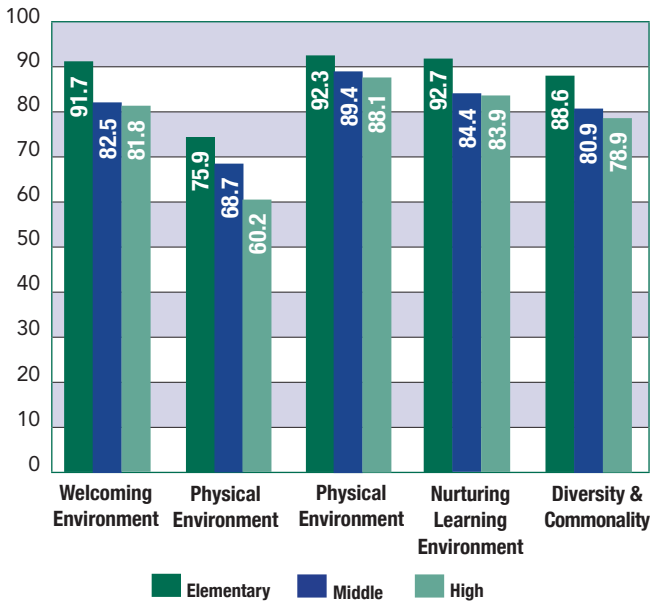
All Howard County schools met the state **safe student behavior standard** with 2 percent of students or

less suspended for arson, drugs, explosives, guns and other weapons, or physical attack on another student or staff member. The school system also monitors suspension rates for violations of all policies and encourages schools to implement strategies to promote positive student behavior. Overall, Howard County schools have very low out-of-school suspension rates. For the 2007-2008 school year, only 1 percent of elementary school students, 4.9 percent of middle school students and 5.6 percent of high school students were suspended.

The Maryland State Department of Education commended the HCPSS for administering the Goal 2 Survey for the purpose of measuring satisfaction.

In May 2008, the school system conducted a **School Environment Survey** via eSchoolnewsletter. The survey collected parent opinions in five categories: Welcoming Environment, Physical Environment, Discipline, Nurturing Learning Environment and Diversity and Commonality. Participants were asked to respond to statements with one of four options – strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.

Parents Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”



Fiscal Accountability Prudent Use of Public Funds for Education

The school system’s operating budget for fiscal year 2008 totaled \$612.9 million. The budget increase of \$61 million over the previous year funded the opening and staffing of the new Veterans Elementary School, the opening of the replacement Bushy Park Elementary School, and the addition of 12th grade to Marriotts Ridge High School. The budget also provided for additional positions to lower high school class sizes, completion of the phase-in of full-day kindergarten, the addition of technology teachers at all elementary schools, and additional positions to keep pace with increased number of non-English speaking students enrolling in county schools. The budget included \$29.6 million to fund the agreements negotiated with our four employee bargaining units.

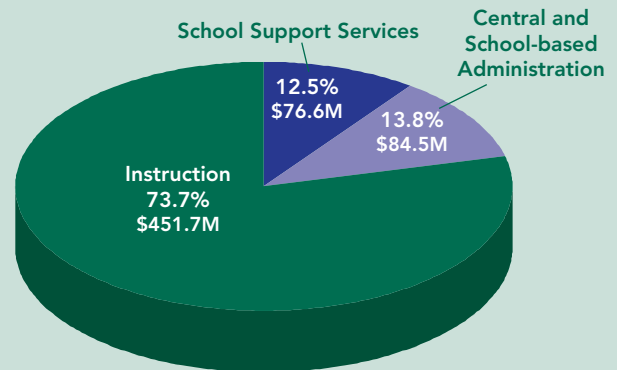
Parents continue to indicate that the overall climate in Howard County schools is welcoming and nurturing. The majority of survey respondents were very positive about their school environment. Survey results are used to guide school improvement efforts and comments from the surveys give schools additional insights into customer satisfaction.

To ensure a safe and nurturing school environment, each school is required to include strategies and interventions in its School Improvement Plan.

Forty-five Howard County schools participated in the **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Program** during the 2007-2008 school year. Twenty-five of these schools have received PBIS Maryland Recognition awards from the Maryland State Department of Education.

The school system continues to implement the recommendations of the **Superintendent’s Anti-Bullying Task Force** through professional development for staff, the inclusion of anti-bullying objectives in the health education curriculum, seminars for parents and an annual student poster contest. Additionally, **Cultural Proficiency** training continued in 2008 for central office and school-based administrators and staff.

FY08 Distribution of Operating Funds Total: \$612.9M



Funding Sources:

County	\$427.2M	(69.7%)
State	\$178.5M	(29.1%)
Other	\$7.2M	(1.2%)

For the third consecutive year, the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) awarded its **Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting** to the Howard County Public School System’s Office of Finance. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment.

Between 1988 and 2008, the Howard County Public School System grew by nearly 22,000 students. During those two decades, the majority of the system’s capital resources were devoted to providing capacity to accommodate this growth. In twenty years, the school system built 28 new schools and 6 replacement schools. Every project was completed on time and under budget.

The fiscal year 2008 capital budget represented a shift in the use of capital funding from primarily new school construction to expansion and modernization projects. With enrollments stabilizing, the need for additional schools has decreased, at least for the immediate future.

In 2007, the Board of Education contracted Gilbert Architects, Inc. and Facilities Engineering Associates to begin a comprehensive assessment of all school facilities. The assessment of high schools was completed in April 2008 and middle schools in August 2008. Assessment of elementary schools is underway and expected to be completed in early 2009. The results of the study will be used to prioritize capital needs and develop a schedule for modernization projects.



Keeping the “public” in public education

A final and vital aspect of accountability involves a public school system’s obligation to inform and involve the broader community. As a public institution, the Howard County Public School System pledges to operate with transparency, demonstrate that dollars invested in education have led to measurable learning, and answer for the efficient, effective use of public funds.

To that end, school officials and the Board of Education encourage public participation in all aspects of school system operations. They are committed to ongoing, two-way communication with persons from every segment of the community and ensure voices from all constituencies are included in policy-making processes through advisory committees, frequent public hearings, volunteer opportunities and accessibility.

Now more than ever, it is imperative that we continue to keep the “public” in public education. Only by securing public trust and confidence can the Howard County Public School System continue to provide the best educational opportunities for all students.

Fiscal Year 2008 Capital Budget*

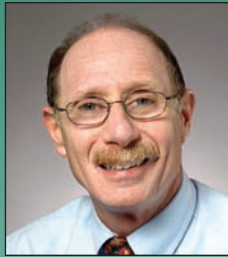
Project	Completion	Prior Authorization	FY008 Request	Project Total
Glennelg High Addition/Renovation	Dec 2007/2008	26,399,000	10,904,000	37,303,000
Centennial Lane Elementary Addition	Aug 2008	243,000	5,019,000	5,262,000
Elkridge Elementary Addition	Aug 2009	0	787,000	787,000
Mt. Hebron High Renovation	Aug 2009	1,900,000	1,200,000	3,100,000
Maintenance/Warehouse Facility	Aug 2009	0	1,100,000	1,100,000
Old Cedar Lane Addition/Renovation	Aug 2009	300,000	1,020,000	1,320,000
Waverly Elementary Addition Phase II	Aug 2010	4,014,000	300,000	4,314,000
Full-day Kindergarten		18,801,000	11,694,000	30,495,000
Educational Specification Modernization		500,000	1,500,000	2,000,000
Systemic Renovations		68,681,000	32,104,000	100,785,000
Relocatable Classrooms		5,310,000	1,100,000	6,410,000
Playground Equipment		1,180,000	200,000	1,380,000
Site Acquisition/Construction Reserve		14,353,000	3,800,000	18,153,000
Technology		10,952,000	5,726,000	16,678,000
Roofing Projects		5,477,000	3,000,000	8,477,000
School Parking Lot Expansions		0	1,000,000	1,000,000
Barrier Free Projects		4,003,000	200,000	4,203,000
TOTALS		\$162,113,000	\$80,654,000	\$242,767,000

*Projects and funding may have changed in subsequent budgets.

2007-08 Board of Education



Frank J. Aquino



Lawrence H. Cohen



Sandra H. French



Ellen Flynn Giles



Patricia S. Gordon



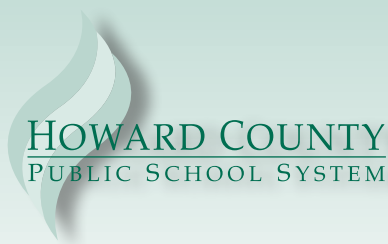
Diane B. Mikulis



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