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TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Nancy S. Grasmick *Nancy*
DATE: January 27-28, 2009
RE: Update on Estimated Graduation Status from Local School Systems

PURPOSE:

To update State Board of Education members on current information regarding the status of students expected to graduate from Maryland public high schools in the spring of 2009.

BACKGROUND:

The Class of 2009 is the first group of students needing to meet the HSA requirement in order to graduate with a Maryland diploma. In December 2008, the State Board requested periodic updates on the progress of 2008-2009 seniors toward meeting high school graduation requirements, with particular emphasis on the HSA requirement. The information used for these updates will vary as the year unfolds due to the new information becoming available as students complete Bridge Plan projects, pass tests, and achieve the combined score of 1602.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At this date, no student has met all requirements for graduation, as they are currently enrolled in their courses that will give them their final credit requirements. However the vast majority of students have already met the HSA requirement, and according to local school systems, most of these students are also on track to complete their remaining credit requirements by the end of the school year. As of May 2008, 90% of all students who had taken all four tests had already met the HSA graduation requirement. Though that achievement is not insignificant, local school systems still had several thousand students who needed to either pass additional tests or who had not yet taken one or more tests. The spring 2008 HSA test data revealed approximately 9,000 students still needing to meet at least part of the HSA requirement, with most having passed at least one or two assessments or near to achieving the 1602 combined score.

Since Spring of 2008, all twenty-four school systems have conducted strong Bridge Plan programs for students needing to use this route to meeting the HSA requirement. Thousands of students statewide have participated in the program, generating numerous successful Bridge Plan projects. At the same time, students have participated in two more test administrations—in August and October 2008, which further accelerated student progress toward meeting this requirement.

Because students are continuously working on projects, and school systems are conducting scoring centers on a rolling basis, it is important to keep in mind that any report on the status of students in any given presentation will under-represent progress since it is only a snapshot in time. Numbers fluctuate from month to month and will depend on the most recent testing and Bridge data and individual student information on how this progress impacts each student's diploma path.

MSDE has been monitoring the work and progress of local school systems and finding that significant efforts on behalf of their students are continuing and meeting with success. Plans have been carefully devised to identify students who are most likely to pass the tests, with the assurance that if they are not successful they will still have time to be successful with the Bridge Plan after January testing. Other students have begun Bridge projects, are meeting with success, and are progressing on a schedule to meet requirements by May. Varying models ensure that Bridge projects are scored in a timely fashion to ensure all students will have sufficient time to meet requirements.

In an effort to provide the Board with the most updated information available, school systems were asked to provide their most current data on numbers of students meeting the HSA graduation requirement as of January 17, 2009. The data are due to MSDE the evening of January 23, 2009. After the local reports are compiled and analyzed, MSDE staff will present State Board members with a summary of findings.

Data is also collected on the operation of local Bridge Plan programs and the number of students successfully completing projects. Bridge Plan projects differ from tests in that students falling short in the initial scoring of their projects can go back and augment and correct their initial work rather than going back to the drawing board.

During the winter and spring of 2009, MSDE staff will continue to update the Board as additional data becomes available. January 2009 data will be updated as we go into the spring with the expectation that additional Bridge Plan projects and test administrations are completed and reported to MSDE. Significant numbers of HSA requirement completers are expected during the coming months.

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ACTION:

For information only. No action required.

