

- Focuses on 8 key areas to improve student outcomes
- Addresses efficiencies within current processes
- Targets customized learning experiences for struggling students including those with disabilities
- Ensures the hiring, training, and retention of highly skilled, highly trained, highly effective staff



1. Elementary Reading

Ensure all elementary students who struggle, including those with disabilities:

- achieve reading proficiency
- are taught by highly trained, highly skilled, highly effective teachers
- are provided additional instructional time to address instructional gaps and support reading proficiency



2. Secondary Reading

Ensure all secondary students who struggle, including those with disabilities:

- achieve grade level proficiency in reading
- are taught by highly trained, highly skilled, highly effective teachers
- are provided additional instructional time to address instructional gaps and support reading proficiency



3. Elementary Mathematics

Ensure all elementary students who struggle, including those with disabilities:

- achieve grade level proficiency in mathematics
- are taught by highly trained, highly skilled, highly effective teachers
- are provided additional instructional time to address instructional gaps and support mathematics proficiency



4. Secondary Mathematics

Examine middle and high school course options that provide students who are struggling in mathematics, including those with disabilities, additional instructional time.



5. Staffing

Ensure all students struggling in mathematics, ELA and reading, including those with disabilities, receive rigorous instruction and additional interventions by highly skilled, highly trained, and highly effective teachers.



6. Related Service Providers

Increase direct service time that occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, and psychologists work directly with students by decreasing inefficiencies.



7. IEP Process Efficiencies

Examine the IEP process and associated tasks and implement efficiencies to provide increased time for special education teachers to support student learning.



8. Central Office Leadership

Redefine roles and responsibilities within the Department of Special Education and Student Services (DSESS) Central Office leadership staff and school based administrators.



Collaboration and Sharing

DMC and HCPSS Department of Special Education and Student Services leadership staff:

- Met with system leaders and parent stakeholders to share key ideas
- Sought parent and administrator feedback and ideas
- Will continue to share and collaborate with stakeholders throughout the planning and implementation process



Next Steps:

- **Collaborate and provide guidance to group leaders**
- **Receive monthly updates from each group leader**
- **Share information and updates with key stakeholders**



Jonathan Davis, Principal, Bollman Bridge Elementary School

“Let’s push past what we know to be quality, to be right or worthy, to trample those boundaries in search of new connections, possibilities, insights and perspectives...”

2/13 Lois Hetland, Educational Leadership Journal

Shiney John, Principal, Thomas Viaduct Middle School

“Let’s push past what we know to be quality, to be right or worthy, to trample those boundaries in search of new connections, possibilities, insights and perspectives...”

2/13 Lois Hetland, Educational Leadership Journal

Scott Ruehl, Principal, Mount Hebron High School

“Let’s push past what we know to be quality, to be right or worthy, to trample those boundaries in search of new connections, possibilities, insights and perspectives...”

2/13 Lois Hetland, Educational Leadership Journal

Beth Benevides, Parent

“Let’s push past what we know to be quality, to be right or worthy, to trample those boundaries in search of new connections, possibilities, insights and perspectives...”

2/13 Lois Hetland, Educational Leadership Journal

Questions



**District Management Council and
Howard County Public School System Retreat
January 22, 2015
9:00 am – 1:00 pm
Board Rooms A & B**

Agenda

HCPSS Vision 2018 – Fulfilling the Promise of Preparation

System Vision	System Principles	System Goals
Every student is inspired to learn and empowered to excel.	We believe in... * Achieving excellence in all we do * Developing each student's unique gifts * Engaging students in relevant, experiential, and personalized learning * Cultivating creative problem solving , critical thinking, and innovation * Promoting integrity, civility, and global citizenship * Enriching learning by honoring diversity * Fostering a culture of collaboration , trust, and shared responsibility * Removing barriers to success	1. Every student achieves academic excellence in an inspiring, engaging, and supportive environment. 2. Every staff member is engaged, supported, and successful. 3. Families and community are engaged and supported as partners in education. 4. Schools are supported by world-class organizational practices.

Outcomes:

Each participant will:

- Learn about opportunities for improvement related to the DMC Report
- Discuss best practices in reading and mathematics
- Respond to key recommendations

I. Welcome – Dr. Foose

- Why are we here?

II. Key Findings of Special Education Opportunities Review – Nate Levenson

- Q & A

III. Responding to Opportunities Review – Patty Daley

- Highlights of key recommendations and best practice

BREAK (15 mins.)

IV. Planning for Action – Nate Levenson and Patty Daley

- Group activity #1: begin planning to implement recommendations for Elementary Reading Program and Secondary double time ELA and Math (90 mins.)

V. Planning for Action – Patty Daley

- Next steps to implement recommendations

VI. Summarizing Next Steps – Dr. Foose



Special Education Opportunities Review Howard County Public School System

Highlights for Sharing Spring 2015

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Introduction

The District Management Council (DMC) has conducted a Special Education Opportunities Review on behalf of the Howard County Public School System. The review focuses equally on the academic achievement of students and on the cost effective use of limited financial resources. The study is conducted under the framework of the continuous improvement model. It does not try to determine what is good or bad, but rather creates a road map to help move a district to the next level of performance. This process acknowledges that all systems can improve and that opportunities for improvement are built upon the district's current strengths, history, structure, and resources.

The review compares current practice in the district to best practices drawn from similar systems around the country. It also incorporates a number of well-tested analytical tools. In all cases, the evaluation recognizes that increasing student achievement, managing costs, continuing to comply with state and federal regulations, and respecting children, parents, and staff are all important. Addressing one, while ignoring the others, is not an option.

The review respects the reality that school districts are complex organizations tasked with a multitude of expectations, unfunded mandates, priorities, and responsibilities. Although a large variety of thoughtful ideas for improvement are possible, a short, targeted plan is more beneficial than a long laundry list of observations, options, and possible actions. To that end, a small number of high-potential, high-impact opportunities are recommended.

Not all opportunities listed in the document can be addressed at once. Additionally, any of these opportunities would typically take 1-3 years of careful planning, research, communication, coordination, and roll-out, with a commitment from the leadership to provide focus and stability during the implementation process.

The research for this project included extensive in-person interviews, an online parent survey, a deep look at hard data, classroom visits, benchmarking against best practices and like communities, and other research.

The Special Education Opportunities Review highlights many of the strengths in the district and pinpoints inter-related opportunities to increase student achievement and utilize scarce resources more effectively.

COMMENDATIONS

The district has much to be proud of and many strengths that create a strong foundation for continuous improvement.

1. The district is committed to providing an inclusive education for students with disabilities.

At all levels, special education teachers, general education teachers, and parents indicated that including students with disabilities in the general education classroom is a beneficial practice and is strongly embraced and widely implemented.

This commitment to meeting the needs of students with mild to moderate—as well as some students with severe disabilities—in the general education setting has had the positive effect of providing most students with disabilities opportunities to be educated alongside their peers.

- Inclusion classrooms are offered at all grade levels in schools throughout the district. All of the classrooms visited included students with disabilities.
- During interviews, teachers expressed that there is shared ownership of students, and there is a clear district message that “we teach all students.”
- In an online survey, 81% of parents of students with disabilities indicated that their students were welcomed into the school community.

2. The leadership in the district is “forward thinking” and the staff embrace a culture of continuous improvement.

Interviews indicated that Howard County Public Schools prides itself on being “forward thinking,” and the district has shown a commitment to continuous improvement. Staff indicated that the district is frequently asked to participate in state committees on curriculum and instruction initiatives. Additionally, staff expressed a genuine commitment to improving their practice with a focus on serving students more effectively.

3. The district has robust capacity and systems to collect and manage a variety of student and staff data.

The district recently completed an audit of its data systems and is currently in the process of updating its student information systems to be more comprehensive and accessible to the appropriate staff. By the end of the current school year, a learning management system for sharing student performance and local common formative assessment data for use by school improvement teams will be up and running. The district was able to easily and accurately provide large quantities of data for this review, easier than many like districts.

4. The district is proactive in seeking opportunities to improve its budget practices and to expand its capacity to analyze financial data.

Howard County Public Schools has taken a series of proactive steps to improve its budget practices. First, the district rolled out a zero-based budgeting process last year to help ensure

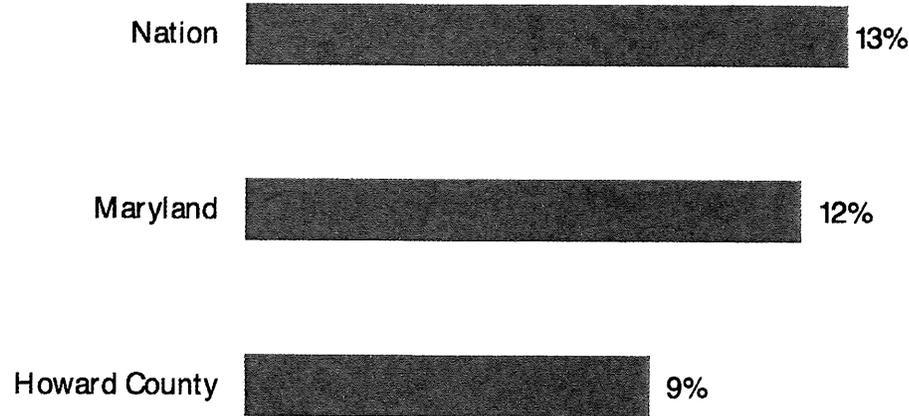
that its investments are aligned with demonstrated need across the district. Second, the budget department added analysts to conduct more rigorous financial analyses than in the past. Third, the district has taken steps to analyze the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of major budget elements to ensure that it is providing high-quality services to students.

These and similar efforts have helped control overall spending in special education, which has grown at a slightly slower rate than overall district spending in the last four years.

5. Students are identified for special education at a reasonable rate.

Across the country, wide variation in identification rates of students with disabilities is common. Identifying a student for special education can have significant implications for his or her learning. In many districts the breadth of general education interventions plays a significant impact of identification rates. The district's strong commitment to serving all students in the general education classroom and commitment of general education teachers impacts the district's identification rate. In the district, students are identified for special education services at a rate that is below both the state and the national averages.

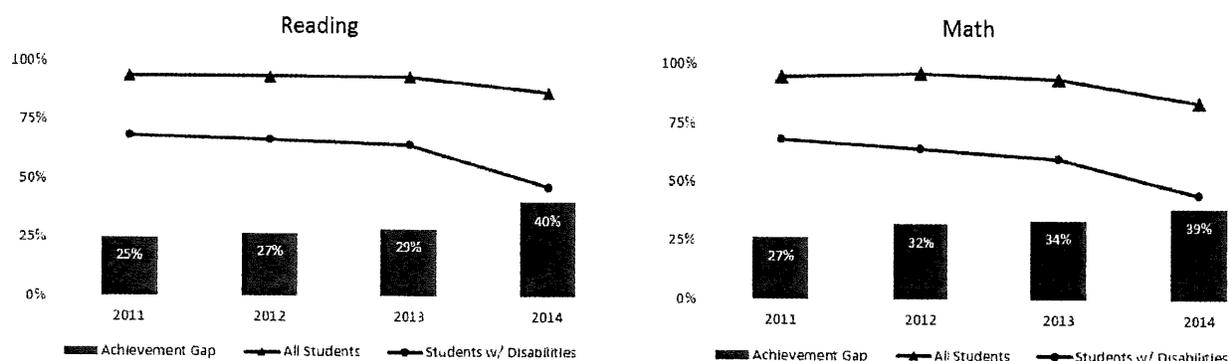
Identification Rate for Students with Disabilities



DISTRICT BACKGROUND

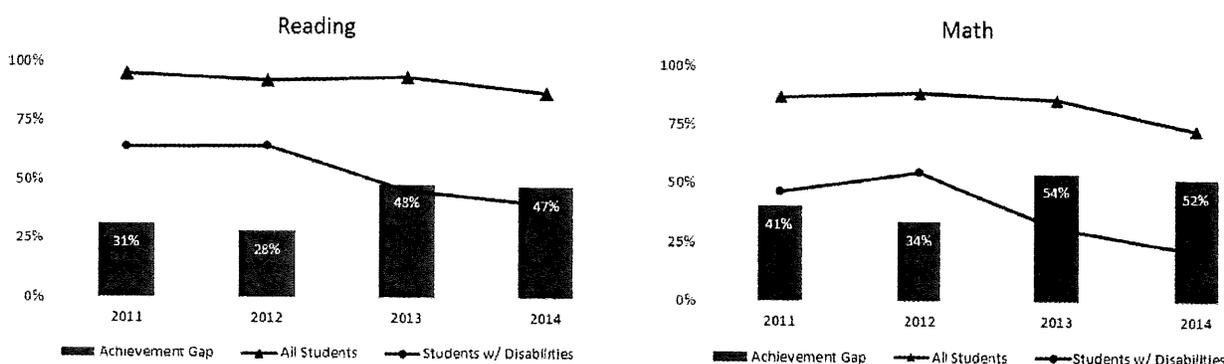
Howard County Public Schools is a very high-performing district overall, with achievement levels typically exceeding the state average. During the recent transition to the new Common Core State Standards, overall student achievement in Howard County Public Schools decreased slightly, a trend in the state since the state tests did not transition to the new standards until 2014-15. However, students with disabilities in Howard County Public Schools were disproportionately affected by this transition, leading to a significant increase in the achievement gap between all students and students with disabilities.

Howard County Achievement Gap, 3rd Grade MSA Results Outcomes for All Students vs. Students with Disabilities



- The achievement gaps between all students and students with disabilities in third grade reading and math have widened by 15 and 12 percentage points, respectively, in the last four years.

Howard County Achievement Gap, 8th Grade MSA Results Outcomes for All Students vs. Students with Disabilities



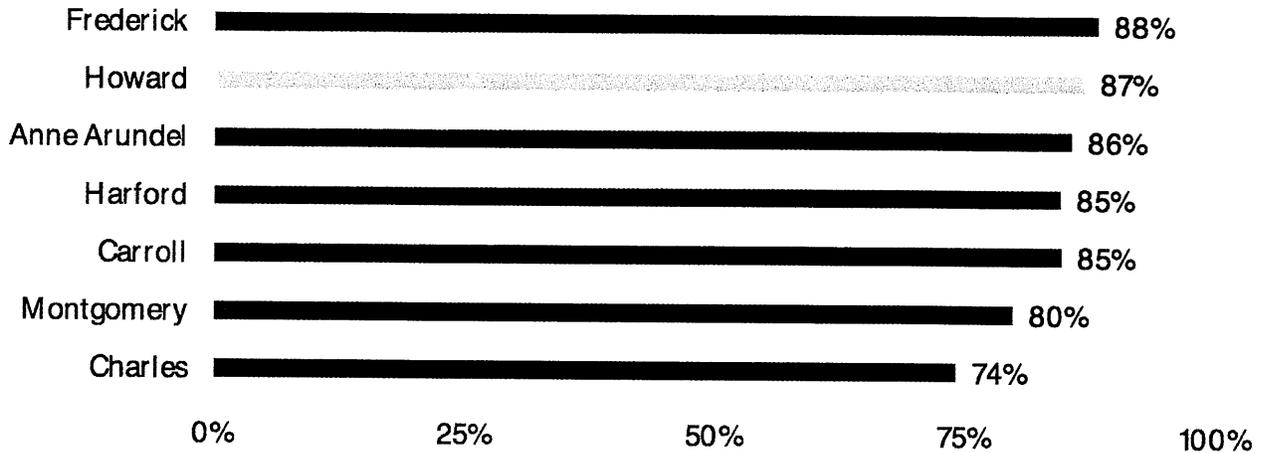
- The achievement gaps between all students and students with disabilities in eighth grade have followed a similar trend as the third grade scores, as reading and math have widened by 16 and 11 percentage points, respectively, in the last four years.

This report seeks to identify opportunities to reverse the growing achievement gaps for students with disabilities.

When compared to similar districts in the state, a similar story is true. Overall the district performs at very high levels, but students with disabilities lag behind both their non-disabled peers, but also students with disabilities in other like districts.

Students Proficient or Advanced on the 3rd Grade MSA Reading Assessment, All Students 2014

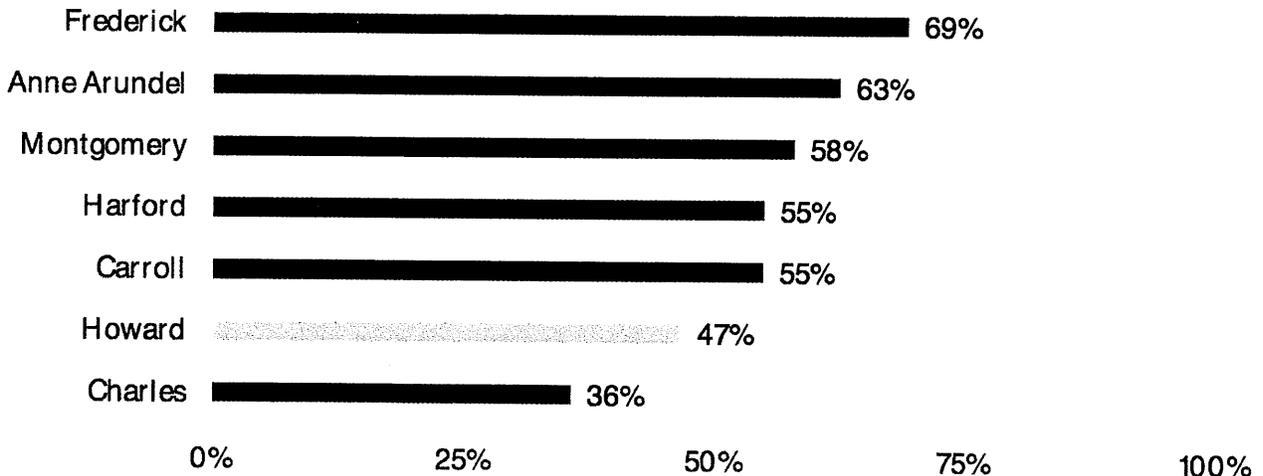
Similar District Data vs. Howard County Data



□ Howard County's 3rd graders performed better in reading than many similar districts last year.

Students Proficient or Advanced on the 3rd Grade MSA Reading Assessment, Students with Disabilities 2014

Similar District Data vs. Howard County Data

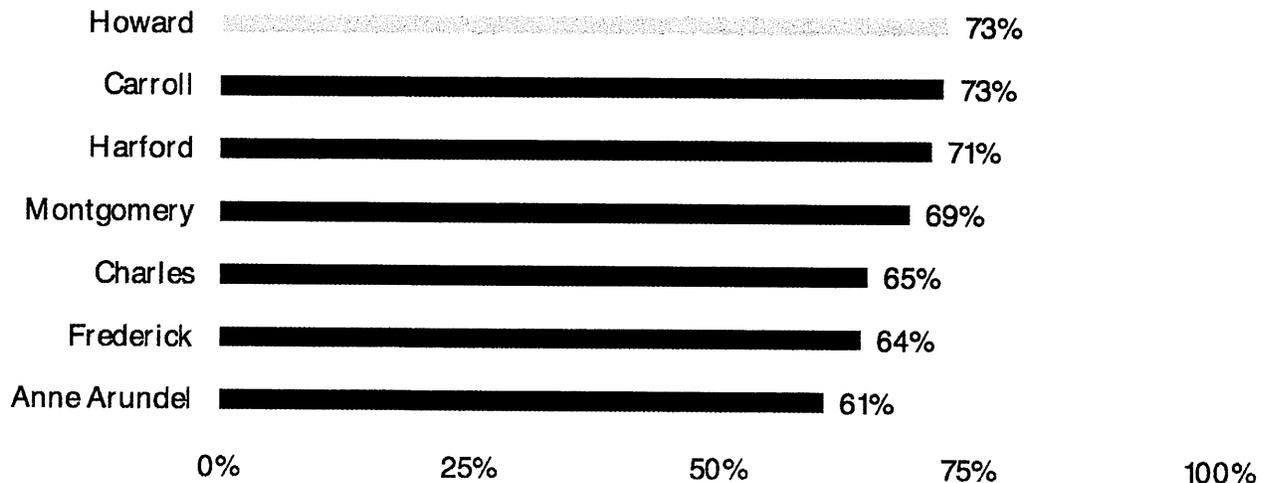


□ The district had a significantly lower proficiency rate for students with disabilities than similar districts last year. Additionally, the comparison districts have higher rates of students living in poverty.

At the eighth grade level, a similar situation exists.

Students Proficient or Advanced on the 8th Grade MSA Math Assessment, All Students 2014

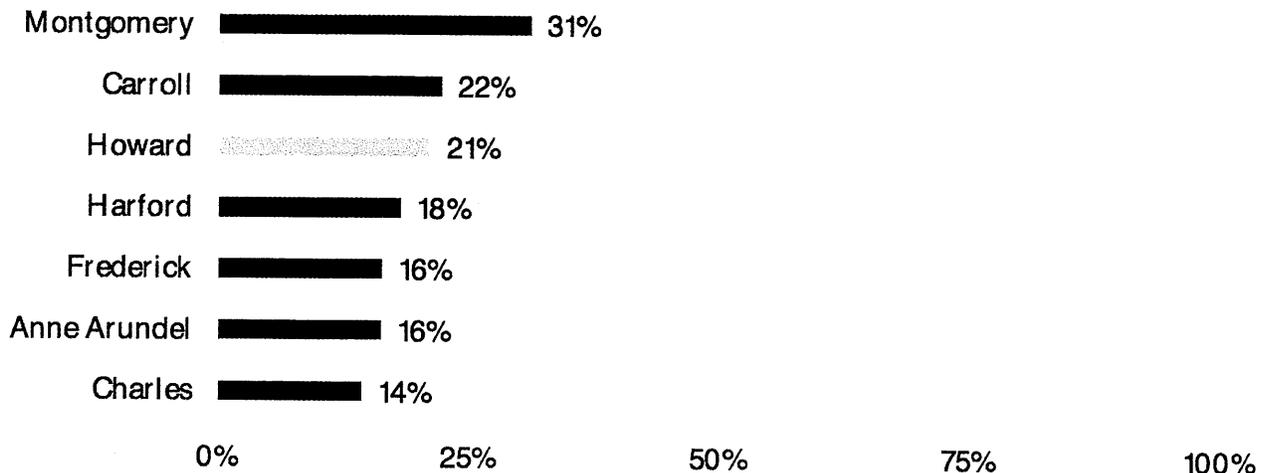
Similar District Data vs. Howard County Data



- Similarly, 8th graders in Howard County Public Schools outperformed students in most other similar districts in math last year.

Students Proficient or Advanced on the 8th Grade MSA Math Assessment, Students with Disabilities 2014

Similar District Data vs. Howard County Data



- However, students with disabilities in the district did not outperform those students in similar districts. Nearly all students with disabilities achieved at low levels.

During our interviews many staff and leaders were aware of the district's overall high level of achievement, but many believed students with disabilities also excelled academically, which is not the case.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Consider providing more time on task for all students who struggle in order for them to master grade level content.

Districts that have closed the achievement gap and significantly raised the achievement of students with special needs—and more broadly, the achievement of all struggling students—provide them with extra instructional time each day to master grade level content.

1a. Elementary Reading

Reading is the gateway to all other learning. Ensuring that all students read on grade level is critical to their future success in school and beyond graduation.

Students who struggle to read on grade level need more time for reading instruction in order to catch up and keep up with their peers. Research has shown that this is true for both students with mild to moderate disabilities and students without IEPs who struggle to read on grade level. Careful planning and scheduling could help ensure that any reading intervention support is over and above the 90 minute core literacy block.

Currently in the district, there is not a consistent practice of providing students who struggle with any additional time on task. The approach to elementary reading varies significantly from school to school, but on the whole extra time to learn is not the norm. For instance, interviews indicated that some elementary schools prioritize pulling students out of individual work time during the core ELA block for supplemental reading instruction and others prioritize push-in for small group or 1-to-1 instruction. Neither approach provides extra time for students. Few—if any schools—consistently use an additional period to provide reading intervention to struggling students.

On a related point, there are not consistent benchmarks or processes used across the district to identify students who need additional time to read on grade level. There is currently no common definition of grade level mastery and no common way to identify struggle readers. Interviews indicated that schools typically use at least one or some combination of a classroom-focused improvement plan (CFIP), program improvement plan (PIP), or instructional intervention team (IIT) process to identify students who are struggling. However, multiple focus groups indicated that there was not a clear benchmark or common assessment used for discussing student data during these processes. Rather, the data used to identify struggling students varies across schools, with many schools using primarily teacher-written assessments, and some using Fountas and Pinnell or MAP.

1b. Secondary Math and ELA

At the secondary level, the extra instructional time required increases significantly relative to the elementary level, up to one or even two hours per day to make up for prior lost years.