INTRODUCTION

The *Maryland School Assessment (MSA)* is a measure of students' reading and mathematics. It will eventually include the measure of students' science. The *MSA* replaced the *Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP)* to meet the new federal test requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* that was reauthorized and renamed from the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* in 2002.

New academic standards were designed to inform parents, teachers, and educators of what students actually learned in schools and to make schools accountable for teaching contents measured by the *MSA*. To this end, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in collaboration with hundreds of educators across the state and Harcourt Assessment, Inc. (Harcourt), developed a series of reading tests to measure students' achievement against the new academic standards.

The purpose of the 2003 *MSA-Reading Technical Report* is to provide users and other interested parties with a general overview and statistical results of the 2003 *MSA-Reading*.

The 2003 *Technical Report* is composed of four parts, and the first part contains the following information:

- General overview and purposes of the 2003 *MSA-Reading*
- Development and review of the 2003 *MSA-Reading*
- Test administration
- Item selection for scoring purposes
- Linking, equating, and scaling
- Standard setting
- Score interpretation
- Test validity
- Item Bank

The second part provides the 2003 *MSA-Reading* results for students in grades 3, 5, and 8. It contains information about the cutoff score and pass rate at each performance level for the 2003 reading tests.

The third part contains statistical summaries for the 2003 *MSA-Reading*. This part outlines the statistical and psychometric characteristics of the *MSA-Reading*.

Three appendices provide additional statistical results for the 2003 *MSA-Reading*. Appendix A contains scale score frequency distributions and histograms, Appendix B contains both classical and *item response theory (IRT)* item parameters, and Appendix C contains test blueprints for grades 3, 5, and 8.