




Maryland State Board of Education

200 W. BALTIMORE STREET / BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201-2595 / (410) 767-0467

TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Tony South 
DATE: May 27-28, 2009
SUBJECT: International Benchmarking in Mathematics

PURPOSE:

To provide the Board with information on the mathematics curricula in Singapore, one of the highest performing countries on international mathematics assessments.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The presentation offers an international perspective on the approach to teaching mathematics in the primary grades in the United States in contrast to the approach used in Singapore, one of the top performing nations in the world on international mathematics assessments. This presentation is consistent with the call by the Chief State School Officers, Governors, Education Commission of the States, and Achieve for international benchmarking to ensure that U.S. students receive a world-class education. The presentation will identify major differences between the mathematics frameworks, textbooks, assessments and teachers in Singapore and a number of States including Maryland. It also presents some initial results from sites that introduced the Singapore mathematics textbook in place of their regular textbook.

Dr. Alan Ginsburg is Director of Policy and Program Studies within the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development at the U.S. Department of Education. Dr. Ginsburg's international work includes Lead Shepherd (chair) of the 21-nation Human Resources Development Working Group within the organization for Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). He has completed studies comparing Singapore and U.S. mathematics systems; a study of what we can learn from the TIMSS and PISA results about international mathematics performance and its causes; and a newly published study of "How the Highest Performing State (Massachusetts) Compares to the Highest Performing Country (Hong Kong) in Grade 3 Mathematics."

ACTION:

For information only, no action is required.