



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

Governor Martin O'Malley and I this week joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative, a state-led effort to develop common English and mathematics standards for the nation.

Maryland and 45 other states have become part of the initiative. Only Alaska, Missouri, South Carolina, and Texas have not joined us.

By signing on to this effort, the Governor and I are coming together with colleagues from across the country in the development of common K-12 standards that are research-based, aligned with college and workforce expectations, and internationally benchmarked. This is a logical next step for Maryland, as we have been at work for many years to raise standards and strengthen accountability for our students.

Achieve, one of the key groups leading this effort at the national level, has worked alongside Maryland in many areas, including the recent review of the mathematics curriculum (*see separate story*). Maryland also is part of the multi-state American Diploma Project, which Achieve also is spearheading. That project is designed to strengthen graduation standards across the 35

## HSA REQUIREMENT NOT A BARRIER TO GRADUATION, SURVEY FINDS

The Class of 2009 has risen to the occasion. With graduation just around the corner, 97 percent of students in this year's senior class had met the High School Assessment requirement, according to local system survey data released last week to the Maryland State Board of Education.



State Board President James DeGraffenreidt and Board Member Dunbar Brooks discuss the latest HSA data.

As of May 15, more than 53,000 students of an estimated graduation class of 55,000 had completed the HSA requirement. Local school systems reported that most of the remaining students were involved in the alternative Bridge Plan projects in an effort to gain their diplomas

before their graduation ceremonies.

Approximately 1,460 seniors were still working on the HSA as of the survey date, down from 4,660 just seven weeks earlier. Since then, local systems have reported that hundreds more students have met the requirement.

"It is a pretty exciting moment," State Superintendent Nancy S. Grasmick said as the positive survey results were being released. "The data are changing daily."

MSDE officials have consistently said that the HSAs raise standards but would not act as barrier to graduation for students who have kept up with their coursework. The new

participating states.

The fact is that we need a high standard for all of our students. The new common core project will help level the playing field with students in other nations.

For more information about the new common core initiative, go [here](#).

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The Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education last week recognized 69 new Maryland Green Schools, two new green environmental education centers, and 24 re-certifications. With these new schools, there are now 271 Maryland schools with Green School Status – a new record.

Maryland's Green Schools Awards Program is a holistic, integrated approach to authentic learning that incorporates local environmental issue investigation and professional development with environmental best management practices and community stewardship. This terrific program celebrates Maryland's model environmental education efforts.

For additional information on this program, including a list of our new Green Schools, go [here](#).

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Maryland's number one ranking in education is the result of a group effort, from students to parents to educational administrators. At the core of all this success are our wonderful teachers.

All 24 local Teachers of the Year for 2009-10 were honored last week by the Maryland State Board of Education. The honorees will compete for the statewide honor, which will be announced this fall.

This year's group is particularly noteworthy. We have elementary, middle, and high school teachers vying for the

data are consistent with that notion, and counter the claims of some that the HSA requirement would keep qualified students from receiving their diplomas.

Board member Mary Kay Finan said that early reports about students struggling with the HSA had given her cause for concern. "It is very encouraging to see those numbers change," she said. "The graduation rate should be even better next year."

Students who do not complete their HSA requirements prior to the close of school this spring could complete them over the summer.

The launch of the HSA program several years ago was the culmination of nearly 20 years of research and study on the part of the Maryland State Board of Education. The Sondheim Commission on School Performance in 1989 put forth a plan of more rigorous academic performance standards, which led to a study of high school exams in 1993. The State Board voted in 2004 to make passing the HSAs a requirement for the Maryland High School Diploma for the class of 2009 (this year's seniors), a measure supported by a broad cross-section of business and higher education leaders.

## MARYLAND'S MATH STANDARDS RECEIVE POSITIVE REVIEW, IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Maryland's PreK-8 mathematics standards provide students with an appropriate and effective foundation in math, according to an independent review released last week.



Achieve's Laura Slover and Matt Gandal, along with Dixie Stack, MSDE's Director of Curriculum.

The report also found that the state's standards provide good alignment with the American Diploma Project's benchmarks, the national movement to develop high standards across states.

"An Analysis of the Maryland PreK-8

title of Maryland Teacher of the Year, each of them bringing something special to their nomination.

For a complete list of this year's nominees, go [here](#).



## **VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS**

### **2009-2010 Teachers of the Year**

(May 28, 2009)

The Maryland State Board of Education meets and congratulates the 24 Maryland Teachers of the Year. In October, Maryland will select from this group a single Teacher of the Year to represent the state in the national competition. .

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## **Calendar**

June 21 – July 31 – Maryland Summer Centers, Various Locations

June 22 – Dropout Summit, Randallstown High School, Baltimore County

June 23-24 – State Board Meeting

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## **In the News**

Olympic Medalist Visits Cascade Elementary In Honor of Breakfast Contest Victory  
WHAG-TV, Hagerstown

Tests Not Expected to Hurt Maryland Graduation Rate  
WJZ-TV, Baltimore

Graduation Requirements Offer Consistent Standard  
SmartBrief Blog

Laurel Resident Honored for School Involvement  
Prince George's Gazette, Laurel

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Voluntary State Curriculum in Mathematics,” a report by Achieve, Inc., took a close look at the state’s math standards in comparison to other standards being touted by other organizations. Reviewers were asked to help improve the standards as the state continues to strengthen its educational offerings.

The report, part of a series of reviews taking place on Maryland’s standards, was released this week to the State Board of Education.

“The world is changing and the demands for students are changing,” noted Laura Slover, vice president for content and policy research for Achieve. She said that schools across the nation need to increase the rigor of their mathematics programs, so students are competitive with their peers in other nations.

Achieve reviewers compared Maryland’s PreK-8 curriculum with not only the American Diploma Project’s (ADP), but also the National Mathematics Advisory Panel’s (NMAP) “Foundations for Success,” the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). The report found that Maryland’s standards effectively address the procedural skills in mathematics, and complimented the state on the way it has improved standards since Achieve began working with state officials.

Reviewers made a number of suggestions designed to further strengthen the standards. The report suggested that rigor be increased in some specific areas, such as geometry and probability. In addition, it said that the progression of knowledge and skills could be more clearly defined and developed rather than repeating objectives from one grade level to the next.

State officials plan to review Achieve’s work in detail before altering the mathematics standards.

Click [here](#) for a PDF version of the MSDE June 5, 2009 Education Bulletin.

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Maryland State Department of Education  
200 West Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201  
MarylandPublicSchools.org  
410.767.0600  
410.333.6442 (TTY)  
1.888.246.0016

**Nancy S. Grasmick**, *State Superintendent of Schools*

**Ronald A. Peiffer**, *Deputy State Superintendent*  
Office of Academic Policy

**John Smeallie**, *Deputy State Superintendent*  
Office of Administration

**James H. DeGraffenreidt, Jr.**, *President*  
State Board of Education

**Martin O'Malley**, Governor



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**Bill Reinhard and Gail Tucker**, *Editors*

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