PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS ASSISTS SCHOOLS IN ‘IMPROVEMENT’ STATUS

School Improvement & Accountability Provides Support, Encourages Parent Involvement

According to data released today by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), three Prince George’s County public schools – Columbia Park ES, William W. Hall ES, and Walker Mill MS – exited School Improvement status this year by meeting all state and federal mandates for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) two years in a row. To meet AYP, schools must meet Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for academic performance (the percent of students proficient or advanced) and attendance in all categories; if not, they are placed in School Improvement status. As a result of the 2009 Maryland School Assessment (MSA), 46 schools are in some form of school improvement. Four of these schools will be closing due to the school consolidations approved by the Board of Education this spring.

“The relentless march upward of the AMOs that set the bar for AYP is creating a very high bar for growth for school improvement efforts and student achievement,” said Dr. William R. Hite, Jr., Superintendent of Schools. “Although we have seen record levels of growth in student achievement since 2005, the school system is challenged each year to make the progress necessary to meet all AMOs leading to 100-percent proficiency for all students in reading and math by school year 2013-2014.”

This year, 56 Prince George’s County public schools had 80 percent or more students scoring proficient or advanced in reading on the 2009 Maryland School Assessment (MSA), and 41 schools had 80 percent or more students scoring proficient or advanced in math. Grade 8 reading achievement made an impressive 10-percentage point gain, and overall performance in reading increased in all racial subcategories. Overall performance by English Language Learners (ELL), students who qualify for Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FARMS), and students receiving Special Education services increased in both reading and math.

To help schools in School Improvement status meet AYP, the PGCPS Department of School Improvement and Accountability provides technical assistance and targeted professional development to school staff. School Improvement Designees (SID) assigned to each Area Office work with schools to align their school improvement activities to their budget, analyze performance data, and ensure that all decisions are “data driven.” School Improvement Liaisons visit each school to deliver professional development on topics such as accountability, monitoring tools, and needs assessments. For schools in Corrective Action and Restructuring status, the office also provides training assistance and teacher capacity needs assessment, and helps to develop alternative governance plans.

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Prince George’s County Board of Education
Parents and families can assist in the school improvement process by being involved in their child’s education, volunteering at schools, and ensuring their child comes to school each day and is prepared to learn. Parent members are included in all schools’ School Planning and Management Teams (SPMTs) so they have a voice in major decisions at the school level. The Department of School Improvement and Accountability also hosts parent involvement seminars for the SPMTs to help them increase parent involvement at their schools. The department is currently developing a Web site that parents can visit to view school improvement plans, access training documents and an online library, and eventually, share comments and ideas through chats or blogs.

“Parent involvement plays a key role in school performance,” said Verjeana M. Jacobs, Esq., Board of Education Chair. “When parents are involved in the education process, they are empowered – this results in empowered students who achieve at higher levels.”

Ensuring that students are taught by highly qualified teachers is also key to ensuring students’ success. PGCPS has been focusing on increasing the number of highly qualified and highly effective teachers for the past several years, particularly those working in Title 1 schools. (Title 1 schools receive federal funds based on the percentage of students living in circumstances of poverty.) As a result, two of the three schools exiting School Improvement this year were Title 1 schools with 85 percent or more teachers who are highly qualified. Schools exiting School Improvement this year are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>STATUS EXITED IN 2008</th>
<th>SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ENTRY YEAR</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Park ES (Title 1)</td>
<td>School Improvement Year 2</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walker Mill MS</td>
<td>School Improvement Year 2</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William W. Hall ES (Title 1)</td>
<td>School Improvement Year 1</td>
<td>2007</td>
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</tbody>
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The following four schools in need of improvement met AYP this year and are poised to exit School Improvement status in 2010: Carmody Hills ES, Ernest Everett Just MS, James H. Harrison ES, and Templeton ES. Both Ernest Everett Just MS and James H. Harrison ES (a Title 1 school) had been in School Improvement since 2004.


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