

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2001 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 1131 (Delegate Dewberry, *et al.*)
Ways and Means

Maryland School Performance Assessment Program - Study Commission

This bill establishes a 15-member Commission to Study the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP). The commission must: (1) create and administer a survey to be distributed statewide to school personnel for grades kindergarten through eight who administer the MSPAP; and (2) evaluate the results of the survey and recommend modifications and changes to the assessment program to the Maryland State Department of Education. The commission must report to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 1, 2001 and again by December 1, 2002. The Department of Legislative Services will provide staff support for the task force.

The bill is effective July 1, 2001 and sunsets December 31, 2002.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for commission members and staffing costs for the Department of Legislative Services could be handled with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: None applicable.

Background: The Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) tests students in third, fifth, and eighth grades in reading, mathematics, writing, language usage, science, and social studies. The tests form the basis for Maryland's school accountability program, whereby schools that perform poorly on MSPAP may be subjected to increased State and local scrutiny or, in some cases, State reconstitution.

The MSPAP tests are developed by Maryland educators and are based on knowledge that educators believe students should possess and be able to display as a result of their educational experiences. Basic skills and knowledge are tested, but the emphasis of the test is on higher order skills such as supporting an answer with information, predicting outcomes, and comparing and contrasting information.

Even with the State receiving consistently high grades from national analysts for its school accountability measures, MSPAP tests have come under fire over the last year, due in part to a critical report from the Abell Foundation. The report has not been made public because it identified some of the MSPAP test items, but the concerns raised in the report include inconsistent scoring of the test and incorrect content within some answers that received high scores. In another well-publicized incident, a Montgomery County teacher was accused of helping students to cheat on the test.

Exhibit 1 shows the cumulative MSPAP test scores for third, fifth, and eighth graders in each of Maryland's 24 school systems. As shown in the table, no school system has achieved the 70% satisfactory performance benchmark established by the Maryland State Department of Education. The tests become even more significant as Maryland prepares to begin testing high school students. Beginning with the Class of 2007, all high school students will be required to pass the high school assessment test to earn a high school diploma.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader – February 27, 2001
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Exhibit 1
Composite 2000 MSPAP Scores
(Percent of Students Performing at Satisfactory Level)

	<u>Grade 3</u>	<u>Grade 5</u>	<u>Grade 8</u>	<u>Total</u>
Allegany	45.9	50.1	46.2	47.4
Anne Arundel	46.0	51.5	44.7	47.5
Baltimore City	20.4	22.5	18.3	20.5
Baltimore	48.7	52.1	51.9	50.9
Calvert	50.7	55.2	59.1	55.0
Caroline	52.1	47.0	50.4	49.8
Carroll	50.4	55.5	56.3	54.1
Cecil	51.6	53.7	49.0	51.5
Charles	40.0	46.3	53.4	46.7
Dorchester	47.7	42.8	37.9	42.7
Frederick	47.0	53.9	52.2	51.0
Garrett	43.9	45.6	55.8	48.2
Harford	52.2	55.9	59.0	55.7
Howard	59.9	63.5	61.0	61.4
Kent	78.0	49.7	59.3	62.0
Montgomery	50.5	57.6	58.0	55.4
Prince George's	30.3	31.8	31.0	31.0
Queen Anne's	49.3	51.8	51.1	50.8
St. Mary's	52.1	49.9	45.8	49.4
Somerset	38.5	40.1	37.6	38.7
Talbot	39.5	46.9	47.1	44.4
Washington	50.3	55.7	57.1	54.4
Wicomico	43.2	45.9	39.7	43.0
Worcester	50.1	48.2	52.7	50.2
State	42.8	46.9	46.1	45.3
State Standard	70.0	70.0	70.0	70.0

Source: Maryland State Department of Education