

**BALTIMORE (January 12, 2012)** – The Maryland public school system has now made this a habit: ranking first in nation for the fourth consecutive year, according to an independent national report being released today.

*Education Week*, the nation's leading education newspaper, looked at data in six critical categories over the past four years, and once again found that Maryland's state education system ranked at the head of the class.

Maryland's grade of B+ placed at the top of the list in *Education Week's* annual "Quality Counts" tally. Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia followed Maryland, with B grades. As has been the case since the report's inception, most states received grades in the C ranges or below.

Interim State Superintendent of Schools Bernard Sadusky said that Maryland has never wavered from the goal of having the highest quality schools in every neighborhood.

"Schools are only as good as the school in your neighborhood, where your child or grandchild goes to class, or where you work as a teacher," Dr. Sadusky said. "*Education Week's* detailed analysis offers us a positive review of our efforts, and we are immensely proud of the ranking. We use it as fuel to redouble our efforts to strengthen every classroom."

Maryland has not been treading water since gaining the top slot in the nation in 2009. In 2010, Maryland became one of a few reform-oriented states to be awarded a portion of the federal government's \$4.3 billion Race to the Top funding, which has helped the State strengthen standards for students and educators, build a new data warehouse, and improve educator evaluation. Just last month, Maryland received an additional four-year \$50 million federal grant to help continue its reform efforts in critical early childhood education programs.

Maryland's 2012 ranking in Quality Counts is based on State education policies and student performance that reflect nearly two decades of work under recently retired State Superintendent Nancy S. Grasmick and Dr. Sadusky to solidify the preK-12 curriculum; state accountability and standards; educator effectiveness; and work on school readiness, high school reform, and preparation for college and the workplace.

Quality Counts uses more than 100 indicators to develop its report, making it what many believe is the most broad-based look at educational quality that is currently available. Individual grades reported by *Education Week* show Maryland's consistent strength throughout the report card.

- **Chance for Success – Maryland received a B+ grade.** This category includes such factors as parental education, family income, student performance, and graduation rates.
- **K-12 Achievement – Maryland received a B grade (up from a B- last year).** This category includes National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores and an analysis of achievement gaps. This grade ranked third in the nation.

- **Transitions and Alignment – Maryland tied for first in the nation with an A grade (2011 data).** This category includes early childhood education, college readiness policies, and workforce policies.
- **School Finance – Maryland received a B+ grade.** This category is based on school funding and equity in finance.
- **Standards, Assessments, and Accountability– Maryland received a B+ grade.** Maryland has a long history of high standards and detailed statewide accountability programs.
- **The Teaching Profession – Maryland ranked third in the nation with a B grade (up from fifth last year).** Maryland continues to improve the quality of its education workforce.

Today’s announcement by *Education Week* continues Maryland’s long history of success in the annual review. Maryland has consistently worked to strengthen policies and improve student achievement. The State placed third in 2008, the first year the publication issued a comprehensive ranking, before gaining the top spot for the first time in the 2009 “Quality Counts” report. Maryland’s lead on the rest of the nation grew with the 2010 report, and its success has been confirmed over the past two years.

“None of this success would be possible without the efforts of the staff of the Maryland State Department of Education, members of the Maryland State Board of Education, and local system superintendents, administrators, and teachers for continuing to shine a spotlight on improving student achievement,” Dr. Sadusky said. “Our schools benefit greatly from being a bipartisan issue in our State, and we’ve had strong and consistent support from the Governor, the Maryland General Assembly, educators, parents, business leaders, and the public at large.”

Most of the state-level data gathered by *Education Week* comes from a policy survey of the states conducted in the summer and fall of 2011. In addition, the publication draws on data from such organizations as the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Bureau of the Census, and the American Federation of Teachers.

For more information, see the *Education Week* website, [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org).