



**A few words  
from State  
Superintendent  
of Schools  
Nancy S.  
Grasmick**

We have much to be proud of in Maryland with our top-ranked school system. But trading water won't get us any closer to our goal of every child achieving at their highest level.

This month I presented some important new concepts for our State to consider, which I believe are necessary to continue to make the educational progress we all expect. They are:

- Increase the time our teachers spend in the classroom before gaining tenure from two to four years. Demands on teachers are greater now than ever before because of the issues surrounding accountability. They deserve more support—such as mentoring and professional development—as they begin their careers. A better prepared teacher leads to more successful students.
- Explore differentiated compensation models for teachers and principals who work in struggling schools, and for those teachers in subject areas where shortages exist, such as special education, mathematics and science. Students deserve highly effective teachers and principals, and differentiated pay may be another tool to point us in the right direction.

## **HONORING SCHOOLS: BLUE RIBBON, TITLE I WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

Maryland has a number of terrific schools and in recent weeks has had the opportunity to honor several of the best. Six State Blue Ribbon Schools and Two Title I Distinguished Schools have recently been announced.



Maria Lamb, director of Program Improvement and Family Support at MSDE, introduces the principals of Maryland's two Distinguished Title I Schools, Bonnie Hess at Chadwick Elementary in Baltimore County, and Dr. Jane Ennis at Adelphi Elementary in Prince George's County.

The Blue Ribbon schools are: Eastern Technical High School, Baltimore County; Northern Middle School, Calvert County; New Market Elementary School, Frederick County; Ellicott Mills Middle School, Howard County; Northwestern Elementary School, Wicomico County; and Snow Hill Middle School, Worcester County.

The Title I Distinguished Schools are Chadwick Elementary School in

Baltimore County and Adelphi Elementary School in Prince George's County.

“Maryland is fortunate to have a large number of terrific schools, and making these selections truly difficult,” said State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick. “We congratulate the students, teachers, parents, administrators and community members of these outstanding schools, which serve as gleaming examples of educational excellence.”

- Improve the teacher and principal evaluation structure. The primary responsibility of teachers and principals is to maximize student learning. A new statewide evaluation structure would place the link between student achievement and the instructional quality of the classroom teacher and the instructional leadership of the principal. Therefore, student growth would be a primary—but not a sole—evaluation criterion for teachers and principals.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, with the support of President Obama, considers each of these areas to be important in taking the next step in school improvement and I completely agree. To accelerate our improvement, we must try new pathways.

These new concepts are certain to generate important discussion throughout our State, and that's a good thing. We have worked collaboratively in Maryland to strengthen our schools, and that work has involved the legislature, local school boards, teachers' organizations, and the public.

My desire is that we resist the temptation to rest on our laurels. Other states have implemented – or are starting to implement – similar plans. Maryland has been a leader in education for a long time, and none of us wants to turn back that clock. By putting students first, our State will continue to make strides.

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Maryland this month welcomed 307 new Nationally Board Certified Teachers, the seventh highest total in the nation. Our state ranks 14th in the nation in the total number of NBCTs since the national program's inception.

National Board Certification is a rigorous program, and the teachers who take part in this process represent some of the best and brightest our fine classrooms have to offer. We congratulate our new NBCTs, and are proud to have them teaching our children.

The names of the six State Blue Ribbon Schools have been submitted to the U.S. Secretary of Education for the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program. They are being recognized by the Maryland State Department of Education on the basis of rigorous state and national requirements for high achievement and dramatic improvement.

The schools will be honored by Dr. Grasmick and other dignitaries at a banquet scheduled this coming March 15 in Annapolis. They also will be recognized with a special tribute by the Maryland General Assembly. The six schools will represent Maryland in the National Blue Ribbon Schools Competition. National winners will be announced in the fall of 2010 and be invited to Washington, DC to be honored by national officials.

The two Title I schools were among the Title I schools from across the U.S. that will be honored by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Association of State Title I Directors in a special ceremony in Washington, DC, this coming January.

Title I is the largest federal aid program in K-12 education. Schools use Title I funds to improve the education of all students in high poverty areas. MSDE administers Maryland's Title I program and nominated the two schools after a thorough review of student achievement data based on the Maryland School Assessments.

## **STEM EDUCATION TASK FORCE CALLS FOR IMPROVEMENTS, INVESTMENTS**

Maryland has an historic opportunity to strengthen its long-term economic health by improving its STEM education programs, according to the co-chairs of a recent task force.

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We are nearing the end of 2009 and I'd like to wish each and every one of you a warm and happy holiday season. Thank you for your thoughts and support throughout the year, and I look forward to working with you again in 2010.

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## Calendar

January 13, 2010 – Maryland General Assembly Session Opens

January 26-27, 2010 – State Board Meeting, Baltimore

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## VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

### News From The Board

(December 10, 2009)

Maryland postpones its application for Race To The Top funding until June, re-focuses its attention on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) courses, and recognizes two Title One National Distinguished schools, plus Board Briefs.

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## In the News

Teacher Reform  
WBAL – Channel 11

Inside Ed: New Nationally Board Certified Teachers  
Baltimore Sun

Local Schools Among Blue Ribbon Picks  
WMAR – Channel 2

A Town Hall on No Child Left Behind  
The Johns Hopkins University Gazette

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June Streckfus, Executive Director of the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education, and Dr. Britt Kirwan, Chancellor of the University System of Maryland, describe the STEM imperative for the State.

Dr. Brit Kirwan, Chancellor of the University of Maryland System, and June Streckfus, executive director of the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education, led the Governor's Task Force on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). The two met with the Maryland State Board of Education this month to

outline the report and discuss next steps.

“Even though this plan was developed in a time of scarcity, we are looking not only to ride out the storm, but we are looking to the future,” Streckfus said.

The task force, which included State Superintendent Grasmick and other K-12 educators, put together six major recommendations: align STEM curricula, eliminate STEM teacher shortages, better prepare STEM teachers, provide STEM capstone experiences for both high school and college students, increase the number of STEM college graduates, strengthening research and entrepreneurship in the STEM areas, and launch a STEM network allowing resources to be shared.

Many of the ideas are well underway. For example, Maryland's work with the Common Core standards states should help to align curricula in the STEM areas. Moreover, MSDE has been working to build the pipeline for teachers in the mathematics and science fields.

Dr. Kirwan suggested that other recommendations will need some help from the Maryland General Assembly and some additional funding through state or federal sources.

“We produced this report in the worst possible economic environment,” he said. “You can't do this without money.”

State Board President James DeGraffenreidt suggested

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that the cost of not making these efforts may be far greater, and Kirwan agreed.

“If we don’t do these things, we could slip back the way General Motors did two decades ago,” Kirwan said.

For the complete task force report, click [here](#).

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