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2005 MCPS MSA Scores Continue Upward Trend

Grade 4 Students Set Record of 86 Percent Proficient; African American and Hispanic Students Scores Rise Dramatically and Narrow the Achievement Gap

ROCKVILLE, MD – Elementary school students in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) continue to set higher marks every year on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) while at the same time narrowing the achievement gap, state test results released today show.

On average, 82 percent of MCPS elementary school students performed at or above proficiency in reading and mathematics on the 2005 MSA, with the greatest gains among African American and Hispanic students at every grade level assessed, according to data released today by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

Grade 4 students produced a record-breaking proficiency level of 86 percent in reading and 84 percent in mathematics, the highest of any grade tested this year on the MSA and the highest ever for the school district. This is the same group of students who comprised the first class to receive the early childhood reforms begun in kindergarten five years ago and who have continued to surpass previous achievement levels at every successive grade.

Proficiency rates in reading among African American fourth graders reached 76 percent, an increase of 7 percentage points and the highest level of proficiency for African American students in this subject at any grade level. Proficiency in mathematics also increased for African American students in this class, rising by 6 percentage points to 68 percent, again the highest level of any grade in this subject for African American students. Similar gains were made by Hispanic students.

African American students narrowed the gap with their white counterparts by 30 percent in grade 3 and 26 percent in grade 4. Hispanic students narrowed the gap by 36 percent in grade 3 and 33 percent in grade 4.

“The performance by this year’s fourth graders underscores the cumulative, positive effect of the early childhood and elementary school reforms we put in place five years ago,” said Jerry D. Weast, superintendent of schools. “Every year, this class sets a new high for the system and paves the way for the classes that follow. We are going to continue to push to help every child achieve at high levels.”

The reforms that produced these results began in 2000–2001 with a new kindergarten curriculum, improved teacher training, new diagnostic assessments, and expanded full-day kindergarten. In each year since then, student performance by that class has improved, and each

subsequent class has reached high levels of achievement as well.

“The 2005 MSA data are something our entire community should be proud of. It reflects the commitment the Board of Education, our parents, and our staff have to helping our students achieve new heights each and every year. It proves that a rigorous curriculum coupled with a well-trained staff provide an excellent foundation for our students to build upon,” said Patricia B. O’Neill, president of the Board of Education.

The improved performance in elementary schools is occurring at the same time that the school population continues to grow more diverse. This school year, the overall elementary enrollment was more than 62,000 students, with 23 percent African American, 15 percent Asian American, 21 percent Hispanic, and 41 percent white, the lowest white enrollment among elementary, middle, and high schools. The improved performance and change in diversity are particularly evident in the experience of the current fourth grade class over the last five years. The class has grown more diverse over time and produced higher levels of achievement every year. In 2000–2001, for example, white students comprised 47 percent of the kindergarten class. This year, in grade 4, the percentage of white students has declined to 43 percent. During the same time period, overall levels of proficiency in reading have risen each year, from 39 percent in kindergarten to the high point of 86 percent in grade 4.

Overall, reading scores are up 2 to 5 points over last year’s results in grades 3 through 5 and math scores are up 3 to 5 points over the 2004 results.

Several schools posted extraordinary double-digit gains over the 2004 results. State Superintendent Nancy Grasmick singled out Viers Mill Elementary School Tuesday for its remarkable progress among students with limited English proficiency (LEP) as just one example. The proficiency level for third graders with limited English skills went from 54 percent in 2004 to 90 percent in 2005.

At the middle school level, the average performance of students improved slightly to an overall proficiency rate of 71 percent. The data show a small decline in reading in grade 6, a slight improvement in reading in grades 7 and 8, and gains in mathematics in all three grades.

Proficiency data by race and ethnicity for the middle schools reflect a varied picture. The differences in the proficiency levels for African American and Hispanic students, compared to Asian American and white students, are greater at the middle school level than in elementary schools. The most significant difference is in grade 8 mathematics where proficiency levels have increased for African American and Hispanic students at higher rates than Asian American or white students but remain below 40 percent.

Performance on the MSA is used, in part, to determine Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). The state’s 2005 preliminary report on AYP for elementary and middle schools is expected to be released later this month, and the AYP report for high schools is expected in August. The 2005 MSA results for MCPS and all other school districts are available online at <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde>.

Attached are data charts that demonstrate scores at each grade level by race and ethnicity and other subgroups.

Attachment Table 1

Preliminary Proficiency Percentages for Montgomery County Public Elementary Schools on
the Maryland State Assessment for 2003 through 2005

Grade	Content	Racial/Ethnic Student Group	Percent Proficient			One-Year Change
			2003	2004	2005	
3	Reading	MCPS	66.8	77.6	79.2	+1.6
		African American	48.3	64.5	66.4	+1.9
		Asian American	77.8	86.1	87.7	+1.6
		Hispanic	39.9	59.7	62.9	+3.2
		White	83.0	89.4	90.6	+1.2
	Mathematics	MCPS	75.5	79.4	83.0	+3.6
		African American	55.8	63.5	67.3	+3.8
		Asian American	88.1	89.0	92.3	+3.3
		Hispanic	56.5	64.9	73.0	+8.1
		White	88.6	90.5	92.5	+2.0
4	Reading	MCPS		81.9	86.4	+4.5
		African American		68.6	76.4	+7.8
		Asian American		89.0	91.5	+2.5
		Hispanic		65.2	75.9	+10.7
		White		93.3	94.7	+1.4
	Mathematics	MCPS		80.0	83.5	+3.5
		African American		62.2	68.8	+6.6
		Asian American		91.2	93.1	+1.9
		Hispanic		64.0	71.8	+7.8
		White		91.9	93.2	+1.3
5	Reading	MCPS	74.7	76.1	79.8	+3.7
		African American	58.3	60.0	65.3	+5.3
		Asian American	81.3	85.1	87.9	+2.8
		Hispanic	53.4	56.4	63.6	+7.2
		White	88.5	89.8	91.4	+1.6
	Mathematics	MCPS	67.8	73.5	78.5	+5.0
		African American	43.1	52.4	58.8	+6.4
		Asian American	83.7	88.2	91.3	+3.1
		Hispanic	47.5	55.0	62.6	+7.6
		White	82.4	87.5	90.9	+3.4

Note: The MSDE did not administer the MSA in Grade 4 in 2003.

Attachment Table 2

Preliminary Proficiency Percentages for Montgomery County Public Middle Schools on
the Maryland State Assessment for 2003 through 2005

Grade	Content	Racial/Ethnic Group	Percent Proficient			One-Year Change
			2003	2004	2005	
6	Reading	MCPS		77.2	75.8	-1.4
		African American		61.7	59.0	-2.7
		Asian American		85.2	86.4	+1.2
		Hispanic		56.7	55.9	-0.8
		White		90.5	90.0	-0.5
	Mathematics	MCPS		62.4	67.7	+5.3
		African American		37.1	44.0	+6.9
		Asian American		81.3	86.0	+4.7
		Hispanic		39.0	45.7	+6.7
		White		78.2	84.1	+5.9
7	Reading	MCPS		76.0	76.8	+0.8
		African American		57.9	60.5	+2.6
		Asian American		84.9	85.8	+0.9
		Hispanic		55.5	56.0	+0.5
		White		90.5	90.6	+0.1
	Mathematics	MCPS		63.9	67.8	+3.9
		African American		36.3	43.2	+6.9
		Asian American		82.0	85.5	+3.5
		Hispanic		40.7	45.3	+4.6
		White		81.3	83.6	+2.3
8	Reading	MCPS	70.9	72.4	73.9	+1.5
		African American	51.1	52.9	55.3	+2.4
		Asian American	77.9	82.7	84.0	+1.3
		Hispanic	48.0	49.2	52.8	+3.6
		White	86.0	87.7	88.8	+1.1
	Mathematics	MCPS	57.5	58.8	64.6	+5.8
		African American	28.8	31.2	39.0	+7.8
		Asian American	77.4	80.2	85.1	+4.9
		Hispanic	30.1	33.1	41.2	+8.1
		White	74.6	76.1	80.7	+4.6

Note: The MSDE did not administer the MSA in Grade 6 or 7 in 2003.

Attachment Table 3

Preliminary Proficiency Percentages for Elementary Students Receiving Special Services on
the Maryland State Assessment for 2003 through 2005

Grade	Content	Special Service	Percent Student Proficient			One-Year Change
			2003	2004	2005	
3	Reading	FARMS	37.5	57.4	60.0	+2.6
		Special Education	30.3	53.2	58.5	+5.3
		LEP	18.9	43.2	48.4	+5.2
	Mathematics	FARMS	51.8	60.3	66.5	+6.2
		Special Education	45.8	51.4	57.8	+6.4
		LEP	44.5	52.8	61.7	+8.9
4	Reading	FARMS		62.3	72.3	+10.0
		Special Education		59.1	66.6	+7.5
		LEP		40.6	59.7	+19.1
	Mathematics	FARMS		58.6	67.1	+8.5
		Special Education		48.4	54.4	+6.0
		LEP		46.2	56.7	+10.5
5	Reading	FARMS	47.5	52.7	58.6	+5.9
		Special Education	46.9	46.4	51.2	+4.8
		LEP	27.2	33.1	41.6	+8.5
	Mathematics	FARMS	40.8	49.2	55.4	+6.2
		Special Education	31.0	39.2	44.3	+5.1
		LEP	36.4	41.2	45.6	+4.4

Note: The MSDE did not administer the MSA in Grade 4 in 2003.

Attachment Table 4

Preliminary Proficiency Percentages for Middle Students Receiving Special Services on
the Maryland State Assessment for 2003 through 2005

Grade	Content	Special Service	Percent Student Proficient			One-Year Change
			2003	2004	2005	
6	Reading	FARMS		53.9	51.0	-2.9
		Special Education		39.6	39.2	-0.4
		LEP		28.4	32.4	+4.0
	Mathematics	FARMS		33.4	39.6	+6.2
		Special Education		21.6	29.7	+8.1
		LEP		27.7	35.5	+7.8
7	Reading	FARMS		49.4	50.9	+1.5
		Special Education		38.2	37.6	-0.6
		LEP		19.8	28.8	+9.0
	Mathematics	FARMS		32.6	37.9	+5.3
		Special Education		25.8	26.7	+0.9
		LEP		24.7	29.5	+4.8
8	Reading	FARMS	41.3	44.5	46.6	+2.1
		Special Education	34.5	31.8	35.8	+4.0
		LEP	15.9	22.7	24.9	+2.2
	Mathematics	FARMS	25.3	27.9	34.1	+6.2
		Special Education	20.8	18.6	26.1	+7.5
		LEP	24.5	29.3	33.4	+4.1

Note: The MSDE did not administer the MSA in Grade 6 or 7 in 2003.