

TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Schools 

DATE: October 29, 2026

SUBJECT: SY 2025-2026 Science and Social Studies Assessment Results

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

Pillar 3: College and Career Readiness

Goal: Every student graduates high school college and career ready.

Outcome:

3.E Increase the percentage of grade 8 students scoring proficient in science.

3.F Increase proficiency on all state assessments for each student group.

3.G Decrease gaps in proficiency on all state assessments between student groups.

Purpose

The Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) science and social studies assessment results for the 2025-2026 school year are provided for your information.

Background

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to assess students in science once in each grade span (3-5, 6-8, and high school). The MCAP Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (MISA) for grades 5 and 8 was first administered in the 2017-2018 school year and has continued to be administered until the present, except for a pandemic-induced pause in the 2019-2020 school year and a shortened administration in the fall of 2021. The High School Life Science assessment was first administered as an operational test in the 2021-2022 school year.

The 2022-2023 school year was the first time when results for the High School American Government operational test were reported based on four performance levels. Prior versions reported results using two categories (Pass/Fail). To earn a Maryland High School Diploma, high school students must participate in the High School American Government statewide assessment, which counts as 20% of the student's final course grade in American Government.

Executive Summary

This presentation summarizes Maryland's science and social studies assessment trends. Science proficiency continues to increase in elementary and high school while remaining stable in middle school. Proficiency gains are also demonstrated in grade 8 Social Studies and High School American Government.

Action

No action is required; this information is for discussion only.

Attachments

Science and Social Studies Assessment Results, SY 2025-2026.pptx

Science and Social Studies Assessment Results, SY 2025-2026.pdf



Science and Social Studies Assessment Results, SY 2025-2026

DIVISION OF ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Presented By | Geoff Sanderson, Chief of Accountability
Dr. Tenette Smith, Chief Academic Officer

October 29, 2026



MSDE Strategic Plan Goals

1

Every child has access to a high-quality early childhood program.

PILLAR 1: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



Every student is matched with the resources they need to ensure their success.

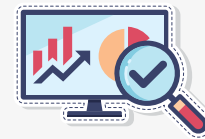
PILLAR 4: MORE RESOURCES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

4

2

Every school has high-quality and diverse teachers and leaders.

PILLAR 2: HIGH-QUALITY & DIVERSE TEACHERS AND LEADERS



Every school and district receives a rating of ____ or higher.

PILLAR 5: GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

5

3

Every student graduates high school college and career ready.

PILLAR 3: COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS



Visit the Maryland State Department of Education website to learn more about the Strategic Plan!

strategicplan.marylandpublicschools.org



STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT



Every student graduates high school college and career ready.

3.E

Increase the percentage of grade 8 students scoring proficient in science.

3.F

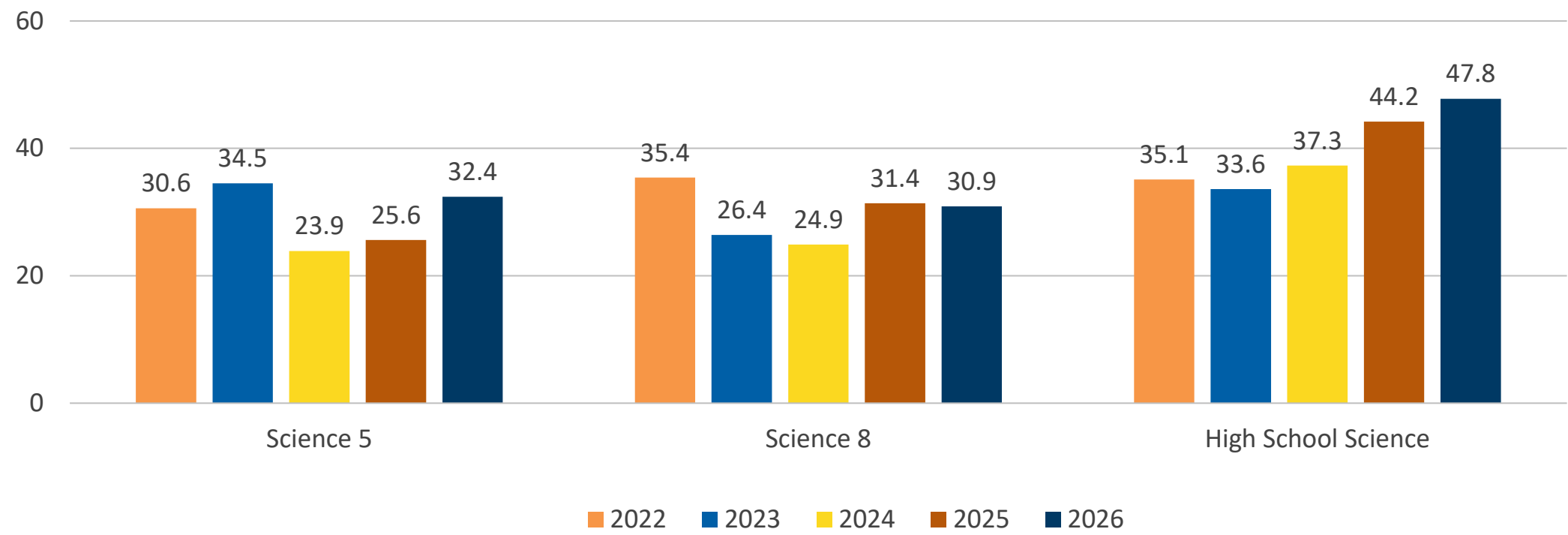
Increase proficiency on all state assessments for each student group.

3.G

Decrease gaps in proficiency on all state assessments between student groups.

Science 5, Science 8, and High School Science Assessment Proficiency SY 2021-2022 to SY 2025-2026

There is a positive upward trend in Grade 5 science performance, with 32.4% of students proficient in SY 2025–2026. Grade 8 science proficiency remained essentially flat at 30.9% in SY 2025–2026, slightly lower than last year but still higher than SY 2023–2024. High school science proficiency rose to 47.8% in SY 2025–2026, an increase of 12.7 percentage points from SY 2021–2022.



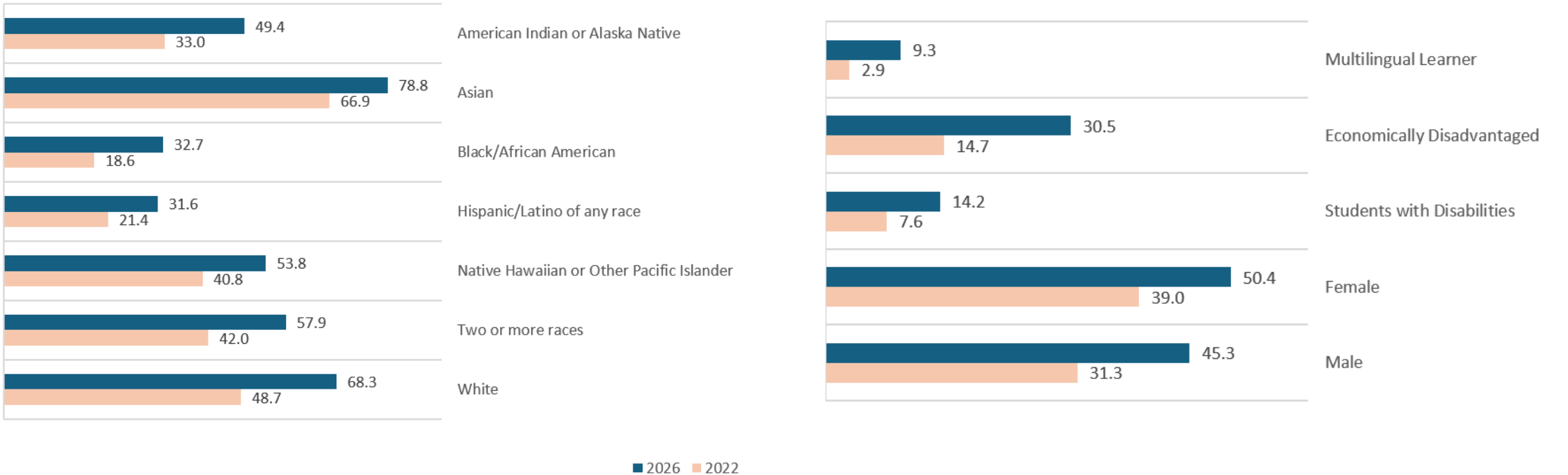
High school science results are based on the combined performance across the winter, spring, and summer administrations.

Science Results

LEA	2026 Science 5 Percent Proficient	2026 Science 8 Percent Proficient	2026 HS Life Science Percent Proficient
Allegany	31.4	26.9	50.4
Anne Arundel	37.8	36.0	54.6
Baltimore City	12.6	12.1	21.0
Baltimore County	31.0	26.4	42.8
Calvert	44.4	40.8	64.9
Caroline	25.3	25.3	46.6
Carroll	44.0	46.8	70.0
Cecil	20.9	27.6	44.6
Charles	23.4	19.1	37.4
Dorchester	15.9	24.7	18.9
Frederick	40.6	41.4	63.0
Garrett	31.9	30.4	56.3
Harford	39.8	37.5	50.6
Howard	47.9	44.0	69.3
Kent	38.4	14.0	25.4
Montgomery	40.1	40.0	57.6
Prince George's	19.6	16.2	28.9
Queen Anne's	35.3	43.9	52.6
Saint Mary's	38.1	40.1	61.7
Somerset	13.0	14.5	31.0
Talbot	30.6	23.5	42.0
Washington	38.5	36.1	52.5
Wicomico	21.7	22.1	38.2
Worcester	37.5	51.1	65.1

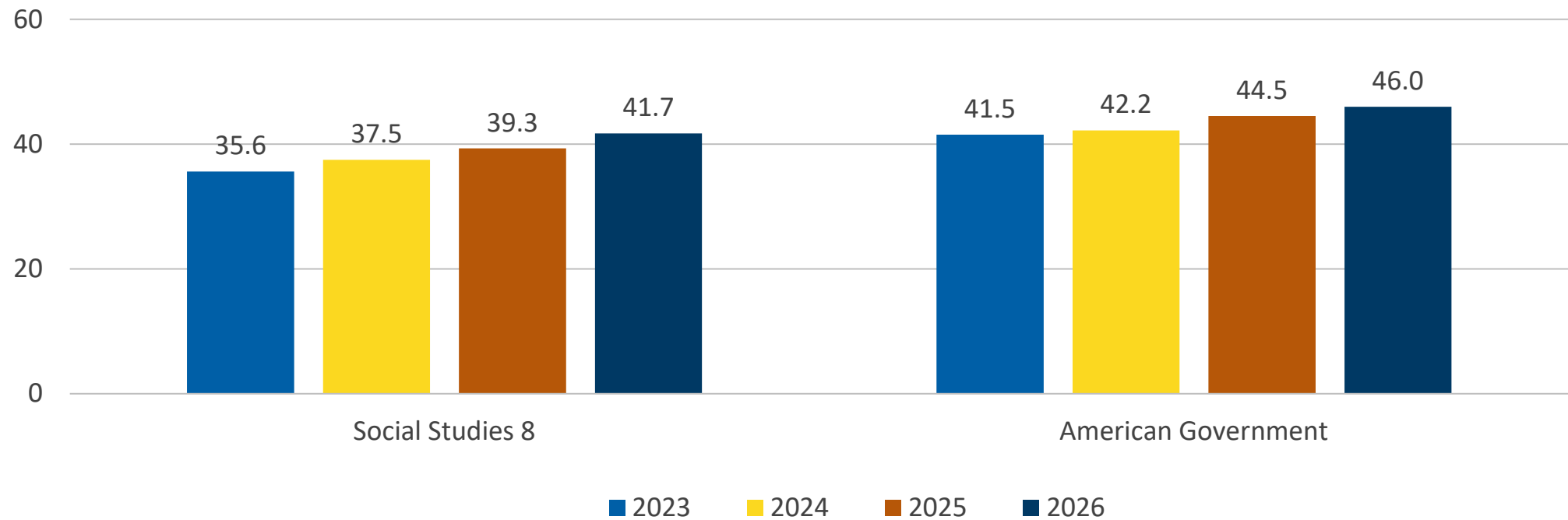
High School Life Science Proficiency by Student Group, SY 2025-2026 Compared to SY 2021-2022

The percent of students proficiency in High School Life Science increased for all student groups by at least six percentage points from the 2021-2022 school year to the 2025-2026 school year.



Social Studies 8 and American Government Assessment Proficiency SY 2022-2023 to SY 2025-2026

There is an upward trend in Social Studies 8 performance, with 41.7% of students proficient in SY 2025–2026, an increase of 6.1 percentage points from SY 2022–2023. American Government proficiency has also continued to rise since SY 2022–2023, reaching 46% in SY 2025–2026



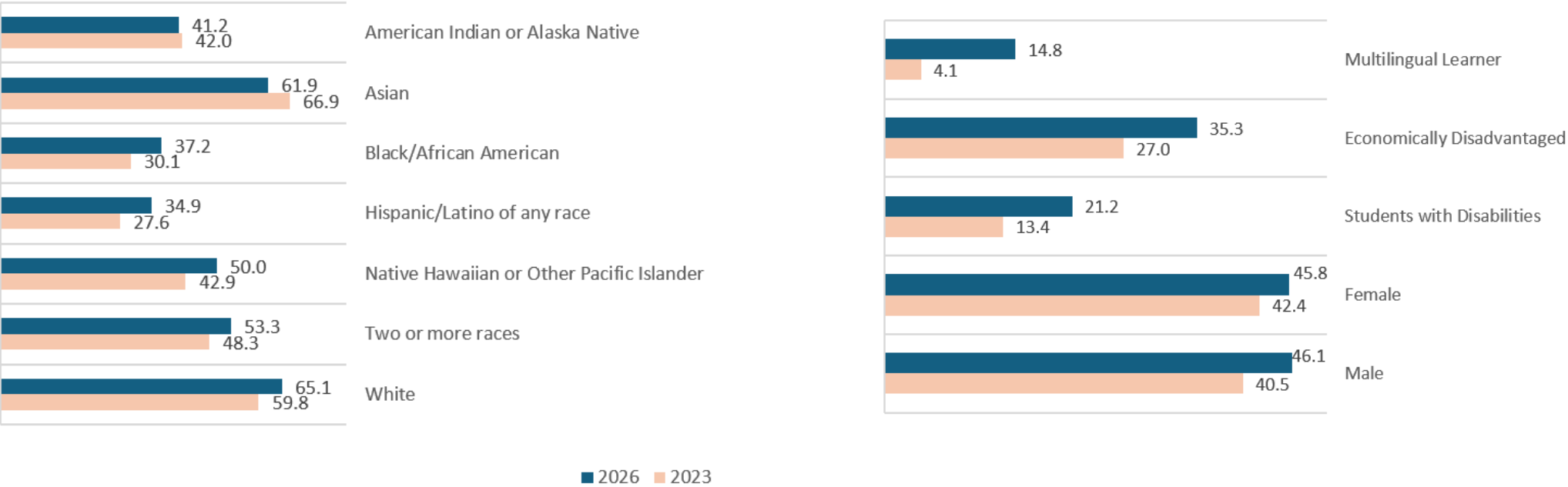
The first operational administration of the MCAP Social Studies 8 test took place in May 2023. American Government results are reported based on combined performance across the winter, spring, and summer administrations. Beginning in SY 2022–2023, results transitioned to four performance levels. Prior to SY 2022–2023, the assessment was reported as pass/fail.

Social Studies Results

LEA	2026 Social Studies 8 Percent Proficient	2026 American Government Percent Proficient
Allegany	34.8	52.0
Anne Arundel	47.6	49.6
Baltimore City	19.1	32.8
Baltimore County	34.7	35.4
Calvert	59.2	75.4
Caroline	37.6	45.6
Carroll	62.9	70.7
Cecil	39.9	46.3
Charles	29.6	41.3
Dorchester	37.0	25.6
Frederick	53.8	60.3
Garrett	33.3	42.0
Harford	44.0	56.2
Howard	64.2	61.4
Kent	21.2	54.9
Montgomery	53.4	47.2
Prince George's	22.8	33.5
Queen Anne's	51.3	56.6
Saint Mary's	45.9	51.3
Somerset	25.4	42.5
Talbot	35.9	43.5
Washington	44.1	47.7
Wicomico	33.7	41.4
Worcester	62.6	63.3

American Government Proficiency by Student Group, SY 2025-2026 Compared to SY 2022-2023

The percent of students scoring proficient in American Government increased from the 2022-2023 school year to the 2025-2026 school year for most student groups.



Instructional Programs Priorities

Support districts in delivering a **multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS)** that meets the needs of every student.

Ensure all students have access to **high-quality instructional materials (HQIM)** and evidence-based practices that are aligned with standards.

Provide ongoing **professional learning and coaching** to build educator capacity to implement MTSS and use HQIM effectively.

Use reliable **data** to guide instruction, **monitor** student **progress**, and **inform decisions** at the classroom, school, and system levels.

Advancing Science Through MSDE Priorities



The Maryland State Department of Education is working to improve student outcomes in science through:

- Facilitating statewide professional learning
- Conducting Science Supervisor Collaboratives and Check Ins
- Convening the Science Standards and Frameworks Validation Committee (SFVC)
- Providing continued communication and support through each stage of the high-quality instructional materials process

Advancing Social Studies Through MSDE Priorities



MSDE strengthened social studies instruction and educator capacity this past year through professional learning, implementation guidance, and supplemental resource reviews.

- **Writing Series:** Pre-Writing: Unpacking the Prompt and From Evidence to Reasoning
 - **Disciplinary Literacy:** Historical Thinking Skills, Geographic thinking Skills
 - **Discourse:** Paideia seminars for grades 6–8
 - **Science of Learning & Cognitive Load Theory:** Clear Thinking, Deep Learning
 - **Content-Based:** Democratic Principles
 - **Assessment:** SS Assessment 101 & Assessing Historical Thinking
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- **MTSS:** Completed Secondary Implementation Guide, a baseline for Tier 1 instruction; Elementary guide in development
 - **HQIM:** Round 1 approved four supplemental resources (Digital Inquiry Group, DBQ Project, U.S. Holocaust Museum, Street Law); Round 2 underway