

# A PARENT'S GUIDE



**Maryland's Plan for PreK-12 Education  
2010 - 2011 School Year**

**Fall 2010**

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Maryland's 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
- Programs to help plan for a child's future

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

- [MdK12.org](http://MdK12.org)
- [MdReportCard.org](http://MdReportCard.org)
- [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org)
- [MarylandPublicSchools.org](http://MarylandPublicSchools.org)
- [MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/schoolsystems](http://MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/schoolsystems) for links to local school systems

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.

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, 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.

### 2010 Maryland State Board of Education Policy

- In February 2010, permission was granted to publish new **Personal Financial Literacy State Curriculum** regulations [COMAR 13A.04.06.01 & .02]. The purpose of the regulations is to provide guidance to local school systems in implementing a system-wide financial literacy instructional program for all students. For more information, go to [MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/newsroom/publications](http://MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/newsroom/publications).
- In April 2010, permission was granted to publish proposed amendments to **COMAR 13A.07.04 Teacher and Principal Evaluation**. The regulations would require that student achievement be a substantial part of the evaluation process for both teachers and principals beginning with the 2012 school year. A stakeholder group will be brought together to determine the evaluation structure, state and local responsibilities, and the specific elements of the evaluation. The policy was a component of legislation passed by the General Assembly in April 2010 under **Senate Bill (SB) 899/House Bill (HB) 1263**.
- In May 2010, a revised **Guidelines for Implementing Alternative Preparation Programs** for teacher certification was adopted as proposed by the Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Programs (MAAPP) Workgroup. The revised guidelines provide for implementation of a "test-in" strategy for candidates wishing to participate in an MAAPP without evidence of a major or significant coursework in a field of study.
- In June 2010, the **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** in English-language arts and mathematics were adopted. The CCSS Initiative is a national, state-lead initiative to have a common and consistent set of standards from kindergarten through grade 12. (See page 9 for more information about CCSS.)

For more information, go to [MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/stateboard](http://MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/stateboard).

## 2010 General Assembly Legislation

- **House Bill (HB) 1160 Safe Schools Act of 2010:** The legislation clarifies the authority of the juvenile court to notify specified school officials that a child has been found to be delinquent, in need of assistance, or in need of supervision and committed to a specified agency under specified circumstances.
- **House Bill (HB) 1263/Senate Bill (SB) 899 Education Reform Act of 2010:** The legislation alters the probationary period of employment of a certificated employee in a local school system; alters specified procedures related to the probationary period of a certificated employee; requires a county board of education to evaluate annually a non-tenured certificated employee based on established performance evaluation criteria; requires certain certificated employees to be assigned a mentor and provided guidance and instruction and additional professional development under certain circumstances as established by the State Board of Education.
- **Senate Bill (SB) 286 Governor’s P–20 Leadership Council of Maryland:** The legislation codifies the Governor’s P–20 Leadership Council of Maryland. The purpose of the Council is to investigate ways of improving the connections between the pre-kindergarten, primary, secondary, and higher education systems.
- **Senate Bill (SB) 275 Maryland Longitudinal Data System:** The legislation establishes the Maryland Longitudinal Data System as a statewide data system containing certain student data from all levels of education, from pre-kindergarten, primary, secondary, and higher education, and into the State’s workforce. The legislation also establishes the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center as a central repository for the Maryland Longitudinal Data System linking certain student and workforce data.
- **Senate Bill (SB) 540 Child with a Disability - Individualized Education Program (IEP):** The legislation requires appropriate school personnel to provide a copy of specified documents relating to the development of an Individualized Education Program for a child with a disability to the parents of the child at least 5 business days before a specified meeting, subject to an exception.
- **Senate Bill (SB) 966 Education - High School Diploma by Examination:** The legislation removes 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.

For more information , go to <http://mlis.state.md.us/>.

Students need to know and be able to do more than ever before. 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](http://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](http://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](http://Mdk12.org).
- **Maryland High School Assessments (HSAs)** cover four core subject areas – algebra/data analysis, English, government, and biology. For more information, go to [HSAexam.org](http://HSAexam.org).



### 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](http://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](http://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](http://MdReportCard.org) and use the navigation bar at the top.

The Common Core State Standards 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 in English/language arts and mathematics. Standards are a first step – a key building block – in providing our young people with a high-quality education. The goal of the initiative 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 Maryland State Board of Education formally adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in June 2010. Over the next year, educators from across the state will review and align CCSS with Maryland's State Curriculum standards. A draft of Common Core State Curriculum will be presented to the State Board for acceptance by June 2011. Upon acceptance, professional development will begin for educators across the state.

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 Common Core State Standards, teachers will develop lessons using the Common Core State Curriculum 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.

There will not be a single, nationwide assessment developed for the Common Core State Standards. However, states have begun to work together in consortia to pool resources and expertise for developing assessments based on the standards. Maryland is participating on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers consortium. Assessment development will take a number of years to develop, validate, and pilot test. Final assessments are not expected until 2014-2015.

For more information, go to [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).

- The English/language arts standards can be found at <http://corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards>. Within the English/language arts standards are literacy standards for history and social studies, and sciences and technical subjects.
- The math standards can be found at <http://corestandards.org/the-standards/mathematics>.



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 **Take 15 for the Family** and **Take 15 for the Health of It** initiatives are just one way MSDE helps families become more engaged in education. Daily tips and ideas of activities to do at home, as well as tips on how to talk to your child about a variety of health-related topics can be found online at [www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde/programs/familylit/take15](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde/programs/familylit/take15) and [www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde/programs/familylit/take15health](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde/programs/familylit/take15health).

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 Award 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 Award program website at [MarylandPublicSchools.org/PIMA](http://MarylandPublicSchools.org/PIMA). Read about what others parents are doing, then talk to your child's principal or teacher to find out how you can be involved too.

Additional information about parent involvement can be found at [Mdpta.org](http://Mdpta.org) or [mdpirc.org](http://mdpirc.org).

For more information about MSDE's various programs, go to [MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/studentschoolsvcs](http://MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/studentschoolsvcs).

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



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](http://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 has information about how parents can help build a child's skills and abilities, which can be found at [ReadyatFive.org](http://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](http://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](http://www.MdSchoolReadiness.org) or Instruction-Early Education on [MdK12.org](http://MdK12.org).





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/](http://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](http://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](http://MdReportCard.org) or [MdK12.org](http://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 twenty-four 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](http://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](http://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](http://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 four High School Assessment (HSA) tests**  
The passing scores for each of the HSAs are: **Algebra/data analysis, 412; English, 396; biology, 400; and government, 394.** 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 1602 when the four 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).
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](http://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.

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 (FAPE) 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 1-800-535-0182.

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 (IDEA). You may request an evaluation to determine if your child is eligible to receive special education and related services. These individuals work directly with families to answer questions, provide guidance, resources, and assist parents in the planning process.

### 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



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of the areas of suspected disability. An evaluation is a careful look at a child's abilities, strengths, and needs by a team including 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 5 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.

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## 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, which 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).** 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).** 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).** Given to a small number of students in grades 9-12 with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for whom the IEP team has determined that the students 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](http://MarylandPublicSchools.org/msde/divisions/earlyinterv/infant_toddlers/about/family_support_services).

Local Jurisdictions	Family Support Network <i>Ages Birth to 3</i>	Preschool Partners <i>Ages 3 through 5</i>	Partners For Success <i>Ages 3 to 21</i>
Allegany County	301-689-2407		
Anne Arundel County	410-222-6911	410-222-3805	
Baltimore City	410-396-1666	410-396-8995	
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	1-800-400-4519, ext. 489
Maryland School for The Deaf	410-480-4597
MSDE Family Support Services <i>(including dedicated support for Maryland military families and families of detained and committed youth)</i>	1-800-535-0182

### SPECIAL EDUCATION RESOURCES

MSDE Special Education Publications:

[MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/earlyinterv/Special\\_Ed\\_Info](http://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](http://MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/earlyinterv/infant_toddlers/directories/single_point_entry.htm)

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

[MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/earlyinterv/infant\\_toddlers/directories/child\\_find.htm](http://MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/earlyinterv/infant_toddlers/directories/child_find.htm)

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

[MarylandPublicSchools.org/NR/rdonlyres/6FB406E5-4D57-44B4-BB53-37C093D1DCC6/21840/UnderstandingtheIEP.pdf](http://MarylandPublicSchools.org/NR/rdonlyres/6FB406E5-4D57-44B4-BB53-37C093D1DCC6/21840/UnderstandingtheIEP.pdf)

MSDE Autism Connect:

[AutismConnectMd.org](http://AutismConnectMd.org)

Maryland Early Childhood Gateway:

[MDECGateway.org](http://MDECGateway.org)

MSDE State Performance Plan Results:

[MDIDEAREport.org](http://MDIDEAREport.org)

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY):

[Nichcy.org](http://Nichcy.org)

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

[Directionservice.org/cadre](http://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. 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 is 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 is 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](http://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](http://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 test, which is aligned with English language proficiency standards, to measure progress towards attainment of English language proficiency.

## 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](http://MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/programs/title_III)

### MSDE Foreign Translations Publications:

[marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/newsroom/publications/pubsother](http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/newsroom/publications/pubsother)

### The Governor's Office of Community Initiatives

Asian Pacific American Affairs	<a href="http://www.asian.maryland.gov">www.asian.maryland.gov</a>
Hispanic Affairs	<a href="http://www.hispanic.maryland.gov">www.hispanic.maryland.gov</a>
Indian Affairs	<a href="http://www.americanindian.maryland.gov">www.americanindian.maryland.gov</a>
Middle Eastern Affairs	<a href="http://www.middleeastern.maryland.gov">www.middleeastern.maryland.gov</a>

### U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition

[www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/index.html](http://www.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.

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/](http://MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/newsroom/publications/pubs_md_classroom/) or go to [MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/programs/giftedtalented](http://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/PTSA's, 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 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](http://ImaginThis.org).

Career and Technology Education (CTE) in Maryland has evolved into a broad system of programs spanning a variety of challenging fields. Each CTE program is designed so students are able to gain skills and knowledge that will give them a jump start on future career and/or college success. Today's CTE prepares students for the 21st Century by offering:

- Programs of study that allow them to earn college credit while in high school;
- Opportunities to earn industry-recognized credentials, certificates, and licenses;
- Academic subject matter and employability skills taught by solving real-world problems; and
- College and career readiness skills, preparing them for employment and further education.

### Career Clusters

Maryland educators and employers have partnered to develop ten career clusters based on Maryland's unique employment needs. A Career Cluster represents a segment of the economy where industries and occupations share similar skill requirements.

- Arts, Media, & Communication
- Business Management & Finance
- Construction & Development
- Consumer Services, Hospitality, & Tourism
- Environmental, Agricultural, & Natural Resources Systems
- Health and Biosciences
- Human Resource Services
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing, Engineering, & Technology
- Transportation Technologies

Maryland's CTE system has long been recognized as a national model that provides a diverse array of programs organized within 10 career clusters. The clusters help connect education to employment and provide a framework to make the high school experience more meaningful to students. Not unlike choosing a major in college, the career clusters provide students an opportunity to select a field of interest to focus on while still in high school.

CTE programs typically begin at the 10th grade or later, and virtually all allow students to participate in internships and other forms of work-based learning, adding value to their education and giving them a head-start on college and careers. Through career development and exploration activities, students have access to resources to help them move along their college and/or career plan.

Since MSDE collaborates with school systems, businesses, and industry leaders to create CTE programs, the process ensures that high school students can readily transition to two-year colleges, four-year colleges, and other postsecondary educational options to help them reach their goals. Students can also join local chapters of national student organizations such as DECA, Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), FFA, and Skills/USA, adding a level of leadership and interpersonal skill development that will help students increase their knowledge and expand their career networks.

Today's economy demands continuous learning and innovation. It calls for a highly skilled and flexible workforce with the ability to work in teams with people from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. By enrolling in and completing a CTE program of study, students are more likely to be successful in college and the workplace.

Read more about CTE programs in MSDE's publication, **Maryland Classroom, April 2008, Vol. 13, No. 2** at [www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/newsroom/publications/pubs\\_md\\_classroom/](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/newsroom/publications/pubs_md_classroom/) or go to [MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/careertech/career\\_technology](http://MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/careertech/career_technology) or go to the website at [MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/careertech](http://MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/divisions/careertech). For more information about the specific programs and resources available in your area, contact your school principal or your local school system's CTE director.

### JUMP STARTING FUTURE SUCCESS WITH CTE

- Students completing the **Information Technology Networking Academy** can earn college credit and a host of sought-after certifications prior to graduating.
- High school students completing **The Teacher Academy of Maryland** who pass the ParaPro test can begin their career as instructional paraprofessionals and go on to college having already earned college credit toward a teaching degree.
- Those who enroll in the **Project Lead The Way (PLTW) Engineering or Biomedical Sciences Programs** have a head start in preparing for careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields by meeting the requirements to earn college credit through the PLTW end of course assessments.



More and more, libraries have become vital community hubs providing a wide range of technology and educational resources, and librarians have become information specialists who can help guide visitors along the Internet to access online resources as easily as the book stacks. With 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 the state, MSDE's Division of Library Services is able to literally provide a world of information with free, high-speed Internet connections available on all public-access computers.

Working in partnership with all MSDE divisions, the Division of Library Services has developed programs and outreach activities for the entire community.

**SAILOR.** [[Sailor.lib.md.us](http://Sailor.lib.md.us)] A website portal that helps Maryland residents get information anywhere, anytime.

- **Science Resource Center.** A science database with offsite access from home or work
- **History Reference Center-** A historical database with access to over 4,000 primary documents, and articles covering themes, events, individuals and periods in U.S. and world history
- **Student Research Center.** A search engine for magazines, reference books, photos, flags, etc.

**MPOWER CARD.** Maryland's statewide library card provides access to materials, websites, and databases from any public library across the state. **AskUsNow!** [AskUsNow.info] Quick answer to any question, 24 hours a day - this service provides online access to a librarian who will help you find an answer.

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.



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