

◀Return to Full

## LexisNexis™ Academic

Copyright 2002 Associated Press  
All Rights Reserved

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

These materials may not be republished without the express written consent of The Associated Press

**December 1, 2002, Sunday, BC cycle**

**SECTION:** State and Regional

**LENGTH:** 562 words

**HEADLINE:** High schools await first state assessment exam scores

**DATELINE:** BALTIMORE

**BODY:**

Principals at Maryland high schools are concerned that results released this week from new statewide tests won't reflect well on students or their schools.

They fear that students have not taken the tests seriously enough, and that schools haven't yet adjusted what they teach to the material covered on the questions.

Principal Joseph Wilson of City College, considered one of Baltimore's best high schools, says principals across the state are worried.

"I am not looking forward to the report on the schools because I don't believe that any of the schools have had a reasonable chance to prepare for the examinations and the results will probably be poor. I would be shocked if any schools, including the high-performing schools with the best reputations, do very well on the tests," Wilson said.

The exams, which could become a graduation requirement, were given mostly to ninth-graders last winter and spring in English, Algebra I, government, biology and geometry.

The assessments are expected to change the structure and teaching in high school by placing more emphasis, for instance, on higher-level skills such as algebra. The exams replace the Maryland Functional Tests, which called on students to demonstrate they had mastered sixth-grade level skills.

Wilson said the results also won't give schools good information about what areas students knew and where they fell short. For instance, history teachers will get a raw score, but won't know how their students did on questions related to the Constitution and federalism, he said.

Ronald Peiffer, assistant state superintendent, said the tests cover so much material that it would be difficult to segregate the results and report specific areas of high or low achievement. But he said the past year's exams will be available to the public, and could be used by teachers to understand what the test emphasizes.

Nathaniel J. Gibson, principal of Arundel High School in Gambrills, said students "would have worked a lot harder, studied a lot harder," if they knew the tests were going to determine whether they would graduate.

<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/printdoc>

7/10/2004

---

"These first scores are going to be kind of questionable, in my mind," he said.

But Gibson said the results will be valuable for principals and teachers, because it will give them a first chance to see what they need to do to make sure students are able to earn passing scores in the future.

In a year or two, once the assessments are given regularly, he thinks students will begin to take them as seriously as college entrance exams, such as the SAT.

Because state officials have yet to set passing scores for the tests, the results will be reported in percentile rankings. The number of right answers on a test will be the basis for a percentile score that ranks each Maryland student in relation to one another. For instance, if a student's score is in the 75th percentile, that means he or she did better than 74 percent of the others who took the same test that year.

Schools will be given a median percentile ranking for each of the five tests, based on the median score of all the students taking the test.

Students are expected to get their individual scores on the tests before the winter break.

Passing scores are likely to be set in the next year or two.

On the Net:

State Department of Education: <http://www.msde.state.md.us>

**LOAD-DATE:** December 2, 2002