

## Maryland Students Continue to Improve on State Tests, Concerns Remain

*Wide Racial Disparities Persist, Changes to Test Raise Questions About Success*

### Executive Summary

Scores on the Maryland School Assessments (MSA) continued to improve in 2009. Racial gaps continued to shrink but remain at unacceptable levels. The State needs to evaluate the impact of changes made to the MSA in 2008 and move towards standards that match national norms.

### 2009 Results

Maryland elementary and middle school students showed improvement in reading and math in almost every grade on the 2009 Maryland School Assessment (MSA). Middle school students posted the largest gains from 2008 to 2009.

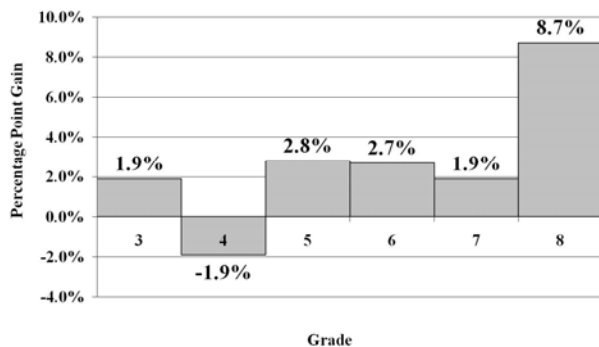
Scores in Baltimore increased across grades, allowing the school system to exit “corrective action” status under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Nonetheless, one in four eighth grade students failed to meet the state standards, with almost half of Baltimore City, Prince George’s County and Somerset County eighth graders failing the test.

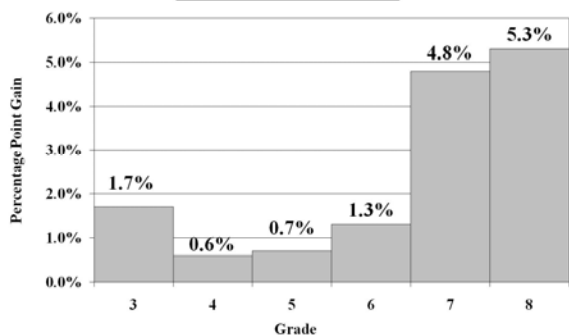
### Discussion

The achievement gap between white and minority students continued to close, but significant gaps remain. For example, 81 percent of White eighth graders met the standard in math, compared to only 48 percent of Black students and 58 percent of Hispanic students. Low-income and Limited English Proficient students also continue to lag behind.

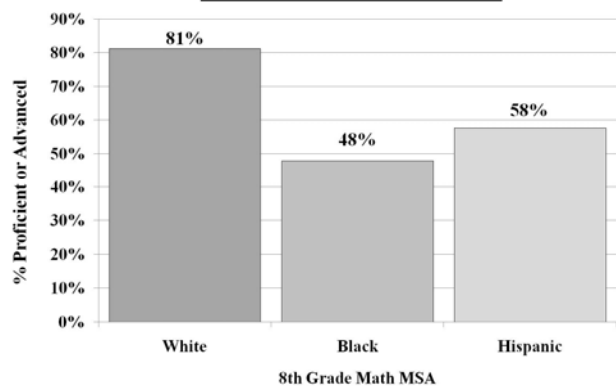
### 2009 Reading Gains



### 2009 Math Gains



### Minority Achievement Gap



### Recommendations

**Test Changes:** In 2008, an expert panel determined that changes to the content and length of the tests impacted results. An independent evaluation was requested by Advocates for Children and Youth, and we urge the State Board of Education to ensure this analysis is completed and released promptly.

**Academic Standards:** Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) paint a different picture than the MSA results. While 87 percent of fourth graders were proficient in reading on the MSA, only 36 percent of them were proficient on the NAEP – a nationally recognized rigorous standard. It is critical that Maryland increase its standards and assessment rigor to ensure student success.