PRESS RELEASE

**Prince George's County Public Schools • www.pgcps.org**
Dr. André J. Hornsby, Chief Executive Officer
14201 School Lane, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

**JANUARY 20, 2005**
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:** John White, 301-952-6375
Kelly Alexander, 301-952-6001

# PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS HEAD FOR FINISH LINE

## *Preparing for Upcoming Exams, Graduation*

With state and national exams looming between now and March, Prince George's County Public Schools Chief Executive Officer André J. Hornsby is encouraging parents to help their children complete the new *Test Sophistication* program and cross the finish line to improved academic achievement.

"We are preparing every student for academic success," Dr. Hornsby said. "We are providing students, parents and teachers with the tools necessary to continue learning beyond the school day. Through our *Test Sophistication* program, children have multiple opportunities to learn and understand difficult subject matter. We are identifying and keeping our future National Merit Scholars on course, and ensuring our seniors graduate."

There are inherent benefits for parents in the *Test Sophistication* program. By helping students with weekly problem sets, parents will understand what is required of students to perform well on Advanced Placement exams, the Maryland School Assessment (MSA), the High School Assessment (HSA), and the PSAT/SAT.

Parents can play a key role in the learning process. For example, parents can ensure students in grades 6-8 complete their *MSA Finish Line* books on math and reading by the end of February. When completed, middle school students should be familiar with all content covered on the MSA exam. Parents and students can review homework solutions online (www.pgcps.org\~math) the week after they are due. Students and parents can also watch exceptional teachers solve algebra and geometry problems each week on the school system's cable television channel 96.

*Test Sophistication* began in November. While many test prep courses teach technique and strategy, *Test Sophistication* provides Prince George's County public school students with multiple exposures to all MSA and HSA content.

- more -

The 13 components of *Test Sophistication* are as follows:

1. Students are engaged in a "Problem of the Week" series;
2. Extended Day Instruction Opportunities are available;
3. MSA Finish Line instruction;
4. For-credit homework packets;
5. Winter vacation packets;
6. Everything-you-need-to-know CD series;
7. HSA biology initiative;
8. HSA government initiative;
9. Evening and Saturday school course offerings;
10. College Board PSSS (Preliminary SAT Scoring Service), an assessment tool that will be administered to all 8th grade students in March 2005;
11. College Board online SAT prep;
12. Tuition-free Kaplan SAT prep course for 250 seniors; and
13. MSA cross-curricular support.

There are specific benefits for students and teachers. Benefits for students include:

- Targeted instruction;
- Opportunity to continue learning beyond the school day;
- Exposure to nationally recognized test preparation materials; and
- Greater success on state and national exams.

Benefits for teachers include:

- Customized test preparation materials;
- Opportunities to extend the learning program beyond the school day;
- Access to additional instructional materials;
- Confidence that students have multiple opportunities to learn test content without increasing the teachers' workload.

Eighty four percent of Prince George's County public schools made gains in reading and 77% showed gains in mathematics on the MSA in 2004. Overall reading and mathematics performance increased by 18% and 16%, respectively. The number of schools meeting the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmark increased to 105 (56%) in 2004, up from 64 (35%) in 2003 – a 64% increase.

"Working together, students, teachers and parents can achieve even higher results in the coming year," Dr. Hornsby said.

-30-