

Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 15

Barbara Dezmon, Ph.D.

This testimony is in support of Senate Bill 15. I served in Baltimore County Public Schools for over 35 years, beginning as a teacher. During my tenure I served in elevated roles in central office, including executive assistant to the Deputy Superintendent and Assistant to the Superintendent for Equity and Assurance to Superintendent Joseph Hairston. When I retired, I was tasked with beginning to lead reform efforts in curriculum and instruction. Those roles provided me with access to numerous offices and schools and enabled me to observe practices throughout the central office and schools.

First, I refer to Exhibit 1, which details the role and responsibilities of the Maryland Inspector General regarding education. As the document shows, the purpose is not to govern the Board of Education; rather, it is to ensure accountability for the use of funds as well as operational aspects of the system. Moreover, the Inspector General office provides recourse to which faculty, staff, and citizens turn in case of fraud, waste, and abuse as well as investigations related “operational and administrative” complaints. In addition to other agencies and duties, the Maryland Inspector General has oversight of twenty-four school districts.

Recognizing the extraordinary school district funding request exceeding half the county budget as well as the necessity for an independent office with oversight of the schools, the Baltimore County Council, in direct response to the citizens of Baltimore County, passed a resolution to expand duties in the county Inspector General office to include education. (See Exhibit 2.) Being local will provide an opportunity to increase access, immediate response, and focus on complaints and concerns. In his testimony, The State Inspector General even mentioned the advantages of having a local position with that authority. Further, although, in ideal circumstances, all complaints could be addressed at the state level, often complaints never take that route, due to ignorance or fear of retaliation. This is not duplication of services; it is enhancement for effectiveness and productivity.

Below are actual circumstances that have existed and could be addressed by an Inspector General:

- A. Curriculum Audit of entire system offices and schools by Phi Delta Kappa exposed instances of mismanagement and inefficiency. Reforms never completed.
- B. Funds budgeted for schools and teachers and students withdrawn for central office purposes.
- C. Parents of special education students not being provided with detailed or given general information regarding children condition.
- D. Unnecessary staff retained, while others released.
- E. Retaliation against faculty members and staff who complained or offended.

- F. Curricula materials destroyed and abandoned and replaced with instructional programs that cost millions, yet as test scores show, not effective.
- G. Inappropriate use of credit cards.
- H. Office budget requests aimed not to arouse concern.
- I. Theft.
- J. Revising reports and data to cover unsuccessful programs that cost up to millions. Over years, most of students enrolled in Language! were African American and poor. See Exhibits 3 and 4 for actual real and doctored reports given to Board of Education on Language! Program.
- K. Conference trips arranged so that family members can meet for vacation.
- L. Digitized curriculum/instructional programs and stored curriculum destroyed or abandoned to replace with programs that cost millions.
- M. Grade enhancement – such as 50% rule.
- N. Grade reconfiguring to passing.
- O. Exorbitant funds spent on office furniture while schools in need.
- P. More funds buying from vendors and less investment in teachers and staff.
- Q. More out of the box curriculum at cost of millions without results.

Many of the issues above would not have existed if accountability were adequate. And a local Inspector General can provide those checks and balances.

Baltimore County Public Schools has slid from being among the top in state rankings to a position of 17th among school districts. When I left the Baltimore County Public Schools 15 years ago, during my last meeting with staff I stated that BCPS was at a crossroads and warned that without necessary corrections, the school system would be on an irreversible downward spiral to the point where we could save schools but no longer salvage the system. After that, the number of successful schools will begin to steadily diminish and more and more money impacting all areas of the county budget needs will have to be redirected to the growing unsuccessful schools. Well, again we are at that critical stage at which we stood years ago and were faced with the same issues and solutions. Only this time the stakes are much higher, especially for the future of this county and its children. Over the years many leaders in government as well as education have ignored warning signs and that has brought us to where we are today.

The money we invest in failure is apparent, but yet we continue to lean on the futile hope that it will all get better. What do we think has happened to all those children who have left the system, even with meaningless diplomas, either undereducated or totally uneducated. And all occurring over the years and at greater expense to the parents, residents, and taxpayers! I wrote the foreword to the book *Failure Factory*. (I feel this book should be required reading throughout the nation and especially Maryland.)The admonitions in this book apply to many school districts including Baltimore County today. At the end of the foreword, I pose the question: Are children failing schools, or are schools failing children? That answer now rests with you. The initial key starts with ensuring openness and accountability. Senate Bill 15 provides a step in that direction for Baltimore County.

Inspector General Role and Responsibilities: From State to Local

The Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Education (OIGE) is an independent state entity that investigates fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement within local school systems, including Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). It ensures compliance with state/federal laws, reviews child abuse prevention policies, and handles complaints regarding civil rights violations, auditing, and financial oversight of educational funds.

Key roles and responsibilities include:

Investigating Fraud and Mismanagement: The OIGE investigates complaints of financial, administrative, or operational misconduct in local school systems.

Audit and Compliance: The office reviews policies, procedures, and contracts to ensure compliance with state and federal laws.

Civil Rights Enforcement: The office investigates complaints regarding civil rights violations involving students or employees.

Systemic Reviews: The OIGE examines systemic issues within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and local school boards, rather than just isolated incidents.

Child Abuse Prevention Oversight: The office conducts annual reviews to ensure that local school systems' policies for preventing and reporting child abuse comply with law.

Reporting: Upon completion of investigations, the OIGE issues public reports with findings and recommendations.

The Montgomery County Office of the Inspector General (separate from the State IG for Education) also has authority to investigate fraud, waste, and abuse in county government, including Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), with a high volume of complaints often directed at school operations.)

COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND
Legislative Session 2025, Legislative Day No. 13

Resolution No. 40-25

Councilmembers Marks & Kach

By the County Council, August 4, 2025

A RESOLUTION of the Baltimore County Council encouraging the Maryland General Assembly to pass legislation during the 2026 Legislative Session providing that the Baltimore County Board of Education is subject to the jurisdiction and oversight of the Baltimore County Office of the Inspector General.

WHEREAS, the Board of Education of Baltimore County and the County's Public School System is supported substantially through funds provided by Baltimore County Government and County taxpayers; in fact, each year, approximately half of the County's budget is appropriated to the County School System; and

WHEREAS, the Baltimore County Office of the Inspector General (OIG) was established in the Baltimore County Code by the Baltimore County Council in 2019 and codified in the County Charter by the County Council and County voters in 2024; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the OIG is to provide increased accountability and oversight in the operations of County Government by identifying: (1) fraud, waste, and abuse in County Government; and (2) ways to promote efficiency, accountability, and integrity in County Government; and

WHEREAS, as the largest recipient by far of County funds, the County School System and County Board of Education, should also logically be subject to the independent oversight of the

OIG; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly previously considered similar legislation requested by the Baltimore County Administration for OIG oversight of the County Board of Education during the 2021 Legislative Session in Senate Bill 655 (sponsored by then-Senator Klausmeier) and House Bill 751 (sponsored by Delegate Ebersole); and

WHEREAS, given the very public controversy this year over the County School System's budget, the Baltimore County Council believes it is now the appropriate time to advance more transparency and accountability in the County Board of Education, now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND, that the Council encourages the Maryland General Assembly to pass legislation during the 2026 Legislative Session providing that the Baltimore County Board of Education is subject to the jurisdiction and oversight of the Baltimore County Office of the Inspector General; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution shall be sent to the Governor of Maryland; the Baltimore County delegation to the Maryland General Assembly; and the Baltimore County Executive; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution shall take effect from the date of its passage by the County Council.



LEGISLATION DETAIL

LEGISLATION _____

DISPOSITION _____

ENACTED _____

EFFECTIVE _____

AMENDMENTS _____

ROLL CALL - BILL

MOTION

AYE NAY

SECOND

Councilman Young

Councilman Patoka

Councilman Kach

Councilman Jones

Councilman Marks

Councilman Ertel

Councilman Crandell

ROLL CALL - AMENDMENTS

MOTION

AYE NAY

Councilman Young

Councilman Patoka

Councilman Kach

Councilman Jones

Councilman Marks

Councilman Ertel

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ROLL CALL - AMENDMENTS

MOTION

AYE NAY

Councilman Young

Councilman Patoka

Councilman Kach

Councilman Jones

Councilman Marks

Councilman Ertel

Councilman Crandell



Brief Research Report

An Examination of *Language!* May 30, 2011

Department of Research, Accountability, and Assessment
Dr. Thomas Rhoades
Executive Director

Office of Research
Dr. Tamela H. Hawley, Director
Dr. Renard A. Adams, Coordinator
Dr. Gary L. Brager, Supervisor
Samantha Murray, Specialist
Everett Elliott, Resource Teacher

Dr. Joe A. Hairston
Superintendent of Schools

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Executive Summary

This evaluation was conducted to examine two research questions regarding the *Language!* program. Dr. Joe A. Hairston and Dr. Renee Foose requested that the following research questions should be examined:

Question 1. What students have been and are being served by the *Language!* program?

Question 2. How has the program impacted student achievement?

With respect to the research questions that were examined, the results of this study indicate:

Question 1:

1. Enrollment in the program has increased and then decreased dramatically over a four year period.
 - a. The district should investigate the reasons for such dramatic differences in enrollment trends over time.
2. The program was brought to the school system to help high school students having difficulty passing the high school English graduation assessment; but the data clearly show:
 - a. Most students were enrolled in middle schools and not high schools;
 - b. Slightly over 37% of the students enrolled scored in the “Proficient” – over 34% - - or “Advanced” – over 3%; these students clearly do not meet the original criteria by MSA scores.
 - c. The district should determine how consistently the program is being implemented. If students are being enrolled in the program without meeting the criteria, this is problematic.

Question 2:

3. Eighty percent of the students who scored Basic on the MSA upon entry into *Language!* were still basic upon exiting the program.
 - a. The district should verify that the program has been implemented as prescribed at all schools at all levels.
4. The data used in this analysis was from the data warehouse. It is uncertain if the enrollments included here are a true reflection of the full number of participants in *Language!* For example, because the data points in this study are course enrolments, the

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numbers do not include students who participate in *Language!* as a part of a course that is not listed as an official *Language!* course. In addition, since course enrollments in the data warehouse only apply to secondary students, it is not certain exactly how many (if any) elementary students are participating in the program.

- a. The district should obtain an accurate count of students participating in the program and their home schools.

Detailed Summary

Background

This report was requested by Dr. Joe A. Hairston and Dr. Renee Foose. Dr. Hairston brought *Language!* to the Baltimore County Public Schools to help those students in high school who were having difficulty passing the High School English Graduation Examination. Dr. Hairston envisioned the program as a supplement to regular instruction in language arts.

Research Questions

The superintendent requested that the following research questions should be examined:

Question 1. What students have been and are being served by the *Language!* program?

Question 2. How has the program impacted student achievement?

Methodology

The Research Office utilized existing information in the data warehouse and supporting information from the Language Arts Office to compile the data presented in this report. In particular the enrollment trends of secondary students who have received services from the *Language!* program from SY2003 through SY2010. The report summarizes enrollment and demographic trends for *Language!* students based upon the first time they participated in the program through the time they exited the program. In addition, the study discusses connections between enrollment in *Language!* and achievement as defined by proficiency levels on the MSA and/or HSA.

It should be noted that due to data limitations, this report does not include elementary school students who may be or have been enrolled in this program. The trends in this report are based upon the first *Language!* course that students took.

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Findings

Findings for each research question will be reported with the supporting details and data immediately following.

Question 1: What students have been and are being served by the *Language!* program?

Overall analysis of the first research question yielded information that raised several critical issues which should be addressed by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction as well as the appropriate Assistant Superintendents:

1. Enrollment has increased and then decreased dramatically over a period of four years.
2. The program was brought to the school system to help high school students having difficulty passing the high school English graduation assessment; but the data clearly show:
 - a. Most students were enrolled in middle schools and not high schools;
 - b. Slightly over 37% of the students enrolled scored in the “Proficient” – over 34% - - or “Advanced” – over 3%; these students clearly do not meet the original criteria by MSA scores. A student being enrolled in the program having not met the criteria is problematic.

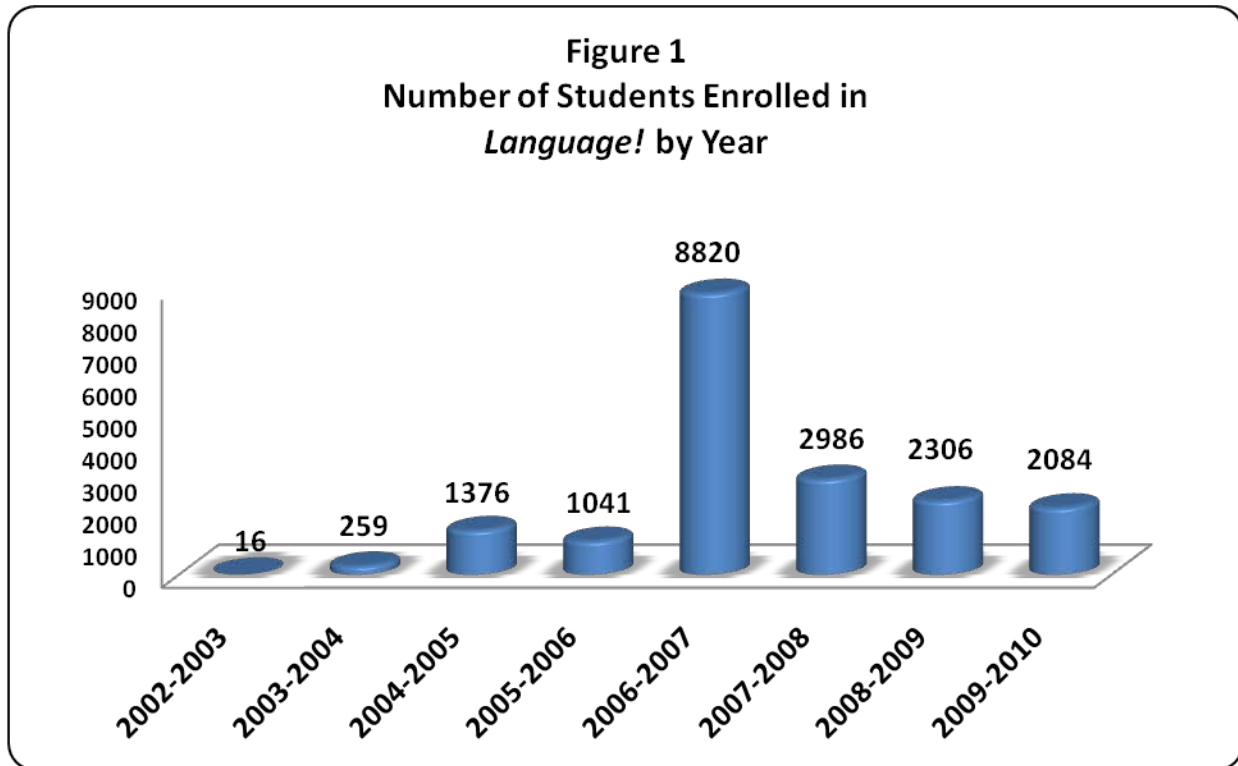
Data and Analyses Supporting Findings for Research Question 1:

Overall Enrollments

Figure 1 depicts the number of students enrolled in *Language !* by year. Specifically, the figure shows that:

- Since 2003, 18,889 students have participated in *Language!*
- Since 2003, the number of secondary students receiving *Language!* services varied.
 - In 2003 (the first time this program appears in the database), there were 16 students enrolled. By 2007, there were 8,621 students enrolled.
 - The number of enrolled students has declined three successive years since 2007: 2,996 in 2008, 2,306 in 2009 and 2,084 in 2010.

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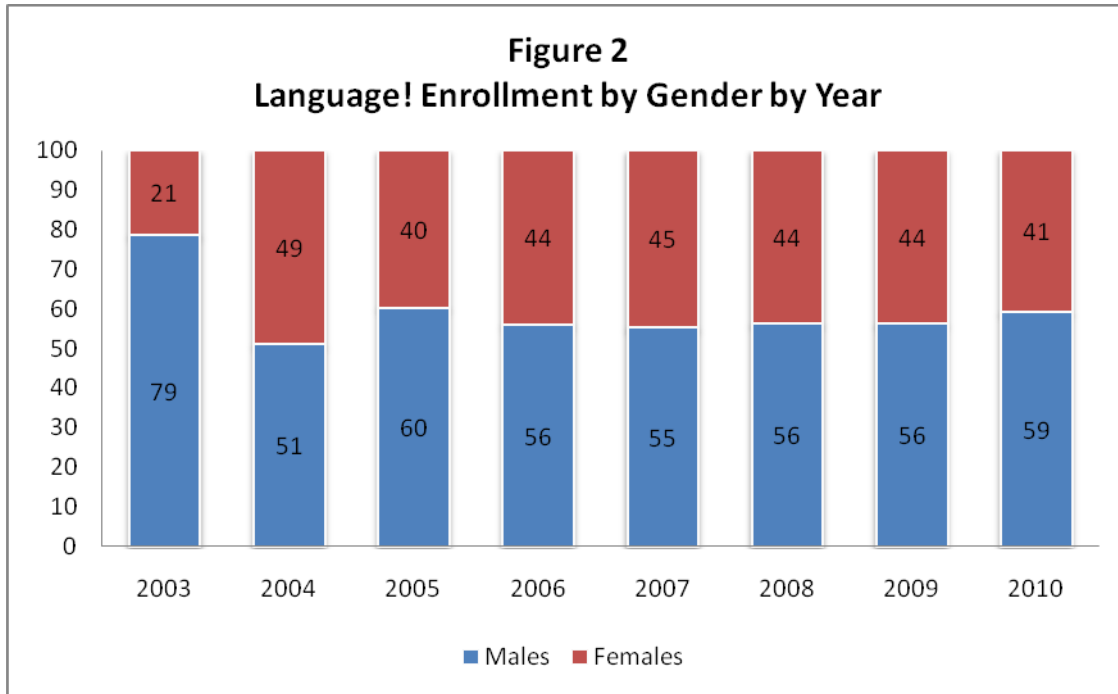


Subgroup Enrollments and Grade Level Enrollments

The following figures and analyses report the number of students in various subgroups enrolled in *Language!* by year. Specifically, Figure 2 shows gender:

- Looking at gender for all years combined: 56% of *Language!* enrollees were male and 44% were female. Across years, eliminating 2003 (with only 16 students), the gender percentages vary: For example, the percentage of males was as high as 60% in 2005 and as low as 51% in 2004.

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Figures 3 and 4 depict enrollment by grade in secondary schools. Specifically:

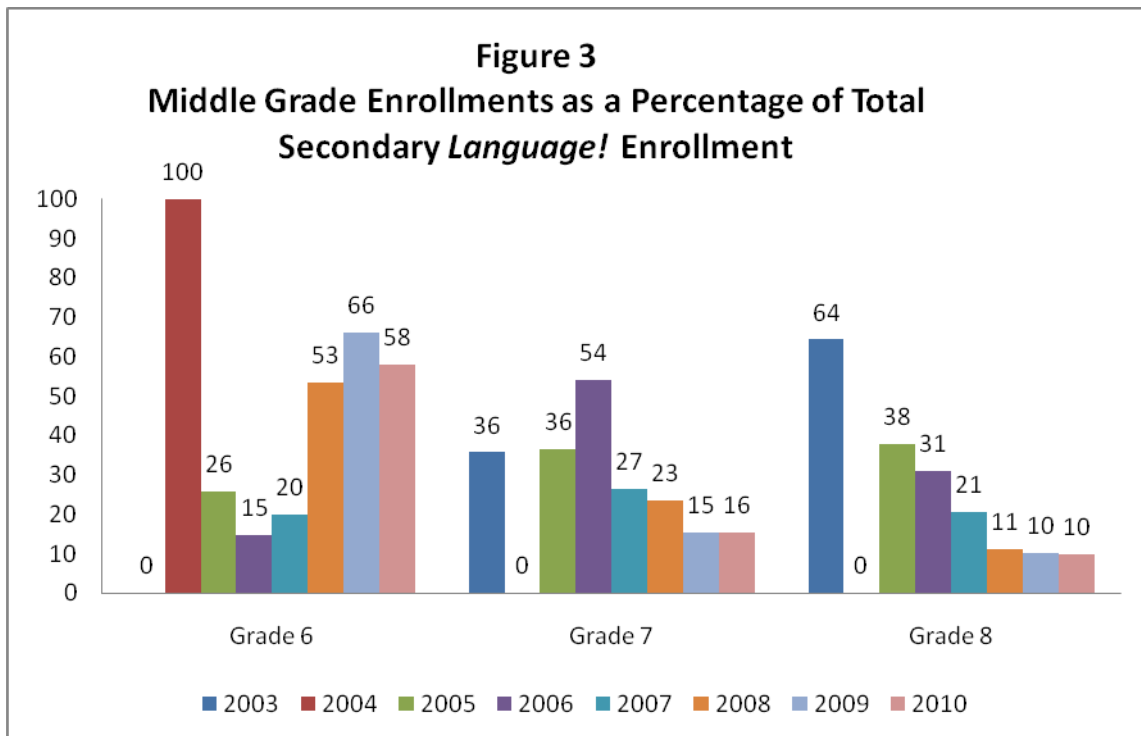
- Overall 80% of the students served were in middle school. In 2010, 83% were in the middle grades. The largest numbers of students tend to be in grade 6, and the number served decrease with each successive grade level.

Because *Language!* was newly introduced in the high schools and the trends of enrollment in high school seemed different than those within the middle schools, an analysis was completed looking at trends in high school enrollment

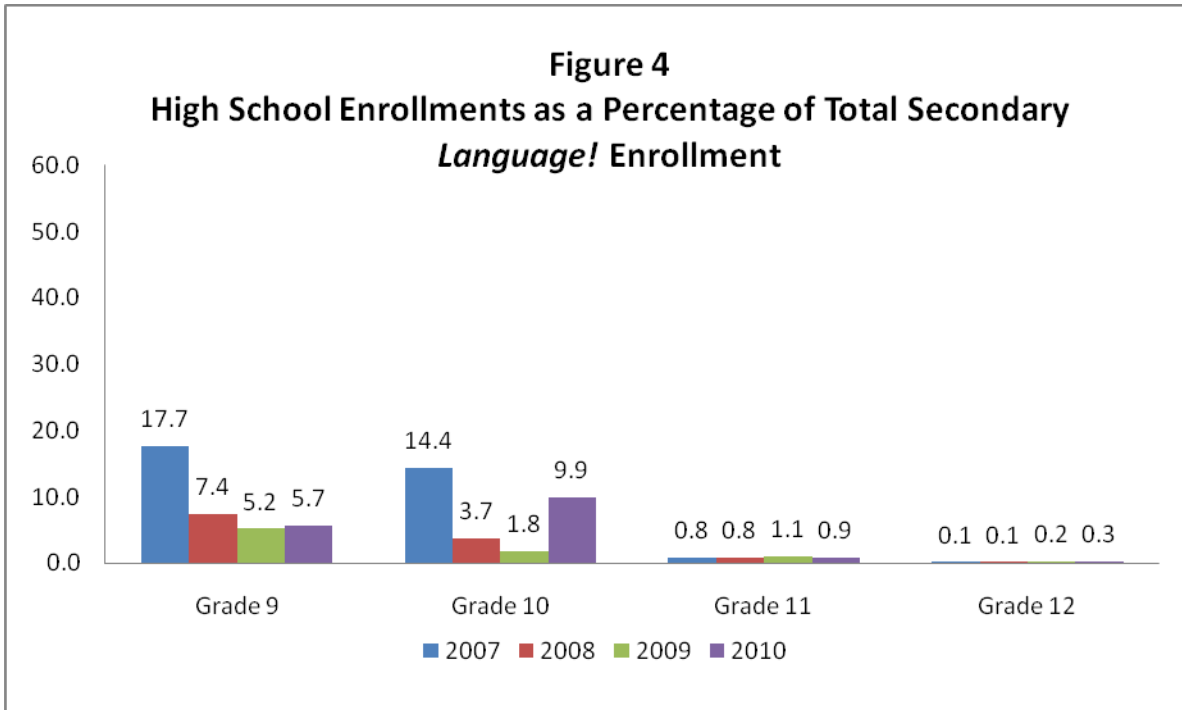
- Prior to 2007, no high school students were enrolled in *Language!*
- Since 2007 and to date, 3,779 students took a *Language!* class for the first time while in high school
- Of the high school students who since 2007 took a *Language!* class for the first time, 2,015 took that class in Grade 9
 - 20% of the first time takers in Grade 9 were in special education

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- Of the first time takers in Grade 9, 43% continued into a second year, but only 6% stayed for more than 2 years. These percentages are the same for both Special Education and Non Special Education students.
- 77% (1,554) of the 2,015 Grade 9 first-time takers took *Language!* for the first time in 2006-2007 school year
- 15,110 students started in *Language!* before Grade 9. Of those, 3,535 (23%) continued taking it after they entered high school.
- After school year 2006-2007, the number of students who continue in *Language!* from 8th grade into 9th grade has continually and dramatically declined.



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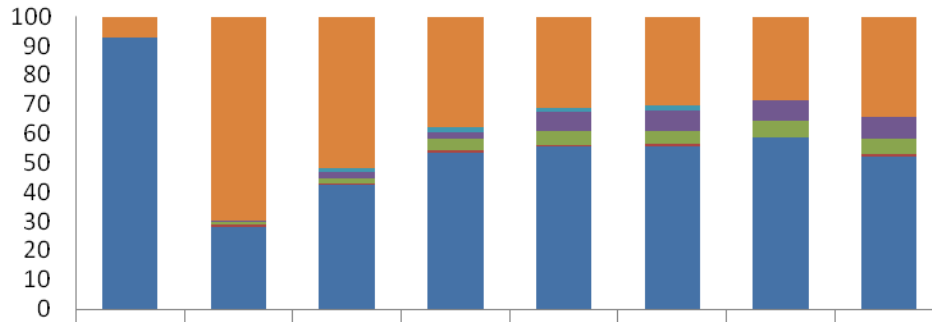
*Note: Prior to 2007, there were no students in high school enrolled in *Language!*

Figure 5 depicts enrollment by race. Specifically:

- Overall 33% of all enrolled students were White and 54% were African American. These were followed by Hispanic (~7.5%) and Asian (5%), and American Indian (~0.6%). The distribution by race has remained consistent since 2007.

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**Figure 5
Enrollment in *Language!* by Racial Groups as a Percentage
of Total Enrollment by Year**



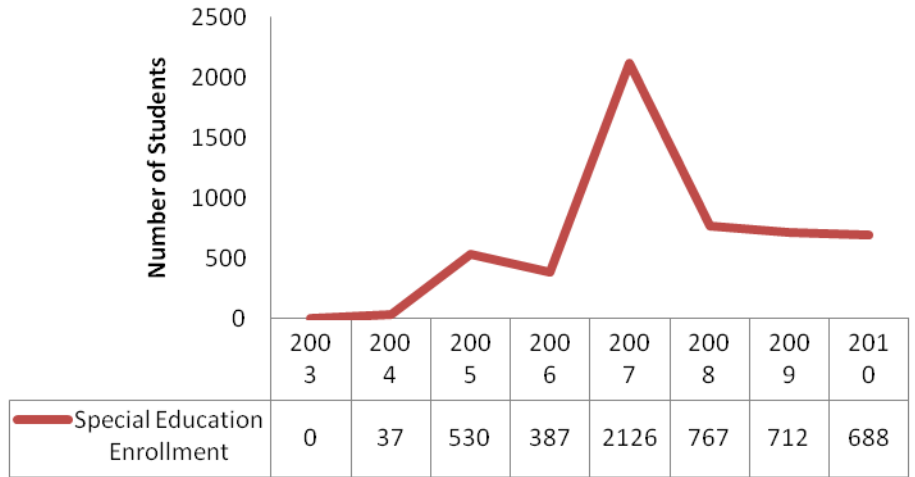
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
White	7	70	52	38	31	30	29	34
Multi-Racial	0	0	2	2	1	2	0	0
Hispanic	0	0	2	2	6	7	7	8
Asian	0	1	2	4	5	5	6	5
American Indian	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1
African American	93	28	43	54	56	56	59	52

The enrollment trends of other subgroups are depicted below.

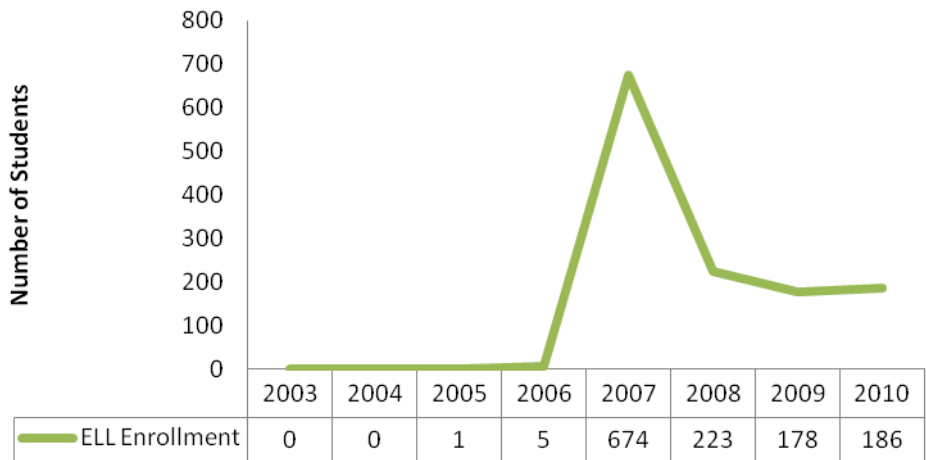
- Overall 55% of the *Language!* secondary students were eligible for FARMS.
- On average, 29% of the students had IEPs
- 7% of the students were receiving ELL services

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**Figure 6
Special Education Enrollment in *Language!* by
Year**



**Figure 7
ELL Enrollment In *Language!* by Year**



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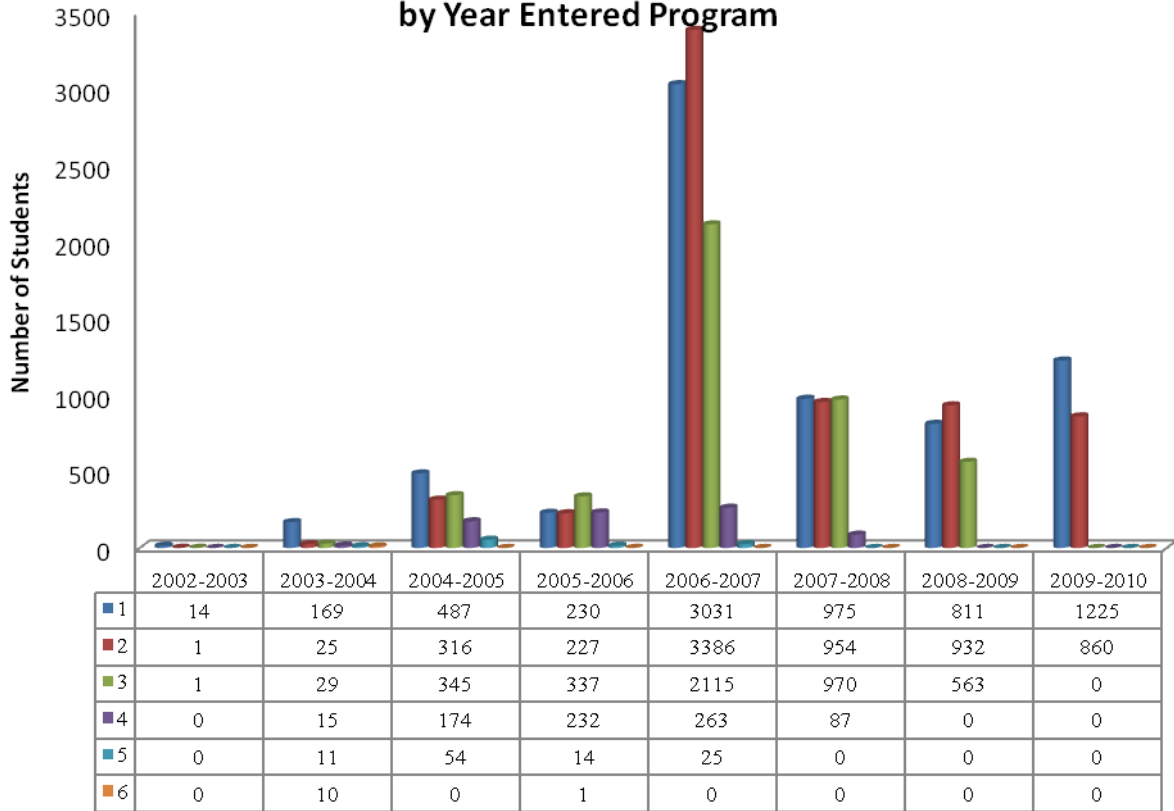
Length of Time in *Language!*

The following figures and analyses report the number of students and the length of time in the program.

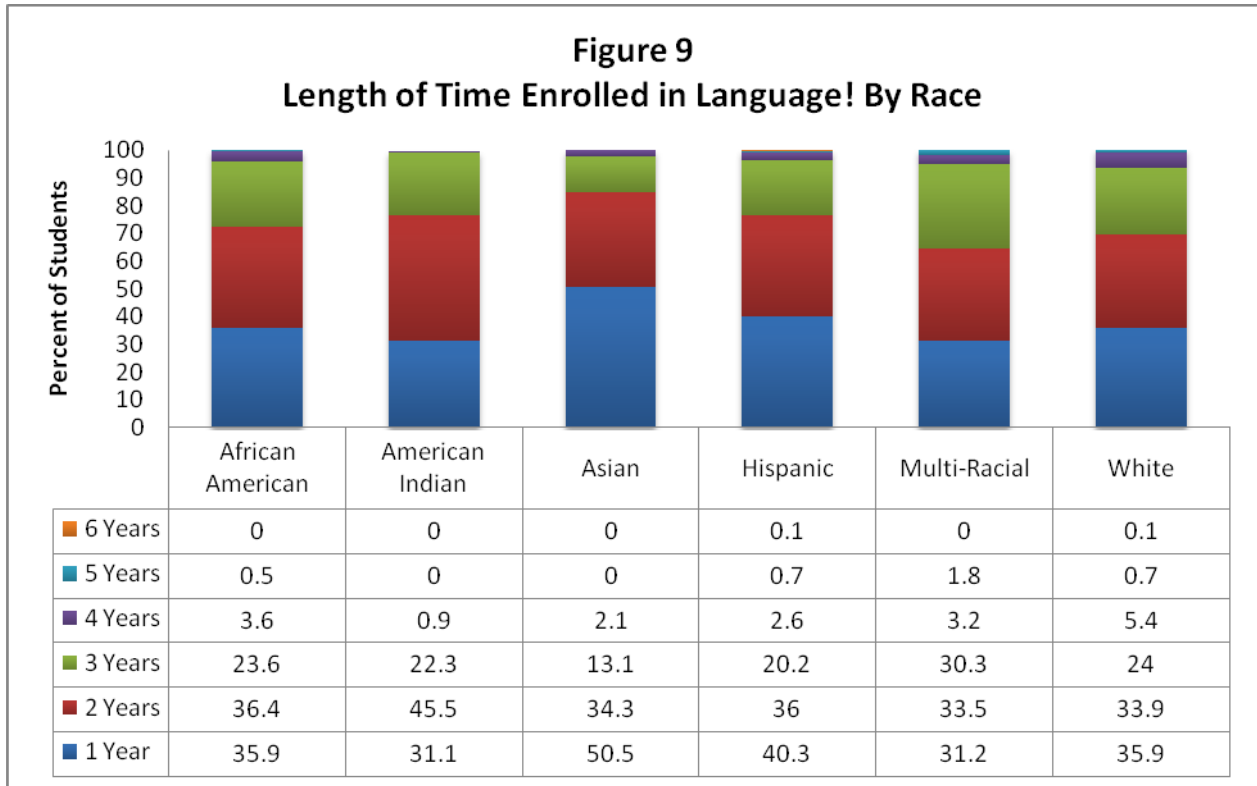
- Of the 18,889 students who ever enrolled in *Language!* between 2003 and 2010, 37% were enrolled for one year, 36% were enrolled for two years, 23% were enrolled for 3 years, and 5% were enrolled for between four and six years.
 - These proportions were similar for all groups when broken down by gender, FARMS, and race.
 - Special Education students' length of enrollment had a similar pattern with the following exceptions: a smaller percentage were enrolled for just one year (25%) and a higher percentage were enrolled for four (8%) or five (1.2%) years.
- *Language!* was disaggregated and analyzed by course title (see Appendix 1 & 2). This analysis showed differences in enrollment by course.
 - *Language!* is taken predominantly as a middle school course as illustrated in Appendix 1
 - *Language!* 6A was taken by 4,524 cohort students (24.6% of the total *Language!* enrollment over its 8 years of existence), the most frequent course.
 - The next five most frequently taken courses were *Language!* 7C (2080, 11.3%), *Language!* 6C (1,412, 7.7%), Language 8C (1,325, 7.2%), English 9C (1,294, 7.0%), Literacy/Language 10 (1,215, 6.6%).
 - Appendix 2 shows the number of total enrollments in *Language!* over 5 years. From 2005 to 2010, this number reflects 57,166 enrollments. The number of enrollments does not drop as it does for the first-time takers. This shows that students are not being placed into *Language!* at high rates within the last three years. However, students seem to be continuing in the program if they are already in it.

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**Figure 8
Lenth of Time Students Continued in *Language!*
by Year Entered Program**



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Achievement of Students Prior to Being Enrolled in *Language!*

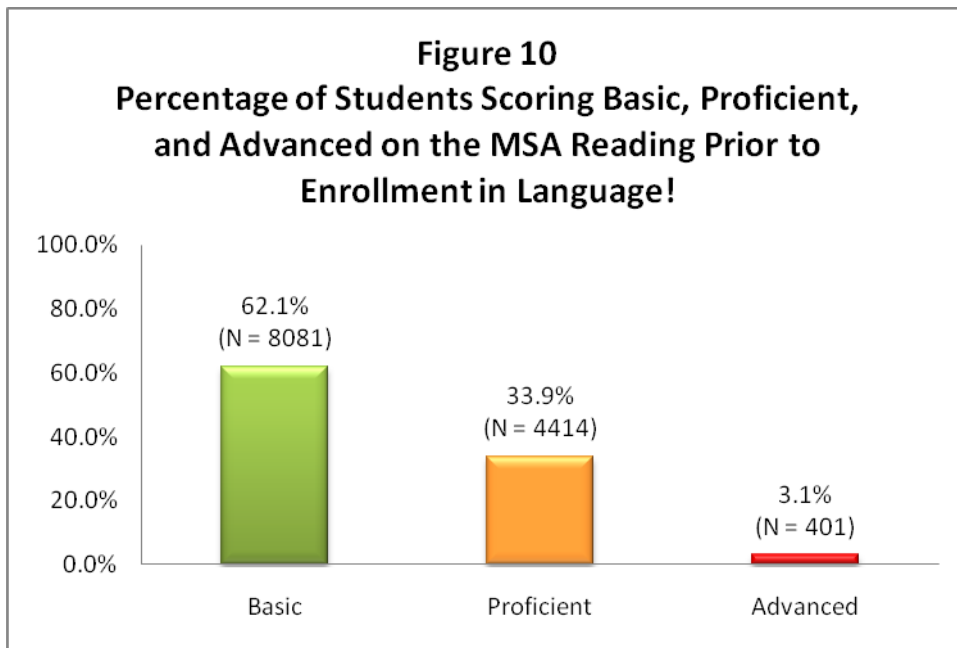
- MSA Reading performance levels of first-time participants in *Language!* were analyzed for the time period between SY2003 through SY2009.
- More than half of all first-time *Language!* participants between SY2003 through SY2010 have scored Basic on the MSA Reading immediately prior to participating in *Language!*
 - 62.7% of students scored Basic, 34.2% of students scored Proficient, and 3.1% of students scored Advanced.
- Each year since SY2003, student achievement on the MSA Reading has fluctuated within and across proficiency levels.
 - The percentage of first-time *Language!* students scoring Basic peaked at 87.1% in SY2005 and dropped to an all-time low of 42.3% in SY2009. During the same time period, the percentage of students scoring Proficient was at an all-time low of 12.5% and nearly quadrupled to 50.9%.

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- SY2003 is the year in which 14.5% of students scored Advanced, the largest percentage over the seven-year time period.
- A slightly greater percentage of male students than female students were Basic, whereas a slightly greater percentage of female students than male students were Proficient and Advanced.
 - 64.4% of male students scored Basic, 32.6% scored Proficient, and 2.9% scored Advanced.
 - 60.3% of female students scored Basic, 36.3% scored Proficient, and 3.3% scored Advanced.
- When split by race, the largest percentage of students in each race category were Basic, ranging from 59.1% for White students to 65.5% percent for African American students
- When split by race and gender, both male and female students had the largest percentage of students scoring Basic within race categories.
 - African American males had the largest percentage of Basic students (67.5%) and American Indian males had the lowest percentage of Basic students (53.5%).
 - American Indian students had the greatest percentage of Basic students (70.0%) and White females had the lowest percentage of students scoring Basic (57.35%).
- The number of years a student has participated in *Language!* ranged from one to six years. Across all years, the greatest proportion of students scored Basic.
 - The greater the length of time in the program, the greater the percentage of students who scored Basic, without exception.
 - Among students who participated Language for one year, 50.2% scored Basic, whereas among students who participated in *Language!* for six years, 90.0% scored Basic.
- Among students designated as ELL, FARMS and SPED, the greatest percentage of students within each designation scored Basic.
 - 73.5% ELL students scored Basic; 66.9% of SPED students scored Basic; and 64.7% of FARMS students scored Basic.
 - When compared to ELL (1.6%) and FARMS (2.7%), SPED students had the highest percentage of students who scored Advanced (4.3%) immediately prior to participating in *Language!*

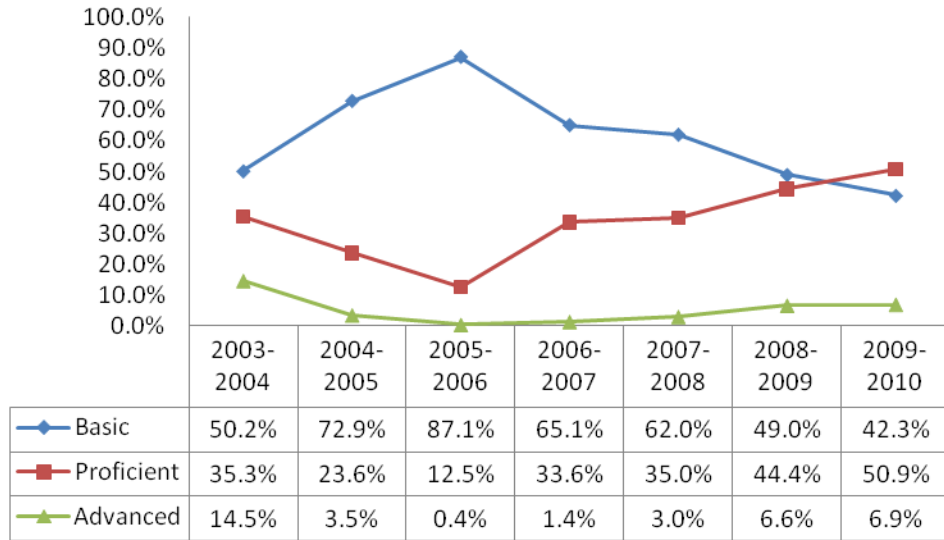
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- A greater percentage of students designated as FARMS scored Proficient (32.6%), compared to the percentages of students designated as ELL (24.9%) and SPED (28.7%) who scored Proficient.



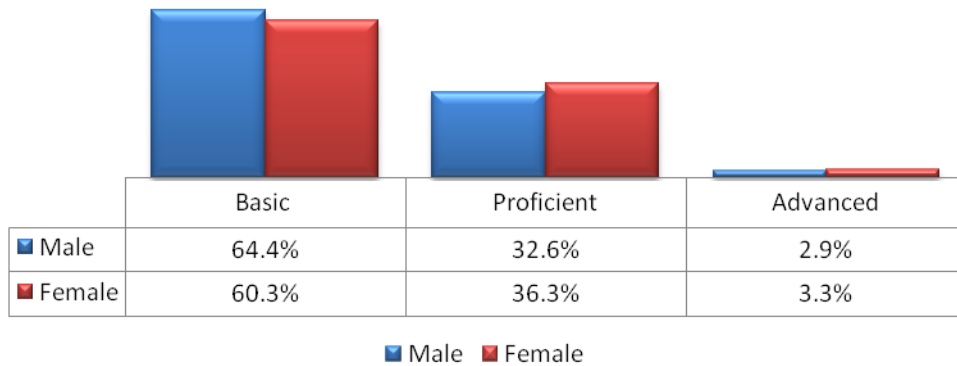
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Figure 11
Percentage of Language! Students Who Have Scored Basic, Proficient, and Advanced prior to Enrollment in Language! from SY2003 through SY2009

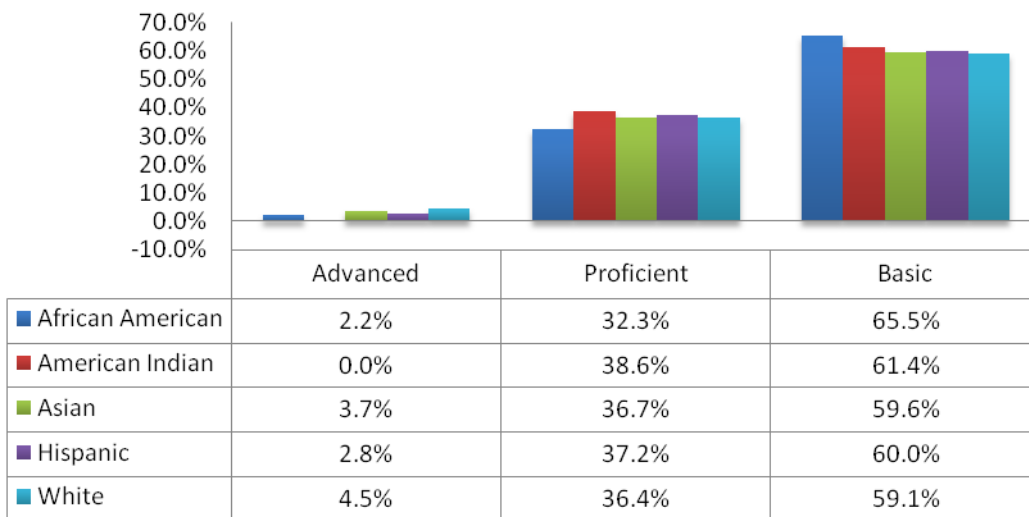


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**Figure 12
MSA Reading Proficiency Levels of Students First
Enrolled In Language!
by Gender**

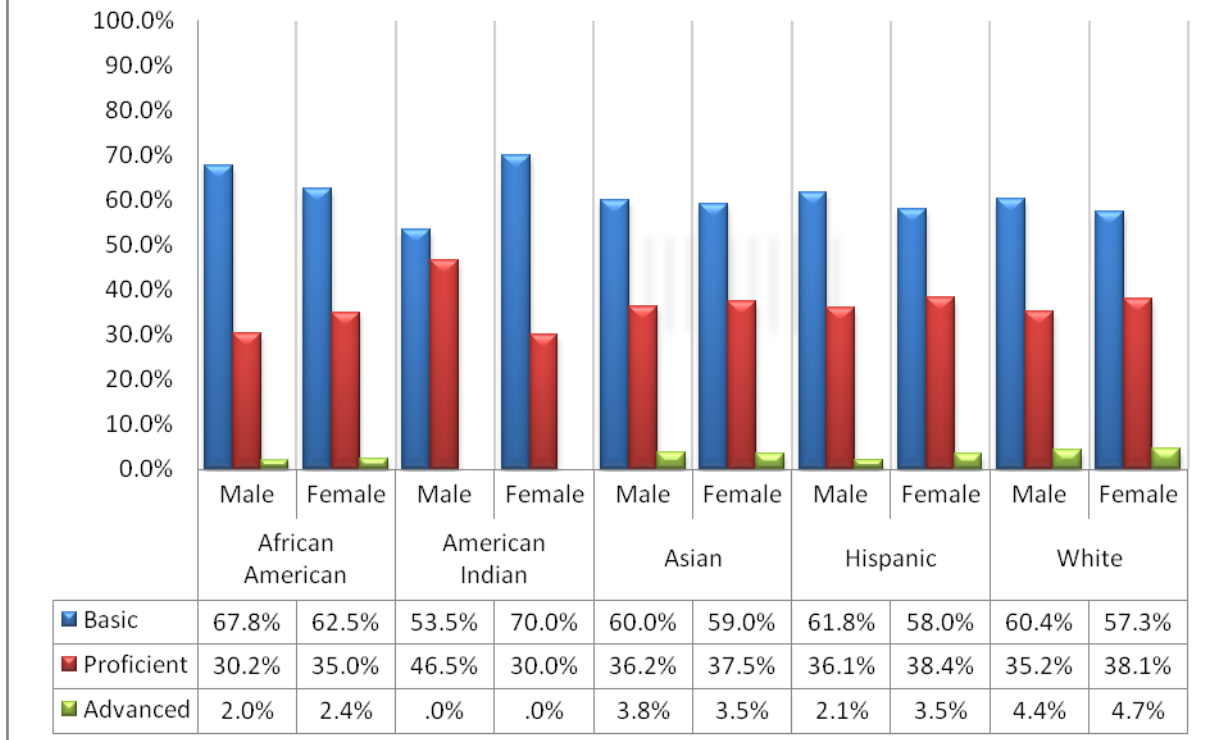


**Figure 13
MSA Reading Proficiency Levels of Students First
Enrolled in Language!
by Race**



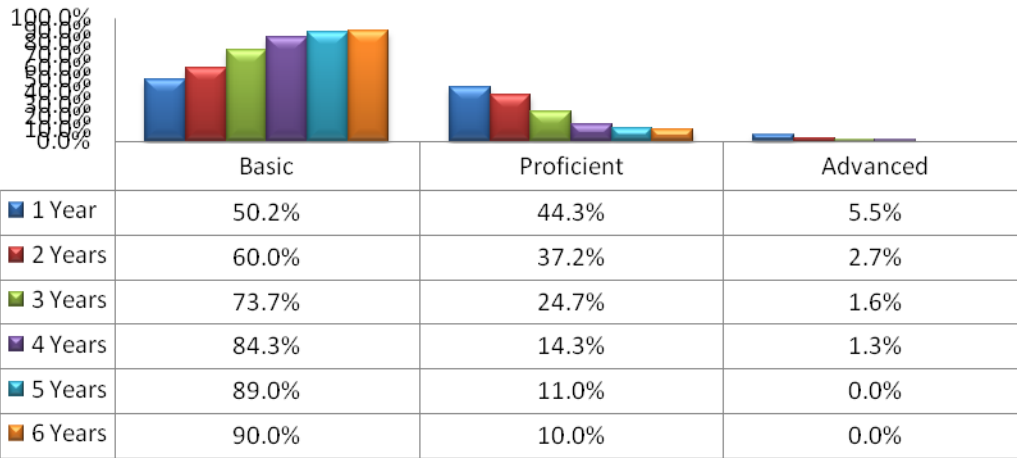
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**Figure 14
MSA Reading Proficiency Levels of Students First
Enrolled in *Language!*
by Race and by Gender**



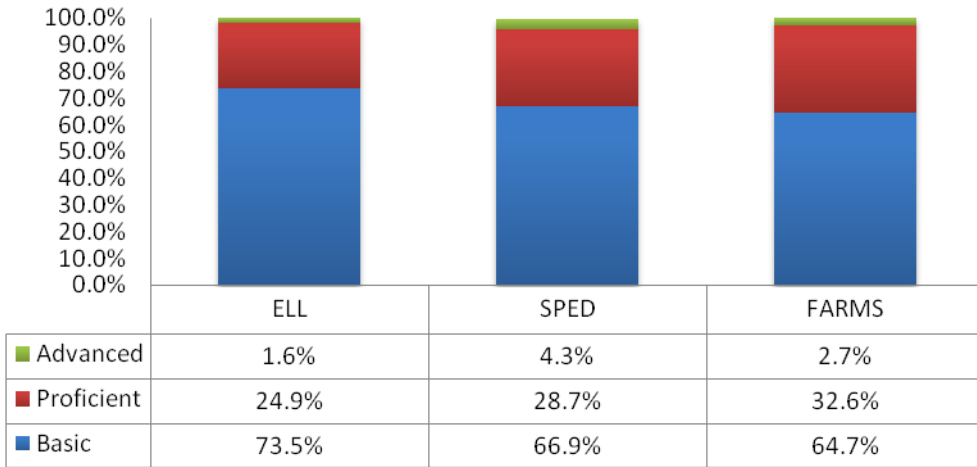
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**Figure 15
MSA Reading Proficiency Levels of
Students First Enrolled by Number of Years
in Language!**



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**Figure 16
Percentage of ELL, SPED, and FARMS
by MSA Reading Proficiency Level
Prior to Enrollment In *Language!***



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Question 2: How has the program impacted student achievement?

Tables 1 through 4 indicate that the impact of *Language!* on secondary students as measured by state-wide assessment data are mixed at best.

- Two-thirds of the students in the Total group had scored Basic on the MSA prior to participating in *Language!* This also means that one-third of the students were either Proficient or Advanced going into the program.

- Eighty percent of the students who scored Basic on state-wide assessments before participating in *Language!* were still Basic after exiting the program.

- Of the students who scored Proficient or Advanced before participating in *Language!*, half exited at a lower performance level (i.e., proficient to basic or advanced to basic/proficient).

- When subdivided by the various student groups (e.g., race, gender, FARMS), the results were similar to the total group.

Data and Analyses Supporting Findings for Research Question 2

Analyses conducted to determine the impact on student achievement:

The MSA proficiency levels for middle school students the school year prior to their participation in *Language!* was compared with the students' Reading MSA or English 10 HSA proficiency level the school year after the they stopped participating. There were 3,673 students for whom complete data were available (i.e., they had both a pre- and a post- MSA and or/HSA score). Cross-tabulations were produced for the total group as well as for subgroups (race, gender, FARMS, ELL, special education). Of the 3,673 students with both pre-test and post-test scores, only 500 students (13%) had MSA reading scores as the post test measure, meaning that the majority of students with both pre-test and post-test scores entered the program in middle school and exited the program in high school.

Demographic composition of the Total group

**An Examination of *Language!*
Baltimore County Public Schools**

Table 1. Percent of Students in Total group by Race

Am Ind	Asian	Af Amer	White	Multi	Hisp
0.5	3.0	50.7	40.8	1.3	3.7

9 out of 10 students were either African American or White.

Table 2. Percent of Students in Total group by Gender

Male	Female
55.6	44.4

Males outnumbered females.

Table 3. Percent of Students in Total group by FARMS Status

No FARMS	Yes FARMS
50.5	49.5

FARMS-eligible students constituted half of the total.

Table 4. Percent of Students in Total group by ELL Status

No ELL	Yes ELL
97.9	2.1

ELL students were a small fraction of the total.

Table 5. Percent of Students in Total group by Special Education Status

No Spec Ed	Yes Spec Ed
72.2	27.8

Special education students were overrepresented in the Total group.

Table 6. Percent of Students in Total group by Number of Years in *Language!*

1 year	2 years	3 years	4 or more years
30.9	39.8	23.4	5.8

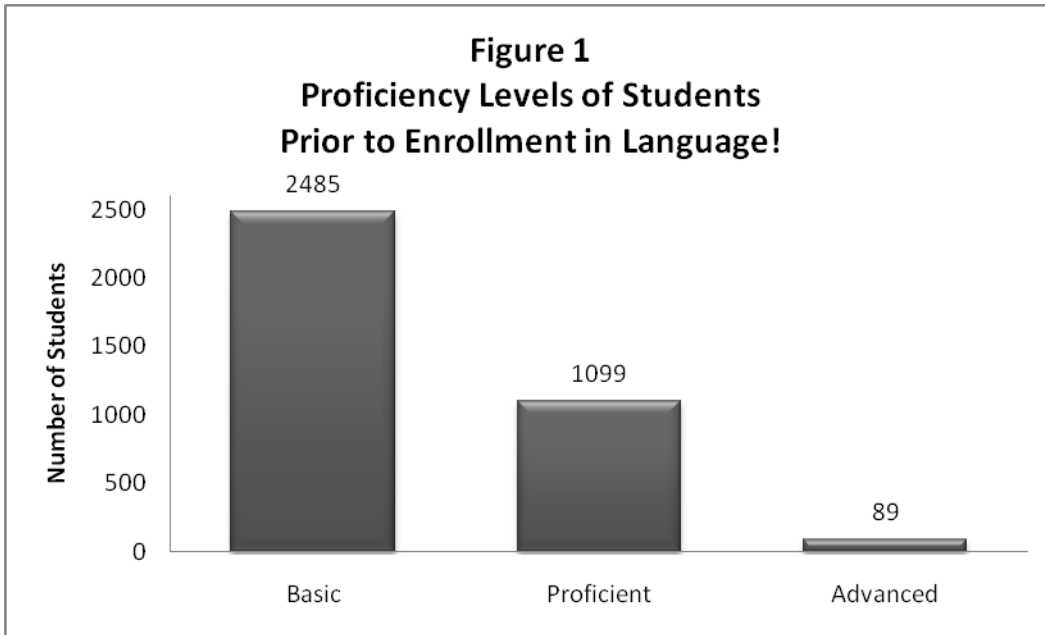
7 out of 10 students were in the program up to 2 years.

Table 7. Percent of Students in Total group by Beginning Grade Level in *Language!*

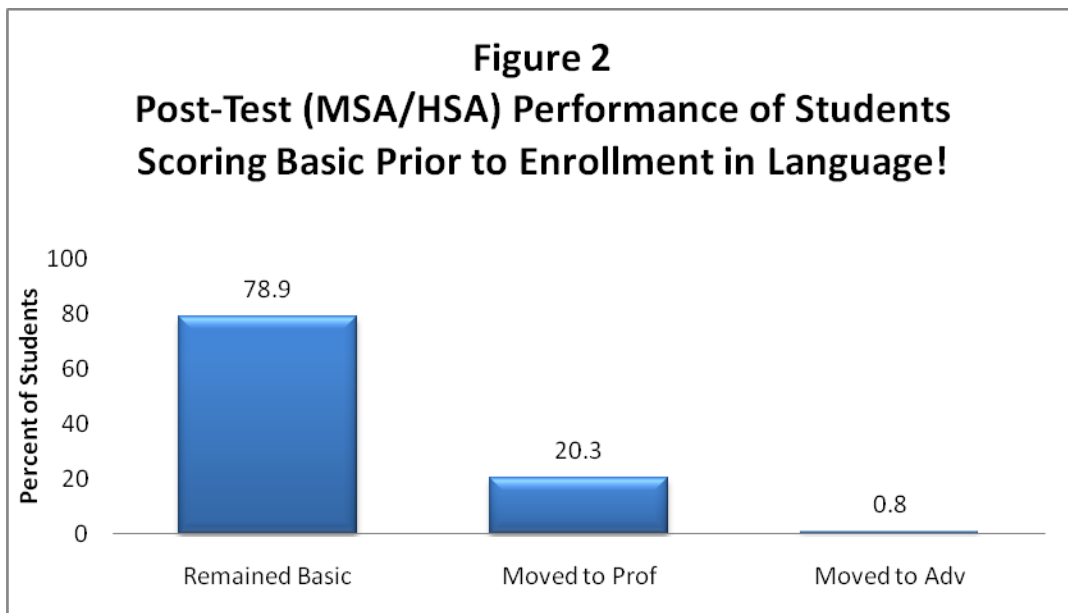
Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Other
20.3	38.5	31.8	9.4

9 out of 10 students in the data base started the program in middle school.

**An Examination of *Language!*
Baltimore County Public Schools**

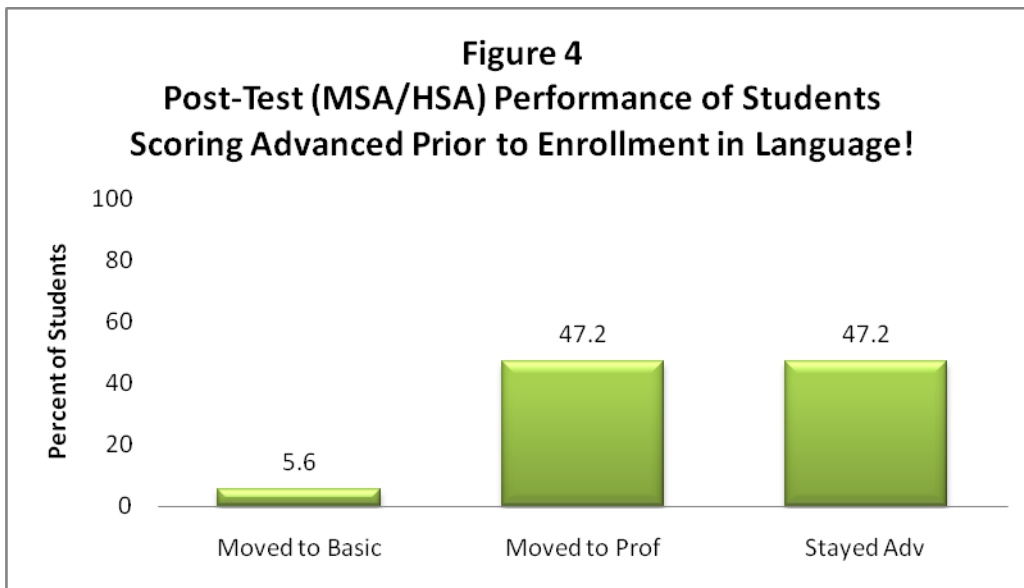
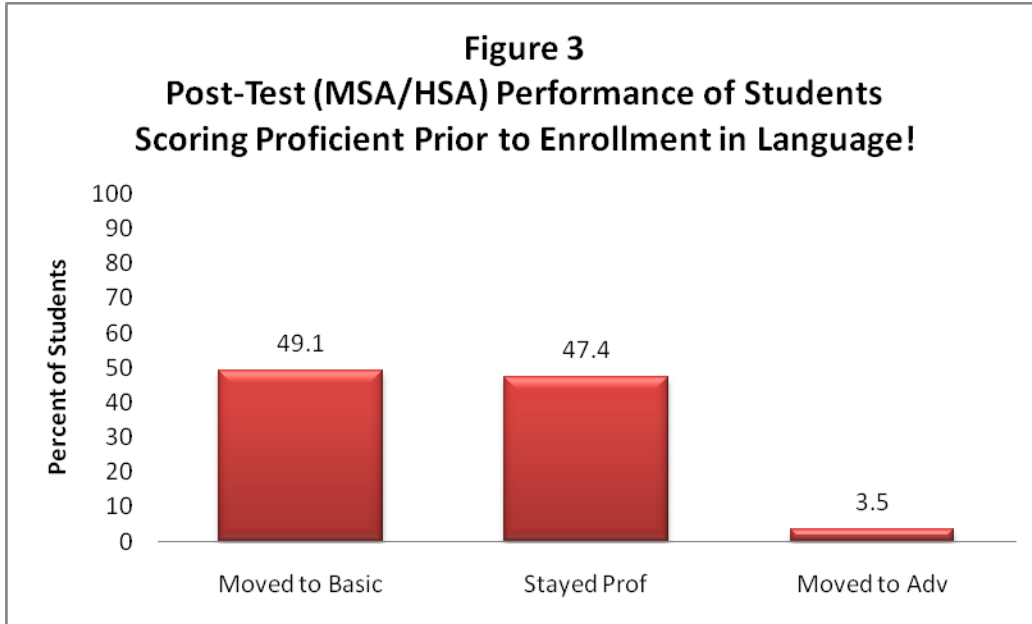


2 out 3 students were basic on the state tests prior to participating in *Language!*



Of the basic students, 8 out of 10 were still basic on state tests after exiting the program.

**An Examination of *Language!*
Baltimore County Public Schools**



Of the students who were proficient or advanced before *Language!*, half exited at a lower performance level (i.e., proficient to basic or advanced to basic/proficient).

**An Examination of *Language!*
Baltimore County Public Schools**

Recommendations

1. Most students were enrolled in middle schools and not high schools. Yet, the original intent of the program was to support students at the high school level. The district should **investigate the consistency of implementation and determine which level would benefit best from the program.**
2. The data that were analyzed for the current study indicate that one-third of the students who selected for participation in *Language!* scored either Proficient or Advanced on the MSA prior to entering the program. This finding suggests the need for the district's **Curriculum and Instruction unit to review the criteria for participating *Language!* particularly at the Middle School level.**
3. Eighty percent of the students who scored Basic on the MSA upon entry into *Language!* were still basic upon exiting the program. This finding suggests that the district should **verify that the program has been implemented as prescribed, consistently at all schools at all levels.**
4. The data used in this analysis was from the data warehouse. It is uncertain if the enrollments included here are a true reflection of the full number of participants in *Language!* For example, because the data points in this study course enrolments, the numbers do not include students who participate in *Language!* as a part of a course that is not listed as an official *Language!* course. In addition, since course enrollments in the data warehouse only applies to secondary students, it is not certain exactly how many (if any) elementary students are participating in the program. This suggests the need for the district to **obtain an accurate count of students participating in the program and their home schools.**

Appendix 1
Enrollments in *Language!* Designated Courses
For First-time Secondary Course Takers
2003 to 2010

	2002- 2003	2003- 2004	2004- 2005	2005- 2006	2006- 2007	2007- 2008	2008- 2009	2009- 2010	Total All Years
ENGLISH 11 A						3			3
ENGLISH 11 C						8	3		11
ENGLISH 11 E						7	15		22
ENGLISH 9 A					465	23			488
ENGLISH 9 C					1,076	169	68		1,313
ENGLISH 9 E						5			5
ESOL LIT/LANG! A							72		72
ESOL LIT/LANG! B							14		14
ESOL LIT/LANG! C							30		30
ESOL LIT/LANG! D							10		10
ESOL LIT/LANG! E							8		8
LANGUAGE! 6 A					1,727	1,527	968	411	4,633
LANGUAGE! 6 B								63	63
LANGUAGE! 6 C					44	82	561	736	1,423
LANGUAGE! 7 A					899	94	33	2	1,028
LANGUAGE! 7 B								5	5
LANGUAGE! 7 C					1,243	351	305	222	2,121
LANGUAGE! 7 D						14	13	42	69
LANGUAGE! 7 E						82	5	51	138
LANGUAGE! 7 F							10		10
LANGUAGE! 8 A					635	30	15	1	681
LANGUAGE! 8 C					1,100	167	56	29	1,352
LANGUAGE! 8 D						10			10
LANGUAGE! 8 E						85	148	173	406
LIT/LANGUAGE! A								4	4
LIT/LANGUAGE! C								8	8
LIT/LANGUAGE! D								2	2
LIT/LANGUAGE! E								39	39
LIT/LANGUAGE! F								162	162
LITERACY/LANGUAGE 10					1,222				1,222
LITERACY/LANGUAGE 9					114	41	64		219
LITERACY/LANGUAGE10A						5			5
LITERACY/LANGUAGE10C						77	18		95
LITERACY/LANGUAGE10D						5	1		6
LITERACY/LANGUAGE10E						13	17		30
LITERACY/LANGUAGE10F						5	6		11
MID SCH ENG ELEC 6	16	200	165						381
READING 6 I & A		59	182	162					403
READING 7 I & A			524						524
READING 8 I & A			505						505
READING7FASTTRACK MS				562	194	172			928
READING8FASTTRACK MS				317	101	11			429
Total All Courses	16	259	1,376	1,041	8,820	2,986	2,306	2,084	18,888

**An Examination of *Language!*
Baltimore County Public Schools**

Appendix 2						
Enrollments in <i>Language!</i> Designated Courses						
For All Secondary Course Takers						
2006 to 2010*						
	2005- 2006	2006- 2007	2007- 2008	2008- 2009	2009- 2010	Total all Years
ENGLISH 11 A	0	0	4	1	0	5
ENGLISH 11 C	0	0	293	11	0	304
ENGLISH 11 E	0	0	839	437	0	1,276
ESOL LIT/LANG! B	0	0	0	0	47	47
ESOL LIT/LANG! C	0	0	0	0	105	105
ESOL LIT/LANG! D	0	0	0	0	80	80
ESOL LIT/LANG! E	0	0	0	0	38	38
LANGUAGE! 6 A	0	1,930	3,454	3,191	1,119	9,694
LANGUAGE! 6 B	0	0	0	0	136	136
LANGUAGE! 6 C	0	53	173	1,907	1,879	4,012
LANGUAGE! 7 A	0	1,079	451	301	18	1,849
LANGUAGE! 7 B	0	0	0	0	47	47
LANGUAGE! 7 C	0	1,476	3,756	4,979	2,607	12,818
LANGUAGE! 7 D	0	0	27	33	94	154
LANGUAGE! 7 E	0	0	250	156	1,008	1,414
LANGUAGE! 7 F	0	0	0	38	0	38
LANGUAGE! 8 A	0	1,038	185	194	10	1,427
LANGUAGE! 8 C	0	1,498	2,246	998	240	4,982
LANGUAGE! 8 D	0	0	581	17	0	598
LANGUAGE! 8 E	0	0	2,298	4,507	3,211	10,016
LIT/LANGUAGE! A	0	0	0	0	50	212
LIT/LANGUAGE! C	0	0	0	0	60	255
LIT/LANGUAGE! D	0	0	0	0	16	160
LIT/LANGUAGE! E	0	0	0	0	593	593
LIT/LANGUAGE! F	0	0	0	0	913	913
LITERACY/LANGUAGE 10	0	3,455	0	0	0	3,455
READING 6 I & A	146	0	0	2	0	148
READING7FASTTRACK MS	665	485	385	0	0	1,535
READING8FASTTRACK MS	472	307	76	0	0	855
Total all Courses	1,283	11,321	15,018	16,772	12,271	57,166

*Course data were not readily available for school years 2003-2004 and 2004-2005

**BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Executive Summary**

**Report on *Language!*
January 24, 2012**

Language! is an intensive language arts intervention program that is used with identified secondary students who are struggling readers. The goal of the intervention is to provide students with grade-level proficiency by using a sequential, cumulative, skill-based instructional format that addresses all learning styles. This program targets a small number of students and is intended to supplement the core instructional program.

BCPS has pre- and post-instruction information for 5,771 students in Grades 6 through 10 who participated in the *Language!* program for two years. The data show that the majority of enrolled students demonstrated growth on the internal measures within the program. The Office of Research, Accountability and Assessment is gathering additional disaggregated data to be shared with the Board of Education.

Next steps include continuing to collect and analyze data to determine the ongoing impact of the program, recertifying of central office language arts personnel so they are available to provide support to the program, and central office collaboration with middle and high school principals on instructional decisions to support students with language arts learning needs.



Brief Research Report

An Examination of *Language!* September 9, 2011

Office of Research
Dr. Tamela H. Hawley, Director
Dr. Renard A. Adams, Coordinator
Dr. Gary L. Brager, Supervisor
Samantha Murray, Specialist
Everett Elliott, Resource Teacher

Dr. Joe A. Hairston
Superintendent of Schools

Background

This report was conducted to examine two research questions regarding the *Language!* program. Dr. Joe A. Hairston and Dr. Renee Foose requested that the following research questions be examined:

Question 1. What students have been served by the *Language!* program?

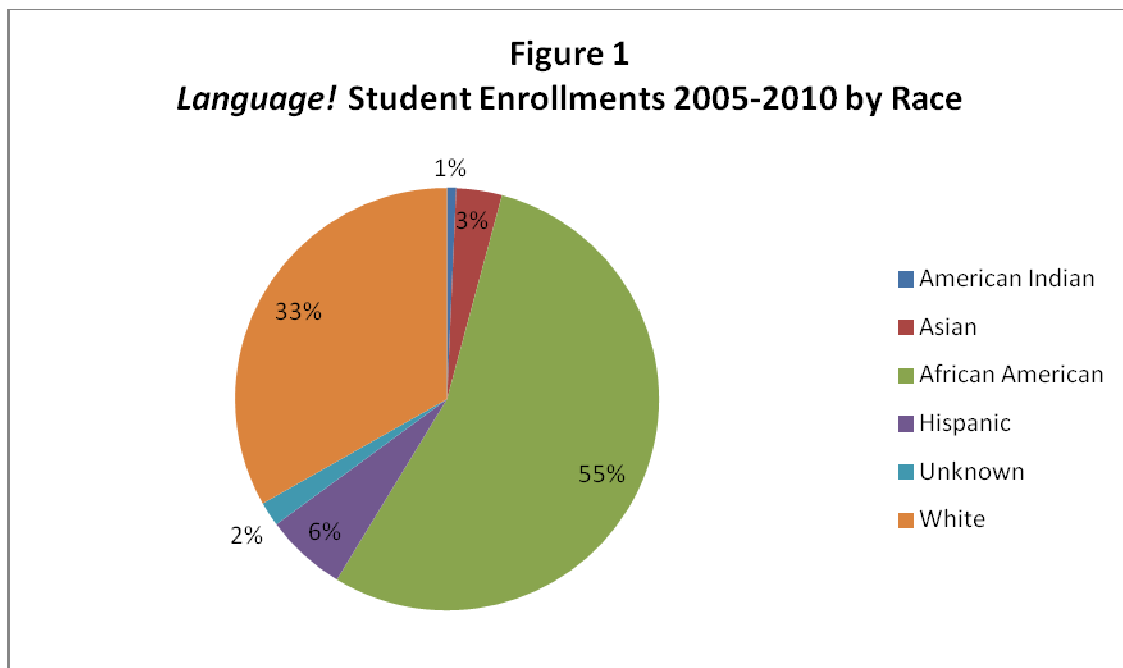
Question 2. How has the program impacted student growth in reading based upon measures within the *Language!* program?

Methodology

Student data entered into the *Language!* program database system were extracted and matched with unique identification numbers within BCPS data systems. The resulting dataset contained 5,771 student records. Students' demographic information and performance measures associated with the *Language!* program were then analyzed for this report.

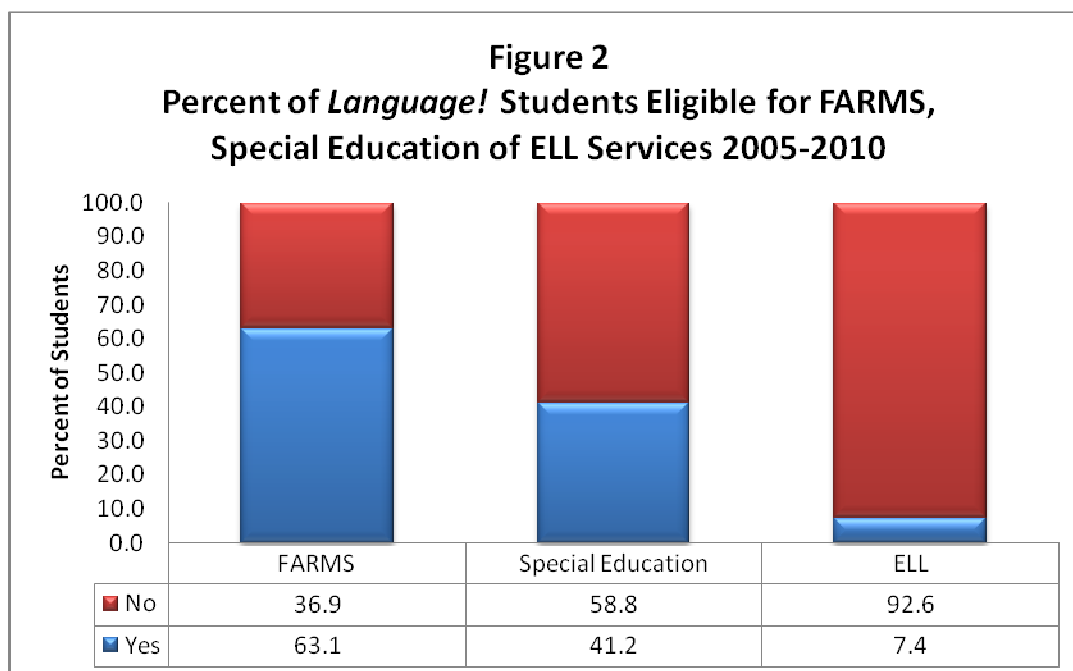
What students have been served by the *Language!* program

Between the fall of 2005 and spring of 2010, 5,771 students were served by the *Language!* program. The majority of those students were African American (55%), with White (33%) students comprising the second most-served student group. Minority students comprised 65% of all students served by the *Language!* program. Figure 1 shows the *Language!* enrollment by race.



An Examination of *Language!* Baltimore County Public Schools

Figure 2 shows the percentage of *Language!* students eligible for special services. Of students served by the *Language!* program, 63% were eligible for FARMS services, 41% were eligible for special education services, and a small percentage (7%) were eligible for ELL services.



How has the program impacted student growth in reading based upon measures within the *Language!* program?

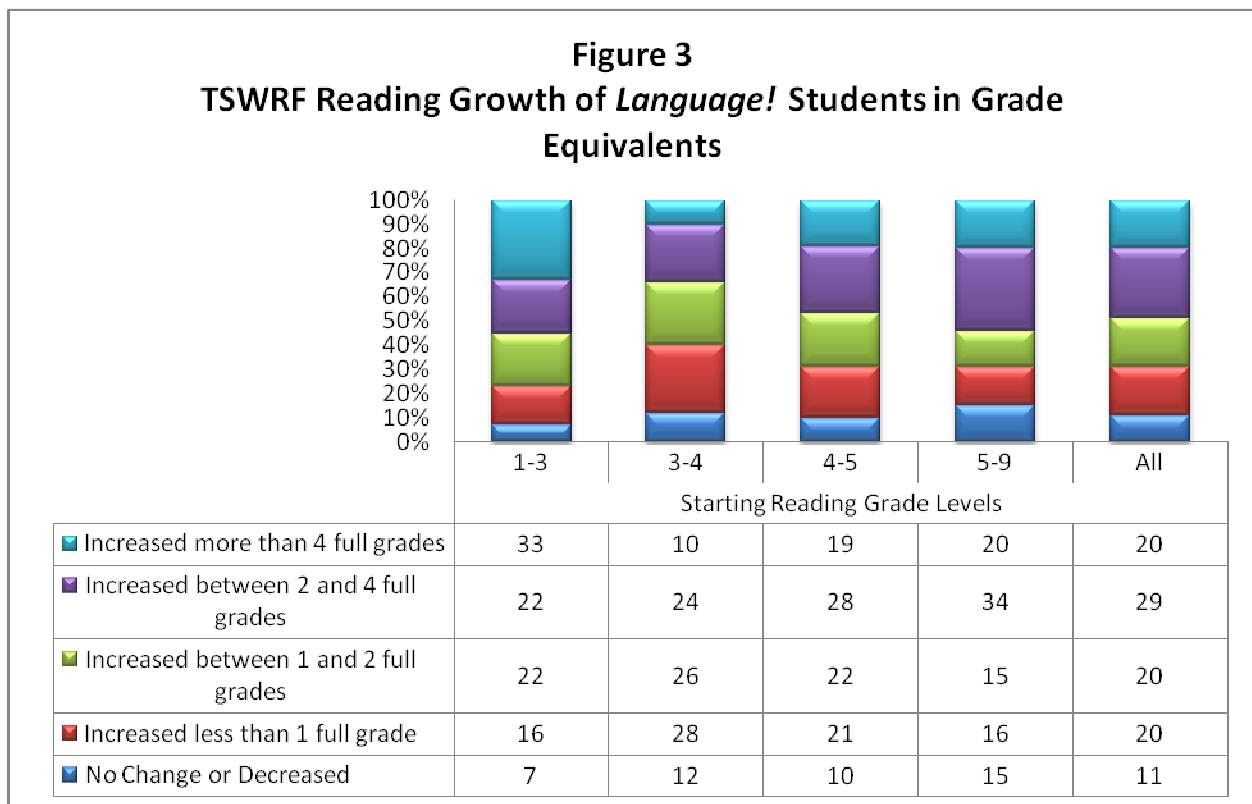
The *Test of Silent Word Reading Fluency (TOSWRF)* measures a student's ability to recognize printed words accurately and efficiently. The *Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)* is a criterion-referenced reading comprehension tests for students in grades 1 through 12. Both the TOSWRF and the DRP are internal measures used within the *Language!* program. Students' achievement scores on these tests were converted to a grade equivalent score.

The grade equivalent score expresses the grade level of students who, on average, demonstrate a particular achievement score when tested. Students demonstrating on-grade achievement typically obtain grade equivalent scores which meet or exceed the grade and month of the school year in which they are enrolled. That is, a grade 4 student who is on grade level at the beginning of the school year may earn a grade equivalent score in reading of 4th grade, 0 months, which is written as 4.0. Grade equivalents can be useful for measuring individual growth from one year to the next and for estimating a student's developmental status in terms of grade level. By comparing students' starting reading grade equivalents to the grade equivalents on either the

An Examination of *Language!* Baltimore County Public Schools

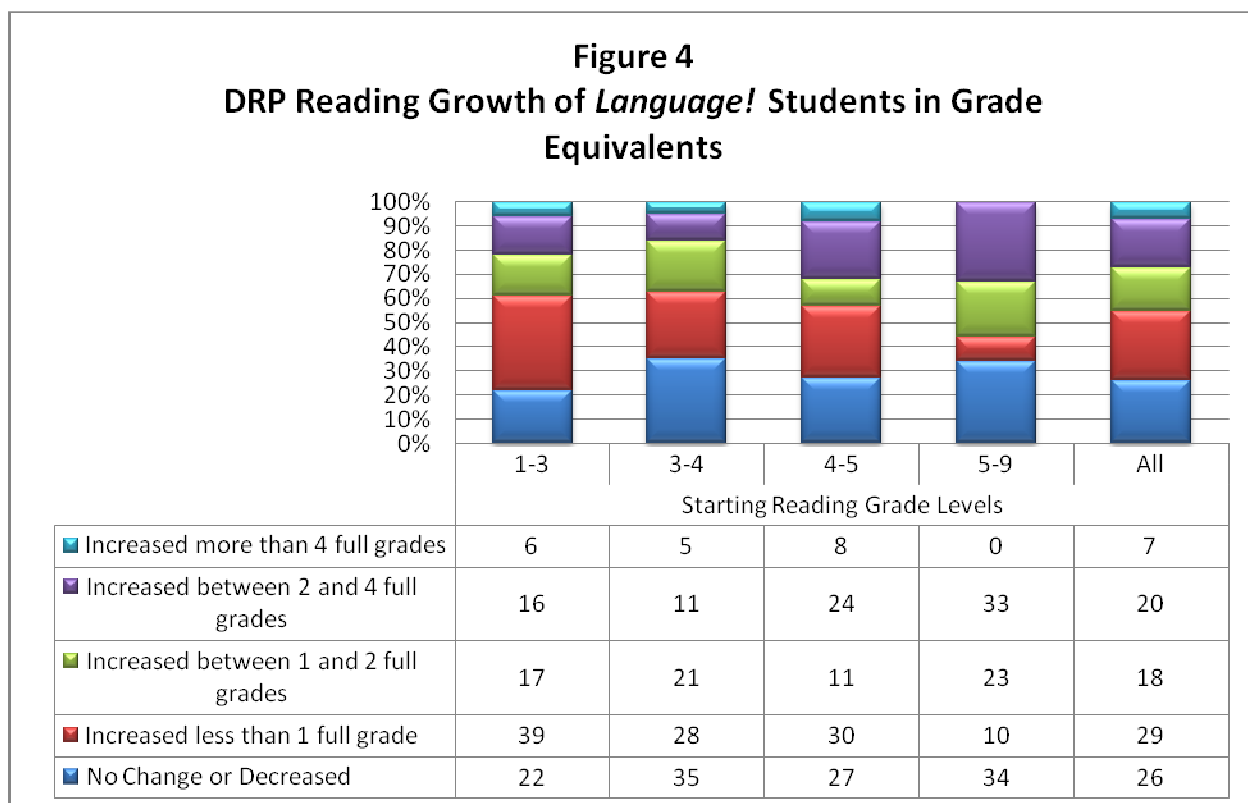
TOSWRF or DRP after two years of instruction, student growth within the program was examined. Student growth is presented in Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3 shows the percentage of students making various amounts of growth on the TOSWRF, grouped by starting grade equivalent tiers. For the total group with all tiers combined, 89% of students exhibited growth. Among starting grade equivalent tiers, the greatest student growth was seen within the 1-3 grade level tier where 93% of students demonstrated an increase, with 33% demonstrating an increase of more than four grade equivalents.



An Examination of *Language!* Baltimore County Public Schools

Figure 4 shows the percentage of students making various amounts of growth on the DRP, grouped by starting grade equivalent tiers. While growth on this measure was not as strong as on the TOSWRF, it was still positive. For the total group with all tiers combined, 74% of students exhibited growth. Among the starting grade equivalent tiers, the greatest student growth was again seen within the 1-3 grade level tier where 78% of students demonstrated growth as measured by the DRP.



Conclusions

With regard to the research questions, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. 5,771 students were enrolled in the *Language!* program between 2005 and 2010. Sixty-five percent (65%) of all enrolled students were minority students, 63% were eligible for FARMS services, and 41% were eligible for special education services.
2. After two years of instruction, the vast majority of students enrolled in *Language!* demonstrated growth on the internal measures within the program.
 - a. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of students demonstrated growth as measured by the *Test of Silent Word Fluency*; and
 - b. Seventy-four percent (74%) of students demonstrated growth as measured by the *Degrees of Reading Power*.



Language! Update

Board of Education
January 24, 2012

Language! 2005–2006

- Dr. Hairston introduced a reading/language arts intervention for secondary students to prepare for the English HSA.

What is *Language!* ?

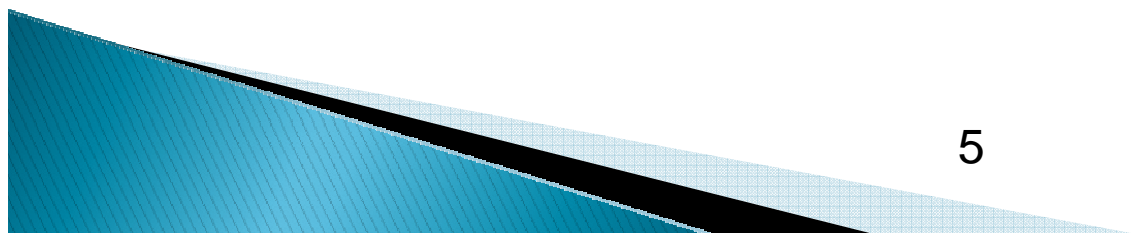
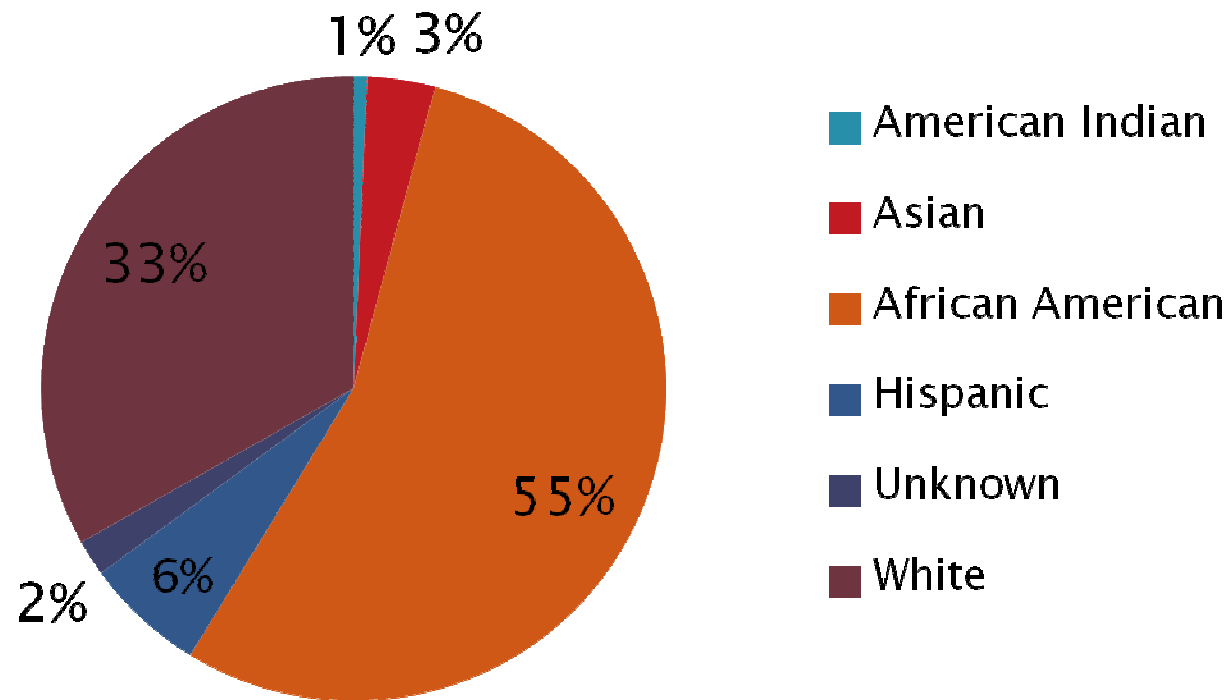
Language! is a comprehensive reading and language arts intervention/acceleration program designed for older, struggling readers.

Language! 2006–2007

- The targeted audience was Grade 6–10 students.
- During the initial year, it was offered in every high school and middle school.

Language! 2006–2010

Student Enrollments by Race



5

48

Percent of *Language!* Students Eligible for Special Services 2006–2010

FARMS	Special Education	ELL
63.1%	41.2%	7.4%

Language!

- Progress in *Language!* is monitored through the use of two assessments:
- *Test of Silent Word Reading Fluency*
- *Degrees of Reading Power*

Language! Conclusions

- The results of 5,771 students' *Language!* assessments were reviewed.
- The following results are for students who participated in two years of instruction.

Test of Silent Word Reading Fluency

Starting Reading Grade Level	1-3	3-4	4-5	5-9	All
% Students with 1 to 4+ Years Growth	77%	60%	69%	69%	69%

Degrees of Reading Power (Comprehension)

Starting Reading Grade Level	1-3	3-4	4-5	5-9	All
% Students with 1 to 4+ Years Growth	39%	37%	43%	56%	45%

Principal's Comments

- ▶ Dr. Jane Barranger, principal of Towson High School, has been asked to provide testimony about the use of *Language!* in her school over the last seven years.

Language! Next Steps

- Recertify members of the English office as *Language!* trainers.
- Identify schools offering *Language!* to students in 2012–2013.
- Provide professional development and support to teachers.

Language! Next Steps

- Identify instructional conditions where more student success was experienced.
- Confirm a consistent method for recording *Language!* progress.
- Provide consistent evaluation of interventions.

Foreword to *Failure Factory* Book

In his book, *Failure Factory*, Chris Papst explores a topic vital to survival of a city and state, both socially and economically - education. Specifically, Baltimore City Public Schools. In his writing, Papst provides the public a lens by which to capture the internal functions of the district, portraying both failures and successes. There are those who argue and try to dismiss the reporting on realities in educational systems, such as that featured in this book, as incendiary and exacerbating to the current issues without resolving them. Mr. Papst views positive and negative aspects of the situation. Using personal anecdotes, he provides insight, which extends far beyond what is often afforded to the public, into the mechanisms of education. Accordingly, the facts put forth in this book consistently underlie the case for necessary reforms in education – for the welfare of all students.

Mr. Papst provides a factual basis for the assertions expressed in the book. His documentation is based on intense investigations over time. And, whether some critics would acknowledge it or not, his descriptions reflect not just the current educational occurrences in one major city, but what is happening across the nation. When considered proactively, rather than reactively, he provides readers the opportunity to analyze negative circumstances impacting students in order to collaborate and develop solutions – as an informed public. To that end, Mr. Papst’s text furnishes what is often missing in communication between school districts and their vulnerable clients, transparency.

All parents, whether classified majority or minority, bring their children to the schoolhouse door and trust those in charge to educate them to help fulfill their futures, even in ways that parents themselves cannot. Yet too often that promise is not kept, and trust with the system breaks down. In his analysis, Papst makes clear that determining solutions can only be accomplished as a joint effort, across constituencies and involving multiple segments of the community. Simply, he poses that this is no time for those in authority to become defensive; rather, it is past time to come to the defense of those who are most vulnerable and voiceless – the children. Along that vein, Mr. Papst provides voice to parents who too frequently have been sidelined or totally marginalized.

Failure Factory does not call for the annihilation of education systems. It does demand recognizing what is not working or simply wrong and then pursuing corrections. Educational institutions have evolved into a new bureaucracy. We must sometimes wonder what happened with the sacred mission – when was it sacrificed and to what purpose? The issues surrounding minorities and the poor not being adequately educated have gone on for over a century. The matters get more focus today basically due to mass media and the Web. And frankly some don’t like what they see. Now, via this book, the public can observe closely the faulty practices, ineffective work arounds and solutions that don’t work, but continuously get repackaged for public consumption.

Throughout his writing, Mr. Papst goes beyond simply providing a single-blame narration for decades of underachievement. He challenges parents and the public in general to act against the laissez faire attitude toward the education of children which has increased particularly in recent

years. Although he speaks to parental responsibility and engagement, Mr. Papst steadily rebuts the allegation that parents should bear inordinate blame for academic failure. Is it fair to blame parents for their children's lack of educational success, when many parents themselves were undereducated by the same school system their children now attend?

As a journalist, Mr. Papst demonstrates the courage to challenge powerful bureaucracies by holding those at the top accountable. He also rejects the premise that the reason for a lack of appropriate education rests on the parents and students themselves based on their living conditions. For although those factors play a role, they are not insurmountable. After all, school systems receive billions of tax dollars intended for the sole purpose of educating students – not some students, but all students. And that mission should not be predicated on the environment from which the students leave when they enter the schoolhouse.

In addition to intense scrutiny of achievement among students and academic challenges, particularly minorities and poor, Mr. Papst also deeply explores topics such as grading, promotions, discipline, school safety, and violence while providing cogent examples. Through the book and its stories, Mr. Papst raises questions about whether or not the situation is truly the failure of children or the failure of systems to address their needs. Is this phenomenon due to the students failing academically or the way in which they are being educated? In other words, are children failing school or are schools failing children?

Barbara Dezmon, Ph.D.

Education Committee Chair: Maryland State Conference NAACP (2010-2023)