



## For Immediate Release

### Maryland Dentists Recommend Oral Health Curriculum

Baltimore, Maryland (October 1, 2008) Including oral health education in the school curriculum each year is another way dentists in the Maryland hope to help prevent tooth decay. The 2000 Surgeon General Report on Oral Health in America documents, "more than 51 million school hours are lost each year to dental related illness." Dr. Marc Nuger, President of the Maryland State Dental Association and Dr. Winifred J. Booker, Immediate Past President, Maryland Dental Society shared the highlights of the Oral Health in America report with the Maryland State Department of Education. Copies of the document were made available to reference the recommendation in the report that demonstrates the tie-in to instituting the proposed oral health curriculum.

The doctors cited government, compiled data in their efforts to explain the importance of requiring the oral health curriculum for all Maryland schools. Several daunting facts were conveyed, including, children who take test while they have a *toothache* are unlikely to score as well as children who are undistracted. Children who are in suffering from tooth decay have been labeled as behavior management problems when they are really *just* in pain. Poor oral health has been linked to an inability to concentrate in school and thus a weak academic performance.

The need to have oral health education included in the Volunteer Maryland Curriculum was further validated for Ms. Ann E. Chafin, Assistant Superintendent for Students, Family & School Support, Ms. Dixie Stack, Director of Curriculum, Mr. Brian Griffith, Specialist for Comprehensive Health Education and Mrs. Donna Mazyck, Health Services Specialist, all from the Maryland State Department of Education. Dr. Nathan Fletcher, President of the National Dental Association, recalled for the educators 7<sup>th</sup> District Congressman Elijah Cummings visit to Cecil Elementary School just the day before. The Congressman was at the school to congratulate the children for receiving the prestigious *No Child Left Behind* Blue Ribbon Award. The students were also rewarded with the Lessons In A Lunch Box: Healthy Teeth Essentials & Facts About Snacks™ presentation and a dental health lunch box. In his address, he talked about the importance of having good oral health. When Congressman Cummings asked the children to raise their hand if they ever had a toothache, more than two thirds were held up. The astounding number of children who sit in the classroom day after day suffering from tooth decay is clear by the number of little hands that were raised Fletcher said.

Under *No Child Left Behind*, states are working to close the achievement gap and make sure all students, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve academic proficiency. It has been documented however that, children from low-income families, who do not routinely see a dentist, report nearly 12 times as many missed days from school because of dental problems as compared to children who visit the dentist regularly. The oral health curriculum proposed by the dentist may help to improve academic proficiency. Undoubtedly instituting oral health instruction as part of the Health Education curriculum will help to relieve the radiating dental pain and chronic suffering of the children in our state and possibly in other states throughout the nation.

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The Volunteer Maryland Curriculum defines Health Education as providing students with the knowledge and skills they need to be healthy throughout their lifetime. The intent of a comprehensive health education program is to motivate students to maintain and improve their health, prevent disease, and avoid or reduce health related risk behaviors. Both the dentists and educators agreed that no one in Maryland wants another child to die from preventable tooth decay because they were unable to get the needed treatment or because they have not been well educated about proper oral health care.

Mrs. Sherry Holland Senter, Field Manager for Experience Corps and Education Recourse Consultant to The Maryland Children's Oral Health Institute, proposes a teacher in-service training on *Oral Health Neglect Prevention*. A former Baltimore City Public schools teacher, Mrs. Senter has witnessed many children sit in the classroom suffering with pain from decayed teeth and believe the training component will be invaluable for educators.

The opportunity to discuss the importance of making oral health education a top priority was made possible when officials from the Maryland State Department of Education attended a Lessons In A Lunch Box: Healthy Teeth Essential & Fact About Snack presentation last April. The following recommendations were made by the Maryland dentists:

**Oral Health Curriculum Recommendations**  
*Presented by*  
**The Maryland Children's Oral Health Institute**  
**Maryland Dental Society & Maryland State Dental Association**

- ✓ A minimum of 1 hour in *Oral Health Education* instruction each year from grade K through grade 12
- ✓ Teacher in-service training on *Oral Health Neglect Prevention*
  
- Grade K- Proper Brushing & Healthy Snack Choices
- Grade 1 - Proper Brushing & Healthy Snack Choices
- Grade 2 - Proper Brushing & Healthy Diet Choices
- Grade 3 - Proper Brushing, Flossing, Tooth Decay & Healthy Diet Choices
- Grade 4 - Proper Brushing, Flossing, Rinsing & Oral Health Safety Education
- Grade 5 - Proper Brushing, Flossing, Rinsing & Tobacco Education
- Grade 6 - Proper Brushing, Flossing, Rinsing & Oral Piercing Education
- Grade 7 - Proper Brushing, Flossing, Rinsing & Anorexia & Bulimia Education
- Grade 8 - Proper Brushing, Flossing, Rinsing, Cigarette Smoking & Oral Cancer
- Grade 9 - Proper Brushing, Flossing, Rinsing, Chewing Tobacco & Oral Cancer
- Grade 10 - Proper Brushing, Flossing, Rinsing & Oral Sex Risk
- Grade 11 - Proper Brushing, Flossing, Rinsing & Oral Diseases
- Grade 12 - Proper Brushing, Flossing, Rinsing, Tooth Decay & Healthy Diet Choices

*Review*

For more information visit our websites: Maryland Dental Society (MDS), [www.themds.org](http://www.themds.org); Maryland State Dental Association (MSDA), [www.msda.com](http://www.msda.com); National Dental Association (NDA) [www.ndaonline.org](http://www.ndaonline.org); The Maryland Children's Oral Health Institute, [www.mycohi.org](http://www.mycohi.org).

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