A PARENT'S GUIDE

Maryland's Plan for PreK-12 Education
2011 - 2012 School Year
Fall 2011

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Maryland's local 24 school systems have made great strides in improving public education from pre-kindergarten through high school to ensure children are getting a high-quality education. This guide provides information and online links, including:

- Maryland's state testing and reporting processes;
- Programs available to support student achievement;
- Ways parents can be involved in their child's education;
- Help for children with disabilities and special needs; and
- Programs to help plan for a child's future.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) also has a number of websites that provide up-to-date and informative materials about public education, which can be found at:

- MdK12.org
- MdReportCard.org
- HSAexam.org
- MarylandPublicSchools.org
- MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/schoolsystems for links to local school systems

The State Board of Education, a 12-member body appointed by the Governor, serves as the voice of the public in its role as policy maker for Maryland's public schools, early childhood development, public libraries, and vocational rehabilitation services. The Board sets the state's education policies and standards for pre-kindergarten through high school and for Maryland's public libraries and correctional education and vocational rehabilitation services. It passes regulations that have the force of law and is empowered to interpret the true meaning and intent of the law.

Comments about this publication can be sent to:

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While MSDE cannot send an individual response due to volume, we do appreciate your comments to help improve our publications and materials.

RACE TO THE TOP

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 provided $4.35 billion for the Race to the Top (RTTT) Fund, a competitive federal grant program designed to encourage and reward states that create the conditions for education innovation and reform. The winning states had to demonstrate how they would achieve significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring student preparation for success in college and career. States chosen for this award had to plan and implement ambitious, innovative plans in four core education reform areas:

- Standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and career;
- Data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals; and
- Turning around the state's lowest-achieving schools.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) received one of the 12 RTTT awards ($250 million over four years) on August 24, 2010 . It was part of the largest competitive grant ever offered by the U.S. Department of Education. MSDE is poised to implement its bold, innovative reform agenda to move from being a national leader to world class — Maryland's Third Wave of Reform.

As part of its reform efforts, MSDE has broad, ambitious plans for enhancing its longitudinal database as well as its approach to instructional improvement through the use of technology as a key component of its RTTT grant. MSDE is engaged in redefining its entire statewide system of teacher and principal evaluation; revising the way it looks at teacher certification; and developing broad and deep plans for professional development. In addition, Maryland has significantly expanded its innovative Breakthrough Center as a systematic way of helping to turn around its lowest-achieving schools.

RACE TO THE TOP

As part of its Third Wave of Reform, MSDE is conducting regional Educator Effectiveness Academies. The Academies, which began in the summer 2011, will continue each summer through 2014. These professional development programs are aimed at building educators' knowledge of new reform measures, knowledge that they will bring back to all of Maryland's schools. The 2011 Academies were specifically targeted at expanding educators' understanding about the new Maryland Common Core State Curriculum (CCSC) and how STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) education aligns with these new standards.

More than 6,000 educators, representing every school in the state of Maryland, participated in the 2011 Academies. Each school sent a team of four representatives, comprised of the school's principal and one teacher from each of the following three subject areas: English/language arts; mathematics; and STEM content.

Over the course of each three-day 2011 Educator Effectiveness Academy, participants:

• Developed knowledge of the Maryland Common Core State Curriculum Standards and Framework;

• Developed an understanding of the relationship between Maryland's vision of STEM and the CCSC Framework;

• Provided feedback, modifications, and additions to curriculum work completed in 2010-2011;

• Analyzed the Academy content presented to identify prerequisite skills needed and appropriate strategies for scaffolding instruction; and

• Created a one-year study plan that will guide school staff in delivering the Academy content.

Ultimately, Maryland's goal is to prepare world-class students. To achieve world-class status, MSDE will have to implement its bold innovation with fidelity. World class means recognizing and acting on the new reality that a high school diploma is just the starting point; preparing students to succeed in college or careers. It also means ensuring that all students benefit from excellent teaching and learning and, once and for all, closing the achievement gaps that continue to exist. The Maryland Common Core State Curriculum will be fully implemented in 2013-2014.

For more information, go to MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/programs/race_to_the_top.

The State Curriculum (SC) and accountability and assessment standards are in place so every student can have a strong education foundation.

What is the State Curriculum (SC)?

The State Curriculum (SC) provides clear and detailed information about what Maryland students should know and be able to do at each grade level. All of Maryland's 24 local school systems have included the SC as part of the local school system curriculum. For more information, go to mdk12.org/instruction/curriculum/index.html.

What are the benefits of the State Curriculum (SC)?

The SC ensures that no matter where a child attends school, he/she will be held to high expectations and will learn the same challenging skills as other students across Maryland. The SC:

- provides teachers with the content students must master to be successful on statewide assessments; and
- helps reduce the amount of time spent repeating and reviewing skills each school year.

The SC gives teachers a basic foundation to build lessons upon, leaving ample opportunity to go beyond the state standards.

What are Maryland's statewide assessments?

Maryland statewide assessments are based on the SC. Maryland has assessments for the following grade levels:

- **Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR)** in kindergarten measures social and personal development; language and literacy; mathematical thinking; scientific thinking; social studies; the arts; and physical development. For more information go to **Instruction - Early Education** on MdK12.org.
- **Maryland School Assessments (MSAs)** cover math and reading from grades 3 through 8; and science in grades 5 and 8. For more information go to **Assessments - Maryland School Assessments** on MdK12.org.
- **Maryland High School Assessments (HSAs)** cover three core subject areas – algebra/data analysis, English, government, and biology. For more information, go to HSAexam.org.

Foundation for Life

How are student statewide assessment scores used?

The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires every state to measure reading, math, and science achievement at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Maryland fulfills NCLB by reporting MSA and HSA scores to the U.S. Department of Education. For more information about NCLB, go to www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml.

Statewide tests are useful for:

- guiding school-wide curriculum development efforts;
- creating or modifying classroom lesson plans;
- understanding a child's academic strengths and weaknesses;
- developing individualized strategies for that child; and
- providing information on where a child may need extra support.

How will I know how my child did on an assessment?

You will receive a Home Report with your child's scores from your local school system. Contact your child's school or the Local Accountability Coordinator for the local school system to find out when the Home Report will be sent. For a list of local school system websites, go to MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/schoolsystems.

Where can I find out how my child's school is doing on statewide assessments?

Information about how schools, school systems, and the state are doing is printed in an annual "report card" (the Maryland School Performance Report). The online report provides an Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) chart for each school that shows whether or not the school made all of its performance goals. To find your child's school information, go to MdReportCard.org and use the navigation bar at the top.

In June 2010, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted the **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. This initiative is a state-led collaborative effort among 48 states, 2 territories and the District of Columbia to develop a set of kindergarten through grade 12 education standards to help ensure that students are receiving an equally rigorous, high-quality education. The goal is to have a common and consistent set of standards across the nation, so no matter where a student lives, he/she is prepared for success in college and/or the workplace. The CCSS form the foundation upon which Maryland is building its new State Curriculum.

The Maryland State Curriculum is already very strong and teachers have been using the standards as a guide to create the best lessons and learning environments for their students. Under the Common Core State Standards, teachers will develop lessons using the Common Core State Curriculum (CCSC) instead as a guide. Maryland educators will also become part of a national community, working toward preparing students to compete with their national and international peers, both in college and in the workplace. Since the CCSS did not include pre-K, Maryland educators have created standards and developed the essential skills and knowledge to serve these students. The **Maryland Common Core State Curriculum** will have two main components, the Curriculum Frameworks and the Online Curriculum Toolkit.

The **Maryland Common Core Curriculum Frameworks** in English/Language Arts and Mathematics define the essential skills and knowledge that students need to know and be able to do to achieve the academic goals of the CCSS. On June 21, 2011, the Maryland State Board of Education accepted Maryland's Draft Common Core Curriculum Frameworks which are posted on www.mdk12.org.

Maryland's Online Curriculum Toolkit provides resources that will assist educators in designing instructional programs that are aligned with the new Curriculum and the new assessments. For more information, go to www.mdk.org.

The new State Curriculum will be implemented in Maryland schools in the 2013-2014 school year.

The **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)** is developing new assessments that are aligned with the CCSS. PARCC is a consortium of 25 states working together to develop an assessment system. The new assessments will be anchored in college and career readiness; provide comparability across states; and be able to assess and measure higher-order skills such as critical thinking, communications, and problem solving. The PARCC assessment will be implemented in Maryland in the 2014-2015 school year and will replace the Maryland School Assessments (MSAs). For more information, go to www.parcconline.org.

The Maryland State Department of Education views each student as a whole person with intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development needs. An important way to meet those needs is to ensure the entire family has access to support systems. MSDE's Division of Student, Family, and School Support has a number of programs and initiatives in place within schools and school systems to help parents and students with needs or issues beyond academics.

These programs and initiatives cover areas such as:
- school counseling and career development;
- school psychology and social work;
- positive behavior and character education;
- drug-free schools and school safety;
- at-risk behavior education and intervention;
- school health services;
- school attendance and foster care enrollment;
- school-based health centers;
- neglected and delinquent student strategies and interventions; and
- drop out prevention and alternative education.

Over 40 years of research has shown that engaging families in their children's education improves student achievement, attendance, and behavior, and increases graduation rates. Helping with homework, talking about school, and attending school activities are examples of how family engagement, within or outside of the school building, can influence student success far beyond the preK-12 years.

The **PRIDE Maryland Public Schools** program is designed to recognize and applaud the outstanding accomplishments taking place throughout Maryland public schools. PRIDE is about sharing success stories by nominating and lauding students, teachers, educators, and members of business communities with citizens across the State, as well as informing the public about the ways in which it can help support and contribute to the betterment of public education. For more information visit www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/about msde/pride.

The Take 15 for Physical Activity and Take 15 for the Health of it! initiatives are just one way MSDE helps families become more engaged in education. The expansion of the ***Take 15 for the Health of It!*** website included the creation of a new program ... **Take 15 for Physical Activity**. The web-based program — designed to help Maryland families develop strategies for better living by making physical activity a part of their daily routine — provides practical tools that families, children, daycare providers, and educators can use to help children talk about sensitive issues like body image, and making exercise and physical activity fun. A well-received component of the website is a monthly calendar of suggested activities for early childhood, elementary, and secondary levels. For more information go to www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/programs/take15physical/physical_activity.

Family engagement has gone beyond volunteering in the classroom, and has helped in transforming student performance and attitudes, fostering and leading school improvement initiatives, and strengthening support for school staff and administration. MSDE is proud of the extraordinary partnerships between families and schools across the state. The Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Awards program shines the spotlight on outstanding contributions parents and caregivers have made in their child's school and community. The slogan for the program is ***Choose Your Seat. Get Involved***. Examples of how parents have been involved in Maryland public schools can be found on the Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Awards program website at MarylandPublicSchools.org/PIMA. Read about what other parents are doing, then talk to your child's principal or teacher to find out how you can be involved too.

Understanding the importance of parent involvement at all levels, MSDE has a Superintendent's Family Engagement Council. This Council meets at least twice a year to advise and give input to MSDE on issues germane to family engagement as it pertains to student academic achievement. Additional information about parent involvement can be found at Mdpta.org.

For more information about MSDE's various programs, go to MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/studentschoolsvcs.

For information about specific programs and initiatives in place locally, contact your local school system Family Involvement Coordinator or your child's school. A list of local school system websites can be found at: MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/schoolsystems.

Support for Students

Early Learning (Birth - Grade 3)

Children begin learning the moment they are born, which is why access to high-quality early childhood programs is so important. Maryland is the first and only state to combine early childhood programs with early care and education programs into one Division of Early Childhood Development within MSDE. This approach helps coordinate the wide variety of services, programs, and training available for our youngest learners.

How can I find quality child care?

The division website lists community-based agencies, organizations, and program centers, from Judy Centers to accredited early care and education programs, and nursery schools, Head Start and pre-kindergarten programs to resources to help pay for child care. To find an early childhood education program near you, go to MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care.

How can I help my child get ready to enter school?

At this age, everything is a learning experience for a child. Exposing your child to a wide variety of positive experiences as early as possible, like reading books; playing games (i.e. peek-a-boo, counting steps); listening to music; dancing; finding a good play group; and visiting museums, parks, and playgrounds, will help develop the skills teachers will be looking for in kindergarten.

How can I help my child get ready to enter school? (cont'd.)

Ready at Five, in partnership with MSDE, has an online series called *Parent Tips* that contains information about how parents can help build a child's skills and abilities. The series can be found at ReadyatFive.org.

Maryland's *Early Childhood Curriculum Project* provides information and resources to child care and other nonpublic early childhood programs for disabilities, birth through 6-years-old. For information about materials and how you can be assured that your child is learning the skills needed to start kindergarten on the right foot, go to MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/preschool_curriculum.

The *Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR)* includes a kindergarten-level assessment, which teachers complete for each student, as well as a set of indicators of what children should know and be able to do. The information collected allows teachers to plan instruction that will help develop the skills, behaviors, and abilities necessary to meet kindergarten expectations and move on to the first grade. For more information about the MMSR, go to www.MdSchoolReadiness.org or Instruction-Early Education on MdK12.org.

Healthy Beginnings, developed by MSDE's Division of Early Childhood Development in partnership with the Johns Hopkins University Center for Technology in Education, are developmental guidelines for families and caregivers that can be used as a reference guide, or as a resource for planning daily or weekly activities. Further, these guidelines describe what children from birth to three-years of age are learning at specified age ranges, and how adults can support their development. The information can be downloaded as an application and features excellent tips of parent-child activities at home, in the park, or on the playground.

Additional parent materials and resources can be found at http://www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/commres.

Early Learning (Birth - Grade 3)

In elementary school, students are beginning to stand on solid academic ground. By middle school, they are being prepared for the more rigorous work ahead in high school. At the same time, these students are trying to find their place in the world around them—basically, where they fit in at school and at home. MSDE's Division of Student, Family and School Support is dedicated to helping parents nurture the whole child with a number of programs and initiatives so that your child has what he/she needs to develop to his or her fullest potential. For more information about MSDE's programs and initiatives, go to MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/studentschoolsvcs/ or contact your child's school.

Every student will take Maryland School Assessments (MSAs) as part of the elementary and middle school experience. These statewide assessments are one measure of how well a child is learning. The MSAs, along with other measures (such as homework, classwork, quizzes, and projects), provide parents and educators with information about students' academic progress so that every student has the support and opportunity to succeed.For more information about the MSAs, go to MdK12.org.

The MSAs are given each spring in reading and mathematics for grades 3-8, and in science for grades 5 and 8. Parents should contact their school system for the specific test dates. Parents are sent a Home Report with their child's MSA scores from the local school system. Reading and math scores are made available over the summer. Science scores are available the following September. For more information about the MSAs go to MdReportCard.org or MdK12.org.

Title I

Title I, Part A is a federal program that provides financial assistance to support academic achievement in local school systems and schools with high percentages of children from low-income families. All of Maryland's 24 local school systems and the SEED School of Maryland receive Title I funds. These funds are used in high-poverty schools within each district for supplemental academic support and increased learning opportunities to help support low-achieving children master challenging curricula in order to meet Maryland's state standards in core academic subjects. Title I funds allow schools to provide extra instruction in reading and mathematics, hire additional teachers, purchase supplemental materials of instruction, as well as design

and implement after-school and summer programs to extend and reinforce the regular school curriculum. For more information about Title I, Part A, go to MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/programs/titleI.

Supplemental Educational Services

Supplemental Educational Services (SES) are available to qualified children who attend Title I schools that have not made adequate yearly progress for at least three consecutive years as part of Title I, Part A. SES allows parents to select companies from Maryland's Approved Provider List to provide tutoring services to their eligible child free of charge. The goal of SES is to help:

- students improve academically, especially in reading/language arts, science, and mathematics;

- parents with options for getting a quality education for their child; and,

- schools with a number of incentives to improve instruction.

Contact the school's counselor or principal to find out if your child qualifies for SES. For more information about SES, go to MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/programs/esea/Supplemental+Educational+Services.

We live in a world that is growing smaller by the mouse click. Maryland has worked hard to provide students with a rigorous and well-rounded education to help prepare them for the highly competitive, global marketplace.

Maryland High School Diploma

For a student to graduate from high school with a Maryland High School Diploma, he/she must meet the following graduation requirements:

- Complete all State course requirements — 21 specified credits
- Complete State service-learning requirements — 75 hours or equivalent
- Complete all State testing requirements *(see following page)*
- Complete all local graduation requirements — local school systems frequently add course and other requirements beyond the State's minimum requirements

Service-learning requirement

Maryland is the first and only state to require service-learning for all public school students in order to graduate from high school. All 24 local school systems in Maryland have developed individualized service-learning implementation plans detailing how students will be engaged in service-learning experiences, from kindergarten through grade 12.

Service-learning is an important teaching strategy that allows educators and students to experience course content in a different light, and use academic knowledge to address real-world problems. For example, a science project may have students working with an organization to preserve marshland or culinary arts students may prepare and serve meals at a nearby homeless shelter. Service-learning also provides opportunities for students to explore a variety of career paths. Many have found lasting inspiration through their service-learning experiences as they learned about an issue(s) and experienced first-hand how their contribution impacted a larger community. To find out more about service-learning, go to www.mdservice-learning.org.

State Testing Requirement (High School Assessments)

Students have three options to meet the State testing requirement.

1. **Pass each of the three High School Assessment (HSA) tests.** The passing scores for each of the HSAs are: **Algebra/data analysis, 412; English, 396; and, biology, 400.** There are two potential test substitutions:

   • **Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) tests** – For students who have earned a score approved by MSDE.

   • **Modified HSA** – An alternative test for students with disabilities who meet the specific participation criteria based on the IEP process.

2. **Combined-Score Option**. Students must earn a combined score of 1208 when the three HSA test scores are added together. This allows students to offset a low score on one test with a high score on another test(s).

   Note: Students who have taken the previously required Government test can choose to meet the testing requirement by reaching a combined score of 1602 on the four (4) HSAs or reaching a combined score of 1208 on the three (3) HSAs currently administered, which would only include Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, and English.

3. **Bridge Plan for Academic Validation.** Students who did not pass one or more of the HSAs after taking the test twice and meet eligibility criteria must successfully complete assigned projects in the specific HSA content area to fulfill the testing requirement for that content area.

For more information about the HSAs and the Bridge Plan, go to www. HSAexam.org.

Testing

Testing opportunities are available in October, January, May, and in the summer. A fifth test administration is available in April for seniors only. There is no limit to the number of times a student can take an HSA test.

Locally-administered or Approved Assistance

Students who do not pass one or more of the HSAs must be offered locally-administered or approved assistance by their school. The student is responsible for taking advantage of the assistance to help prepare for retesting. A student must also participate in locally-administered or approved assistance to qualify for the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation option.

High School Diploma by Examination

Legislation was passed in 2010 [Senate Bill 966] removing the 3-month waiting period from the date of withdrawal from the high school, allowing a person to obtain a high school diploma by examination.

High School (Grades 9 - 12)

Maryland's system of Career and Technology Education (CTE) has long been recognized as a national model by preparing students for both college and career opportunities. These programs typically begin in high school and allow students to participate in internships and other forms of work-based learning, adding value to their education.

Students completing a CTE program of study develop the knowledge and skills that employers need from day one; this means having the ability to think critically and problem-solve, the capacity to synthesize information, the skill to communicate well, and the capability to work well on a team. Core academic courses that prepare CTE students to succeed in their post secondary education, whether it is a two-year or four-year college degree, advanced certificate, or technical training experience, are part of the sequence of courses. The goal is to have all CTE students suceed in post secondary credit-bearing courses without remediation and be ready to meet employer expectations in a technologically advanced, global society.

Career and Technology Education (CTE) - it's more than a name change!

Career and Technology Education *(formerly vocational education)* gives students a head start on college and careers in high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand occupations organized in ten different **Career Clusters** including programs in:

- Information Technology
- Finance
- Homeland Security
- Health Professions
- Pre-engineering
- Construction
- Trades and more

CTE students are able to earn college credits and certifications.

These value-added options give students an extra advantage after earning their diplomas. It's true! Most of the 40+ CTE programs offered around the State provide students with an opportunity to earn college credit, industry-recognized certifications, or both. As an added bonus, nearly every CTE program connects to a similar community college program making it possible for students to transition easily from high school to college.

Students apply what they learn in academic classes.

Project-based content makes learning more relevant and engages students as well as improves their retention and understanding. For example, in the Pre-engineering program, *Project Lead the Way,* students apply skills learned in higher level math courses to real world engineering projects, under the guidance of professional engineers/mentors.

Parents and Students can save money!

High school is the only time when a student can prepare for a career without writing a tuition check! They can earn licenses and credentials, such as a Maryland Cosmetology license or a range of computer software certifications, often at a reduced cost compared to the cost of obtaining certifications and licenses outside of high school. CTE students can also save money on tuition by earning college credit. Students completing CTE programs gain knowledge and skills that can help them achieve better paying jobs while they are attending college.

CTE students learn in authentic, "real-world" work environments!

Experience is sometimes the best teacher. Involvement in Career and Technology Student Organizations (CTSOs), internships, and work-based learning opportunities provide leadership skill development, hands-on learning experiences and the prospect of developing professional networks. Giving students a chance to connect and reinforce what is learned in their CTE classroom — whether it is through CTSO skills development competition or placement with an employer for an internship experience — provides students with another opportunity to strengthen their academic, technical, and employability skills. These experiences can even help students develop a network of co-workers and managers who may also become valuable references for them in the future.

To enroll your teen or to learn more about CTE Programs of Study available in local high schools, Career and Technology Centers, and Community Colleges, contact your local school system's CTE Director or school guidance department. For more information visit http://www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/careertech.

CTE IS FOR THE CAREER AND COLLEGE BOUND

In today's workplace, continued education and training are givens. CTE programs include a sequence of a minimum of four high school courses taken in addition to the academic core classes of math, science, English, and social studies. Students completing both the academic requirements and a CTE program have the advantage of graduating from high school prepared for college and the workplace.

Career and Technology Education

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (DSE/EIS) works with families, local early intervention systems, local school systems, and public agencies so that all children with disabilities, eligible for special education and related services, have access to specially designed instruction to meet the unique educational needs of a child with a disability. Special education ensures that all eligible children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education that is individually designed to prepare them for post-secondary outcomes and independent living.

Special education provides instruction and related services to enable the child with a disability to have access to, and make progress in, the State curriculum in the regular classroom to the maximum extent appropriate. Special education services may be provided in the general and/or special education classroom; separate or nonpublic schools; residential, home or hospital settings.

What if you have concerns regarding your child?

Parents with children ages 3 through 21 years old who **suspect their child may have a disability** can begin the process to determine if their child may require special education by **writing a letter** (and keeping a copy) to the school principal, by contacting the local school system Child Find office, or by calling the DSE/EIS at 800-414-5891.

When contacting the principal or local school system Child Find office, explain that you suspect your child might have a disability and needs services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. You may request an evaluation to determine if your child is eligible to receive special education and related services.

How is eligibility for special education determined?

To determine eligibility for special education and related services, parents and their child will become involved in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. Special education law requires the child to be evaluated in all of the areas of suspected disability. An evaluation is a careful look at a child's abilities, strengths, and needs by a

team comprised of the child's parents, teachers, and specialists. An evaluation is based on a review of formal and informal assessment data, information from parents, observations by teachers, as well as classroom-based, local, and State assessment information.

Based on the evaluation information, the IEP team determines whether a child has a disability and requires specialized instruction and related services. The evaluation also guides the IEP team in developing an IEP for the child and determining the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child may need. Remember, a child's disability needs to have an educational impact that requires specialized instruction. Parents must give consent in writing before the school begins the evaluation process. All decisions about special education are made through the IEP team process.

How are specialized instruction, related services, and supports provided to eligible children?

- **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)** [birth to 3 years old]. Through the lead agency for the Local Infants and Toddlers Program, the IFSP is developed to provide services to eligible infants and toddlers (birth to 3 years old) and their families.
- **Extended IFSP Option** [3 to 4 years old]. Before the age of three, if a child with a current IFSP is determined eligible for special education and related services, the child's family may CHOOSE for their child to continue to receive early intervention services with an educational component that promotes school readiness and incorporates preliteracy, language, and numeracy skills through an IFSP until the child reaches kindergarten age. This option is only available for children who received services through an IFSP prior to age three (3).
- **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** [3 to 21 years old]. Through the local school system, the IEP is developed for students ages 3-21 identified as having an educational disability, who as a result of a disability, require special education and related services. The IEP team, of which the parents are members, develops an IEP for the child. The IEP is a written document with supporting evaluation information that specifies how a child with disabilities will receive specialized instruction, related services, and supports.

Are the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and 504 Plan the same?

No. Students with disabling conditions under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act receive different services and supports. *See page 24 for more information about Section 504 and 504 Plans.*

Who participates in the development of an IEP?

First, an IEP team is created; the team would include the student's parent(s), at least one general-education teacher, at least one special educator, a public agency representative, someone who can interpret instructional implications of evaluation results, and, when appropriate, the student. The team may also include others who have knowledge or expertise about the student or the student's disability. The IEP team develops the child's IEP, which is designed to meet the unique needs of the child. The IEP is a written document and a process that outlines the specialized instruction and related services to be provided to the child. A child's IEP team is required to meet at least annually to review how the child is progressing and how the program is working. If needed, parents or school personnel can request an IEP team meeting at any time during the year to address specific issues or areas of concern.

Does a student with an IEP have to take statewide tests?

Yes. All students must be included to the fullest extent possible in all statewide assessment programs, and their results are a part of Maryland's accountability system. How the child will participate in the state assessments is documented in the child's IEP.

What are Maryland's alternative statewide testing options for students with disabilities?

MSDE has developed a number of alternative statewide testing options so students who receive special education services can participate in Maryland's accountability system.

- **Alternate Maryland School Assessment (Alt-MSA)**. This test is given to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in grades 3-8 and grade 10 for whom the IEP team has determined that the students meet the specific participation requirements. The Alt-MSA is a portfolio assessment tailored to each student's unique instructional needs in reading, mathematics, and science. Students taking the Alt-MSA do not receive a high school diploma. They receive a Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion.

- **Modified Maryland School Assessment (Mod-MSA)**. This test is given to a small number of students in grades 3-8 with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for whom the IEP team has determined that the students meet the specific participation requirements. The Mod-MSA is based on grade-level content standards and modified academic achievement standards. The Mod-MSA incorporates variation in test delivery to meet the specific learning characteristics of the students. This does not include students with disabilities taking the Alt-MSA.

- **Modified High School Assessments (Mod-HSA)**. This test format is given to a small number of students in grades 9-12 with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) whom the IEP team has determined meet the specific participation requirements. The Mod-HSA is based on Core Learning Goals and academic achievement standards. The Mod-HSA incorporates variation in test delivery to meet the specific learning characteristics of the students. This does not include students with disabilities taking the Alt-MSA. Students pursuing the Mod-HSA *may* be able to complete the requirements for the regular high school diploma.

What support is available to families?

The MSDE DSE/EIS maintains a network of local Family Support Services Coordinators *(see next page for local school system contacts)* that assist parents of children with disabilities to fully participate in the early intervention and special education process for their child. Family Support Services are broken down into the following three parts:

- **Family Support Network Coordinators** who work with families of children birth to age 3;

- **Preschool Coordinators** who assist families with children ages 3 to 5 years old; and

- **Partners for Success Coordinators** who support families of children 6 - 21 years old.

Family Support Services Coordinators

The following chart includes information for Maryland's family Support Service Coordinators and can also be found at MarylandPublicSchools.org/msde/divisions/earlyinterv/infant_toddlers/about/family_support_services.

Local Jurisdictions	Family Support Network *Ages Birth to 3*	Preschool Partners *Ages 3 through 5*	Partners For Success *Ages 3 to 21*
Allegany County	301-689-2407		
Anne Arundel County	410-222-6911	410-222-3805	
Baltimore City	410-396-1666	410-396-8900	443-642-4223
Baltimore County	410-887-2169	410-887-5443	
Calvert County	410-535-7387		
Caroline County	410-479-4204, ext 102		
Carroll County	410-876-4437, ext 281	410-751-3955	
Cecil County	410-996-5637		
Charles County	301-934-7456		
Dorchester County	410-221-0837		
Frederick County	301-600-1617		240-236-8744
Garrett County	301-334-8119		301-334-8935
Harford County	410-638-3823		410-273-5579
Howard County	410-313-7161		
Kent County	410-778-5708		
Montgomery County	240-777-4809		301-279-3100
Prince George's County	301-883-7428		301-431-5675
Queen Anne's County	410-827-4629, ext 149		410-758-3693
Somerset County	410-651-9413		
St. Mary's County	301-475-4393	301-863-4069	
Talbot County	410-820-6940		
Washington County	301-766-8221		
Wicomico County	410-677-5250		
Worcester County	410-632-5234		

Statewide Contacts

Maryland School for The Blind	800-400-4519, ext. 489
Maryland School for The Deaf	410-480-4597
MSDE Family Support Services *(including dedicated support for Maryland military families and families of detained and committed youth)*	855-414-5891

SPECIAL EDUCATION RESOURCES

MSDE Special Education Publications:

MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/earlyinterv/Special_Ed_Info

Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program (ages Birth – 3) County-by-County Directory of Contacts:

MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/earlyinterv/infant_toddlers/directories/single_point_entry.htm

Local Child Find Phone Numbers (Age 3 – 21):

MarylandPublicSchools.org/NR/rdonlyres/6FB406E5-4D57-44B4-BB53-37C093D1DCC6/24148/YellowChildFindBrochure_Rev510.pdf

Understanding the Evaluation, Eligibility, and Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process in Maryland:

MarylandPublicSchools.org/NR/rdonlyres/6FB406E5-4D57-44B4-BB53-37C093D1DCC6/22211/UnderstandingtheIEP1.pdf

MSDE Autism Connect:

AutismConnectMd.org

Maryland Early Childhood Gateway:

MDECGateway.org

MSDE State Performance Plan Results:

MDIDEAReport.org

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY):

Nichcy.org

Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE):

Directionservice.org/cadre

What is Section 504?

Section 504 is a federal law that protects the civil rights of persons with disabilities. The Act prohibits any organization that receives federal funds from discriminating against otherwise qualified individuals because of a disability. Public school programs and activities are subject to this law.

Who is Eligible?

A student with a disability should be considered for eligibility under Section 504 if he/she:

- has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities *(examples of major life activities can include but are not limited to caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, and learning)*;
- has a record of such an impairment *(examples of impairments can include but are not limited to severe allergies, cerebral palsy, diabetes, and epilepsy)*; or
- is regarded as having such an impairment.

A diagnosis of a disability does not automatically qualify a student for eligibility under Section 504.

What is a 504 Plan?

Students who meet the eligibility guidelines will have a 504 Plan developed for use in school. The Plan specifies the nature of the impairment, the major life activity affected by the impairment, accommodations necessary to provide access based on the student's needs, and the person(s) responsible for implementing the accommodations.Parents are encouraged to participate in development of the plan. A case manager will be assigned to notify teachers about the accommodations and monitor implementation.

- Accommodations should be specific to the individual student and should not include accommodations typically provided to general education students.
- Accommodations should be specific to the individual student's physical or mental impairment in terms of the substantial limitation to the major life activity.
- Accommodations must be documented in writing.

For more information about Section 504 and 504 Plans, go to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html#interrelationship.

Maryland has always attracted people from all nations as a great place to live and work. For families whose ability to speak English is limited, the challenge of entering the education system process can be overwhelming. MSDE has specific staff members, programs, and services to help families navigate the education system as well as learn English.

Who can I contact in the local school system?

Each local school-system has an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) coordinator to help parents and students with school system processes. Parents should contact the local school system headquarters or ask the school counselor for the name of the coordinator. For a list of local school system websites, go to MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/schoolsystems.

What is available for a student who is an English Language Learner (ELL)?

Students whose primary or home language is not English will be assessed for their proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing English. If a student is determined to be eligible for services based on the English Language Proficiency placement test, he/she will participate in the local school system's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program.

How does Maryland measure English language proficiency?

Maryland has adopted an English language proficiency (ELP) test, which is aligned with English language proficiency standards, to measure progress towards attainment of English language proficiency. This ELP test is administered annually to all ELL students.

Are English Language Learners required to take statewide tests?

Yes. All students must participate. A recently arrived ELL student who has attended school in the United States for less than 12 months is exempt from one administration of the State's English/language arts assessment. At the appropriate grade level, English Language Learners will take either the Maryland State Assessments (MSAs) in elementary/middle school or the High School Assessments (HSAs) in high school.

What accommodations are there for English Language Learners (ELL)?

Each school's English Language Learner (ELL) committee makes decisions about appropriate accommodations for the ELL students' participation in statewide tests and as part of daily instruction.

What is required of the state and local school systems to measure the child's development and attainment of English proficiency?

Under the federal NCLB regulations for Title III, Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students, states must conduct an annual statewide assessment of ELLs and local school systems are required to meet Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO) for ELLs from kindergarten through 12th grade. These AMAOs include:

- increases in the number or percentage of children making progress in learning English (AMAO 1);
- the number or percentage of children attaining English proficiency by the end of each school year (AMAO 2); and
- making adequate yearly progress for limited English proficient children (AMAO 3).

If your child is an English Language Learner, contact your school's counselor to learn more about instruction and testing plans.

RESOURCES

MSDE Title III Website
MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/programs/title_III

MSDE Foreign Translations Publications:
MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/newsroom/publications/pubsother

The Governor's Office of Community Initiatives
Asian Pacific American Affairs   www.asian.maryland.gov
Hispanic Affairs   www.hispanic.maryland.gov
Indian Affairs   www.americanindian.maryland.gov
Middle Eastern Affairs   www.middleeastern.maryland.gov

U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition
http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/index.html

Gifted and talented children demonstrate advanced learning capabilities in areas that include general intellectual ability (IQ), specific academic aptitudes (math, science, etc.), creativity (unique ideas and products), the visual and performing arts, and leadership. These students may learn more rapidly than their peers; seek to solve complex problems; invent novel solutions, products, or performances; and/or concentrate for long periods in an area of interest.

Maryland schools offer a variety of programs and services in gifted education—some serving all students, others serving considerably fewer. In general, as program intensity increases, the number of students participating decreases.

- **Primary Talent Development Early Learning Program (PTD).** This program nurtures and challenges critical and creative thinking skills in all preK–2nd grade students. The curriculum and strategies are based in early childhood theory and practice. Teachers use open-ended, engaging lessons—not to teach discrete content, but to target one of the seven PTD expert learning behaviors: perceptiveness, communicativeness, inquisitiveness, persistence, resourcefulness, creativity, and leadership.

- **Enrichment Programs.** Most schools provide all students with enrichment activities that expose them to potential areas of interest: field trips, guest speakers, cultural events, etc. Schools may extend the general curriculum to provide additional challenges for students through in-depth enrichment opportunities: for example, a Shakespeare Festival for students interested in literature; the Math Olympiad for those interested in math; Black Saga for those interested in history; and TV Production for those interested in media/communications.

- **Programs for Students with Identified Talent Areas.** Students who are performing at high levels when compared with peers require programs and services beyond the regular school program. Some school systems provide these services in the student's home school; others use magnet schools or Center Programs for the Highly Gifted.

  Magnet schools/center programs typically require students to go through an application process that is based on extensive criteria, including students' academic performance; standardized test scores; recommendations from teachers, parents, and school-based staff/committees; evidence of motivation, intellectual curiosity, analytical thinking, and creativity; and an indication that the student can succeed with accelerated and enriched instruction.

The above-grade level curriculum is based on interdisciplinary, thematic units, and instruction promoting critical thinking, shared inquiry and application of research skills, authentic problem-solving, communication, academic risk-taking, and creative self-expression. Teaching and enrichment experiences are tailored to students' strengths and needs, their interests and learning styles, and their readiness levels.

The *Maryland Summer Centers for Gifted and Talented Students* represent a 44-year commitment at the State level to provide summer educational opportunities for Maryland's gifted and talented students. The Maryland Summer Centers program, in partnership with public and nonpublic agencies, provides Maryland's diverse gifted and talented student population with advanced, rigorous, experiential learning opportunities that nurture these students' talents and abilities within unique learning environments. Summer Center programs serve students entering grades 4-12 through residential and nonresidential formats. Current program information and applications are available each February at www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/summercenters.

For more information about the specific programs and resources available in your area, contact your school principal or your local school system's program coordinator. You can also read more about Gifted Education in Maryland in MSDE's publication, Maryland Classroom, September 2008,Vol. 14, No. 1 at MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/newsroom/publications/pubs_md_classroom/ or go to MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/programs/giftedtalented.

Destination ImagiNation is one of the world's largest creative problem-solving programs for K–college learners. The program is open to schools, PTA/PTSAs, gifted programs, Community Ed or after school programs, home school groups, YMCA/YWCAs, scouting programs, 4Hs, community organizations, and families. There are currently more than 400 Maryland teams in eight regions that compete each year in brainstorming challenges that may cover the sciences, technology, mechanics, engineering, theater, improvisation, goal-setting, time and budget management, team-building, and leadership. For more information, go to Maryland's Destination ImagiNation site: **ImaginThis.org**.

Maryland's public libraries continue to be centers for information that include resources from paper to online formats. School library media specialists work with classroom teachers to develop students who are information literate. Information literacy includes skills such as how to use the internet, determine which information best meets a person's needs, and how to use information appropriately. Although the library building may not be open, there are free services available every hour of every day such as **AskUsNow**, www.askusnow.info, where a librarian assists you in finding the information you need.

Public libraries are branching out and becoming vital community hubs, providing a wide range of technology and educational resources, not limited to books, but including public computers, high speed internet access, ebook training, resume, and job application assistance. The Division of Library Development and Services (DLDS) oversees approximately 180 public libraries, the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, and the State Library Network, which provides access to materials in more than 400 libraries throughout Maryland. DLDS also works in close partnership with MSDE divisions to develop programs and educational outreach activities for the entire community.

Homework Help

Today's libarians have become information specialists who can guide visitors along the internet as easily as the book stacks. With computers that the public can use to access online resources, the Maryland Public Library System literally opens up a world of information now more than ever before. Students and parents can use and borrow materials from any public library across the State, as well as access a number of websites and searchable databases to help with homework and school or personal learning projects.

Teachers can **make learning come alive** with SAILOR— enhancing lesson plans & introducing actual artifacts without leaving the classroom! Students/parents can use SAILOR to help inform and enhance projects and homework assignments. http://www.sailor.lib.md.us

Research Databases *(available online with a valid public library card)* include:

— **History Reference Center**, search history-oriented reference materials.

— **MAS Ultra (Magazine Articles Summaries)**, *School Edition*, guides high school students to numerous full text research sources.

— **Middle Search Plus**, helps connect middle school students to a wide range of age appropriate resource materials.

— **Science Reference Center**, search science-oriented reference materials.

— **Student Research Center** *(middle and high school students)*, search a wide variety of research materials.

Libraries as an Educational Resource

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MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Preparing World-Class Students