

Rising to the Challenge



2007 Annual Bridge to Excellence Report

HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

2006-07 Board of Education



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A Message from the Superintendent



The Howard County Public School System is among the best in the nation for many reasons. What truly sets us apart is our commitment to the success of each child. Thanks to the hard work of our staff and their responsiveness to the needs of our students, we ended the 2007 school year with a significant number of accomplishments.

Our schools continued to show gains on the Maryland School Assessments in 2007. All elementary schools exceeded the county standard in BOTH reading and mathematics. In addition, Howard County's African American and Hispanic students in Grades 3-8 met local standards in

reading. It is truly noteworthy that ten of our elementary schools had 95 percent or more of their students scoring at proficient or advanced in reading; eight elementary schools and one middle school reached that level in mathematics. Our pass rates on each of the four High School Assessments increased this year as well.

We all shared in the pride when Clarksville Middle School was named a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education. Burleigh Manor Middle School and River Hill High School were named 2007 Maryland Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence. Howard County was the only school system to have two of the state's six Blue Ribbon Schools.

Howard County schools were well represented in the Maryland All State Junior Band and Orchestra for Grades 7-9. County students comprised 54 percent of the Junior Band and 33 percent of the Junior Orchestra.

Our student athletes made us proud as well. Howard County high school athletic teams brought home 14 state championships during the 2006-2007 school year – more than any other county in the state.

But, we cannot afford to become complacent. This report identifies five major challenges that face the school system and how we currently address or plan to address them.

Educators in Howard County understand that it is not enough to measure improvement by how well the system and schools perform as a whole. The true measure of our success is reflected in the academic achievement of each and every one of our 48,000 students.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. L. Cousin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sydney L. Cousin
Superintendent of Schools

Five Major Challenges of the Howard County Public School System

1. Ensure all students **meet** state and federal **achievement standards**
2. Address the needs of an increasingly **diverse student population**
3. **Recruit and retain quality** administrators, teachers and support **staff**
4. Keep pace with emerging **technologies**
5. **Modernize** aging school **facilities**



Challenge

Ensure **all students** meet state and federal **achievement standards**

The federal *No Child Left Behind Act* and Maryland's *Bridge to Excellence* legislation have shaped the educational landscape across the state for the past five years. The Howard County Public School System welcomes the call for achievement standards and fully accepts responsibility for student performance.

The school system is committed to providing our youngest learners with educational opportunities that support long-term school success. Efforts begin

with half-day **public pre-kindergarten programs** that are provided for economically disadvantaged children with demonstrated educational needs, who meet age and eligibility requirements.

In addition, the school system began a phase-in of **full-day kindergarten** in 2004. In 2007, the full-day program was available in all elementary schools. **Reading and mathematics support teachers** provide support in all elementary schools and **mathematics instructional support teachers** were added in lower performing middle schools.

Beginning with the Class of 2009, the state of Maryland will require all high school students to pass **High School Assessments** in four content areas — Algebra/Data Analysis, English, Government and Biology — in order to graduate. Preliminary pass rates

for Howard County's Class of 2009 are extremely encouraging. But, for those students who are struggling and do not pass one or more of the assessments on the first attempt, the school system has numerous supports in place.

All high schools offer **mathematics tutoring** and lower-performing high schools now have the services of mathematics instructional support teachers. Additional teaching positions were added to staff mastery courses in assessed content areas in all high schools. These courses are one option for students who do not pass an assessment on the first attempt. The school system continues to expand the successful **co-teaching model** in high school mathematics and language arts classes and provides targeted programming for students who take the Alternative Maryland State Assessment.

Extended day, extended week, and extended year academic interventions are provided in the form of after school tutoring and support in Community-based Learning Centers, Saturday academic support programs and expanded summer school offerings.

Ongoing system level and in-classroom **professional development** ensures that teachers and support staff have the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the needs of all students.



KUDOS

The Maryland State Department of Education commended the HCPSS for reviewing and analyzing attendance data to determine if attendance issues result from students being harassed, intimidated or bullied.



High School Assessments (HSAs)
Class of 2009 – Completion Rates

	# of Takers	# of Passers	% Pass Rate
Algebra	3601	3396	94
Biology	3562	3231	91
English	3650	3262	89
Govt.	3494	3289	94

Maryland School Assessments (MSAs)

Percent scoring at proficient or above

	2006 Reading	2007 Reading	2006 Mathematics	2007 Mathematics
Grade 3	88	89	88	86
Grade 4	92	93	90	91
Grade 5	89	89	87	88
Grade 6	88	87	83	85
Grade 7	87	85	81	79
Grade 8	85	84	77	78

Class of 2007

Plans After Graduation	# of Students	% of Students
Enter the work force	132	4%
Enter the military	47	1%
Attend trade or technical school	70	2%
Attend a 2-year college	763	22%
Attend a 4-year college or university	2,331	66%
Other or unreported plans	178	5%
Total students	3,521	100%

Challenge

Address the **needs** of an increasingly **diverse student population**

Over the past two decades, the demographics of the school system have changed dramatically — ethnically and socio-economically. The number of students receiving English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services has increased from 95 in 1987 to 1,888 in 2007. The percent of students receiving free and reduced-price meals has increased from 5.5 to 9.8 in that same time period. The school system has implemented a number of programs and services to better serve this increasingly diverse student population.

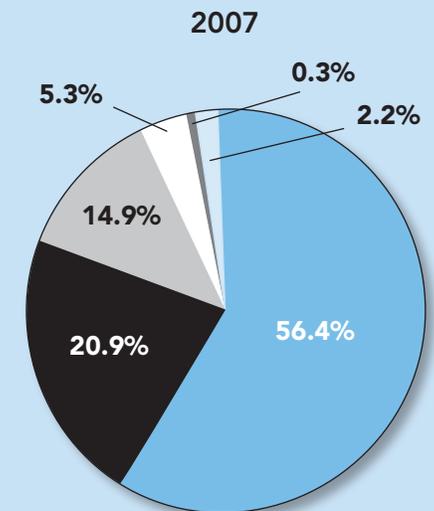
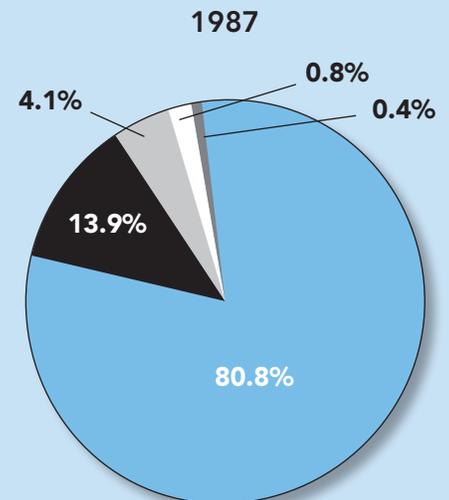
Cultural Proficiency training is provided to all staff members to prepare the system and its employees to interact effectively in a culturally and economically diverse environment.

The school system established an **Office of International Student and Family Services (OISFS)** to provide educational services to international students and to students and families who do not speak English proficiently. The office ensures that Limited English Proficient (LEP) communities have equal access to information and resources about school system services, policies and academic opportunities.

International students entering the Howard County Public School System now register through the **International Student Registration Center**. Students are assessed to determine their English language proficiency and their academic skills at the time of registration. Interpreting services are provided to facilitate the registration process and credit evaluations for high school students are completed on site.



ETHNIC BREAKDOWN
Percent of Student Population



- White
- African American
- Asian
- Hispanic
- American India
- Not Reported

Bilingual Community Liaisons

facilitate communication with and advocate for the LEP families whose children are enrolled in our schools. The liaisons are stationed at 12 county schools and provide language and cultural support for more than 3,000 LEP families.

The OISFS also provides phone services in Spanish and Korean for families with questions and concerns related to school matters. LEP parents may call the **International Call Center** and leave messages in their native language. The phone calls are checked daily to support LEP parents.



The Howard County Public School System has a cadre of **interpreters** who assist with communication at school meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and at other times when needed. Additionally, most of the major **publications of the Howard County Public School System are translated into five languages** — Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Urdu and Vietnamese.

The school system hired its first **Hispanic Achievement Specialist** in 2006-2007 to support schools in addressing the achievement gap that exists between the academic performance of Hispanic students and that of other student groups.

International parents and families are supported through the **Parent and Child ESOL Program**, the

KUDOS

The Maryland State Department of Education commended the HCPSS for before, during and after course interventions, summer school academic interventions, strategies for special education students and ELL students, etc. designed to ensure that all students pass the High School Assessments.

International Parent Leadership Program and Educational Forums.

The **Black Student Achievement Program (BSAP)** also supports the school system's goal of all students achieving, with a specific focus on closing the performance gap that exists between African American students and other student groups. **BSAP Academic Mentors** in 13 elementary schools provide academic support for a caseload of 12 to 15 students who need extra help to work successfully in the school environment.

BSAP services in secondary schools are provided by **Academic Transition Assistants**, who implement a coordinated system of countywide and school-based strategies to help

students reach identified personal, educational, career and social goals.

Six **Community-based Learning Centers** accelerate academic achievement with a primary focus on reading, mathematics and social skills. Students receive assistance with daily homework assignments and develop cultural and social awareness as they discover new assets within themselves.

The BSAP **Saturday Math Academy** meets every Saturday morning at Oakland Mills High School. Students in Grades 4 through 12 can receive individual assistance and/or work in a small group on identified math skills.

BSAP sponsors a number of other initiatives, including **Student and Parent Advisory Councils**, a **Rising Scholars Banquet** and **cultural and historical field trips** for students.

The school system has also seen an increase in the number of students with severe or multiple handicapping conditions and students who are medically fragile. Last year, health-related services for the medically fragile were enhanced, as were **instructional and therapeutic services for Special Education students**.



Challenge

Recruit and retain quality administrators, teachers and support **staff**



Leading up to the 2006-2007 school year, the school system hired 499 teachers and 361 support staff to fill new positions and positions vacated by retirements and resignations. Competition for teachers among area school systems has become increasingly aggressive, particularly for male and minority candidates, experienced candidates, and candidates in critical shortage subject areas such as special education, secondary mathematics and science, technology education, and world languages.

Howard County's competitive position improved by offering **early contracts** to select teacher candidates in critical shortage subject areas and in content areas in which numerous vacancies were anticipated. Last year, the school system increased pay rates for the first five steps on the teacher pay scale to

improve Howard County's competitive position for teacher compensation. In addition, **signing bonuses** of \$1,000 were awarded to the first 125 teachers hired in specific critical shortage areas.

KUDOS

The Maryland State Department of Education commended the HCPSS for its comprehensive teacher and paraprofessional recruitment and retention programs.

The school system's Office of Human Resources employs **online recruiting efforts**, partners with Howard Community College to offer an **Alternative Teacher Preparation Program**, and provides a program and scholarships for paraeducators who wish to pursue teaching careers.

The Office of Human Resources uses a variety of forums to attract qualified applicants.

The school system supports high school students who have an interest in teaching with the **Future Educators Association** and the **Teacher Career Academy**.

Minority recruiting continues to be a focus for the Howard County Public School System's comprehensive employee recruiting efforts. During the 2006-2007 recruiting season, Howard County recruiters visited historically Black colleges and universities in Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina, as well as universities with significant Asian and Hispanic populations in Florida, Illinois, Minnesota and New Jersey. Other activities include the formation of Professional Development School partnerships with Black colleges and universities; inclusive print advertising in campus career guides, newspapers, and job search journals; and participation in an online recruiting service. The school system has expanded advertising in the Latino/Hispanic and Asian communities and added off-site recruiting designed to attract Latino/Hispanic and Asian educators.

The school system also has a number of initiatives and programs to encourage staff retention. These include but are not limited to a **New Teacher Orientation**, Instructional Assistant Scholarships, an Employee Incentive Program that involves local businesses, a grant-funded **Teacher Support Program**, tuition reimbursement for graduate and undergraduate coursework, continuous professional development opportunities and numerous staff recognition programs.

Challenge

Keep pace with emerging technologies

Technology is second nature to today's students. They are "digital natives," who have never known a world without computers, the Internet, iPods and cell phones. They communicate with Instant Messages and text messages. They socialize through FaceBook and MySpace.

The school system views technology as a **vital educational tool**, which enables, empowers, and enhances all aspects of the teaching and learning process. Today's lesson plans frequently include use of the Internet, DVDs, graphing calculators, multimedia presentations and other technology resources.

As called for in the system's **2004-2009 Technology Plan**, the Office of Instruction and Business Technology has established system-wide software and hardware standards and replacement cycles, upgraded Internet access, and enhanced measures related to security and network integrity. Groundwork has been laid for implementing an integrated Student Information Management System starting in the 2008-2009 school year.

Laptops have been provided for all Howard County teachers so that at virtually any time and any place they can have real time access to curriculum resources, including lesson plans, student information and other planning tools. Local schools are piloting several **online grade programs** that provide parents with Internet access to their child's grades, attendance information, and assignments. Electronic testing was piloted by the Maryland State Department of Education in April 2007, when half of the county's fifth and eighth graders took the Maryland School Assessment in science online.

The Howard County Public School System updates student technology

standards as necessary to align with the **Maryland Student Technology Standards** and integrates them into the HCPSS Essential Curriculum to ensure students are meeting criteria for technology literacy. The school system has also adopted the Maryland Teacher Technology Standards and the Maryland Technology Standards for School Administrators and integrates those standards into ongoing professional development activities for both groups.



The school system implemented the first phase of an **Integrated Financial and Administrative Solution** in 2005. Since then, work has been underway to add Human Resources and payroll functions to the IFAS. Both functions will be operational during the 2007-2008 school year.

Technology has been an integral part of the school system's communications program for a number of years. In August 2006, the school system launched a restructured and redesigned website, **www.hcpss.org**, which serves

as a primary source of information about public education in Howard County.

Early in 2007, an e-governance feature called **BoardDocs** was added to the website. The program allows the public to view past and current Board of Education meeting agendas and the supporting documents. This allows interested parties to review and/or print the information prior to the meeting. All documents from the meeting are then archived and can be

accessed by meeting date or through the comprehensive search feature.

eSchoolnewsletter, the school system's email messaging system, gained in popularity and use. The system now serves as a primary home to school communication tool for individual schools and the district. The percent of families subscribing to eSchoolnewsletter reached 85 percent during the 2006-07 school year and over 6500 email messages were sent to subscribers by local schools and the central office.

Challenge

Modernize aging school facilities



Between 1987 and 2007, the Howard County Public School System grew by nearly 22,000 students. During those two decades, the majority of the system’s capital resources were devoted to providing capacity to accommodate this growth and the school system built **29 new schools and 5 replacement schools**.

The fiscal year 2007 capital budget included funds for the completion of the last two elementary schools – Bushy Park Elementary replacement school and a new northeast elementary, which opened as Veterans Elementary School. A new western middle school, scheduled to open in 2013 if enrollments necessitate, is the only new school in the system’s long-range capital plan.

Fiscal Year 2007 Capital Budget

Project	Completion	Prior Authorization	FY07 Request	Project Total
Glenelg HS Renovation	Aug 2007/08	25,429	970	26,399
New NE Elementary	Aug 2007	14,260	15,329	29,589
Bushy Park ES Replacement	Aug 2007	11,340	20,587	31,927
Waverly ES Addition (Phase I, Phase II)	Aug 2007/2010	157	3,857	4,014
Centennial Lane ES Addition	Aug 2008	0	243	243
Running Brook ES Addition	Aug 2008	0	125	125
Maintenance/Warehouse	Aug 2008	0	0	0
Mt. Hebron HS Renovation	Aug 2009	0	1,900	1,900
Full Day Kindergarten		10,147	8,654	18,801
Educational Specification Modernization		500	0	500
ARL Reconfiguration - Automotive		300	3,000	3,300
Old Cedar Lane Addition/Renovation		300	0	300
Systemic Renovations		46,981	21,700	68,681
Relocatable Classrooms		4,335	975	5,310
Playground Equipment		980	200	1,180
Site Acquisition & Construction Reserve		9,353	5,000	14,353
Technology		7,226	3,726	10,952
Roofing Projects		3,577	1,900	5,477
Barrier Free Projects		3,803	200	4,003
TOTALS		\$138,688	\$88,366	\$227,054

Enrollments have begun to plateau and the system’s resources are now focused on the modernization of older facilities. A **comprehensive assessment of all school facilities** was begun in 2007. The results of the study will be used to prioritize needs and develop a schedule for modernization projects.

In the coming year, the Office of Facilities Planning and Management plans to increase community participation in the development and review of the system’s long range master plan for school modernization projects with the establishment of a **Facilities Assessment Advisory Committee**. The committee’s first task will be to review and provide input on draft renovation guidelines.

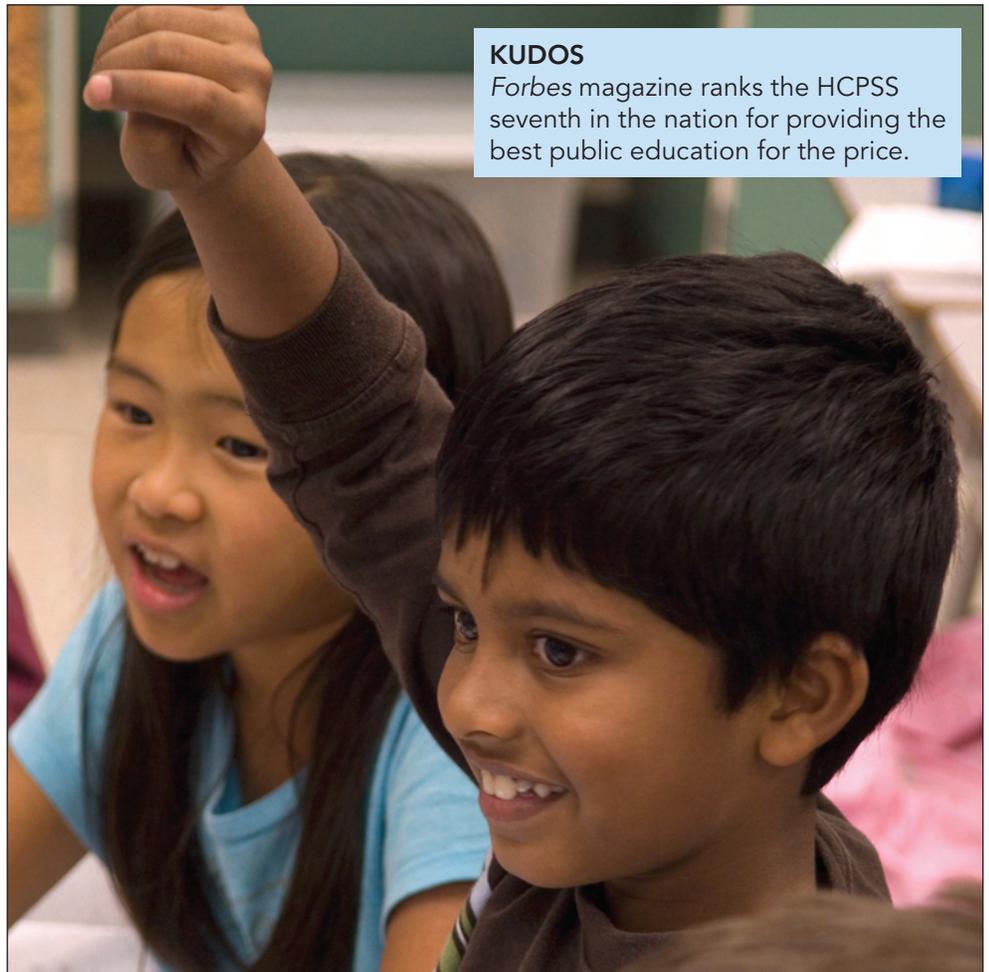
* Projects and funding may have changed in subsequent budgets.

An investment that is paying dividends

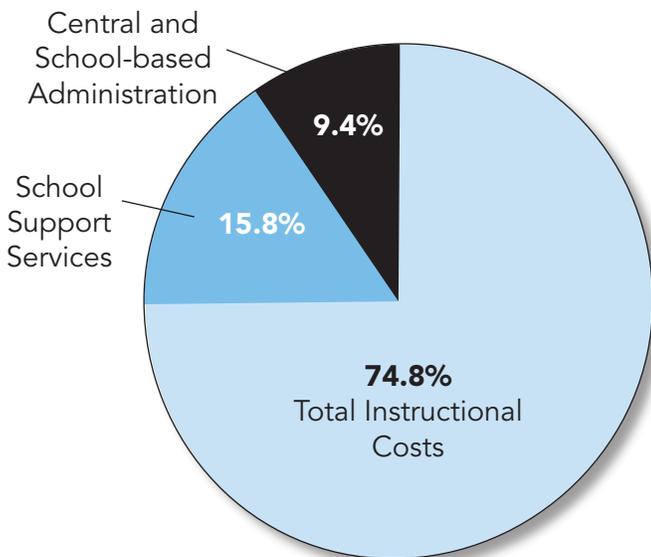
The business of the Howard County Public School System is to ensure the educational success of more than 48,000 children. The school system's operating budget is tied directly to its *Bridge to Excellence Five-Year Master Plan* and the goals to accelerate academic achievement and ensure a safe and nurturing environment for all our students.

Despite challenges, the system continues to report both short and long-term gains – from the excellent performance of students on the Maryland School Assessments, the Maryland High School Assessments and the SAT, to being ranked seventh in the nation by *Forbes* magazine when it comes to providing the best public education for the price.

We gladly report this good news to our shareholders — the residents of Howard County — along with our financial backers, Howard County government and the state of Maryland. Howard County's investment in education is paying dividends.



Fiscal Year 2007 Operating Budget



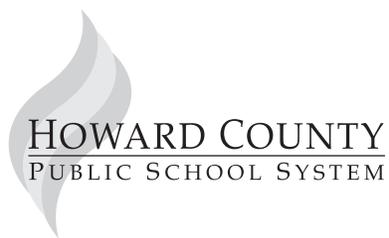
FY 2007 Distribution of Operating Funds

Total Instructional Costs	\$412,347,580	74.8%
School Support Services	\$87,134,630	15.8%
Central and School-based Administration	\$52,039,870	9.4%
TOTAL	\$551,522,080	100.0%

FY 2007 Funding Sources

County	\$393.7	71.4%
State	\$152.0	27.6%
Other	\$5.8	1.0%
TOTAL	\$551.5	100.0%

Annual per pupil expenditure: \$12,650



10910 Route 108 • Ellicott City, Maryland 21042
410-313-6600 • www.hcpss.org

The Howard County Public School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, gender, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation or disability in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs. For more information, contact the Equity Assurance Office of the Howard County Public School System at 10910 Route 108, Ellicott City, MD 21042, or call 410.313.6654.