

*Education Week has ranked Maryland public schools No. 1 in the nation for the third year in a row.*

By [Sonia Dasgupta](#)

They're described as "one-stop shops" for students and families in need, but to those involved with the [Judy Centers](#) in Maryland, they are the means to helping 12,000 students nationwide have better lives.

[U.S. Rep Steny H. Hoyer](#) (D- Md.), state Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick and Prince George's County Public Schools Superintendent William R. Hite, Jr. spoke Friday at the Judy P. Hoyer Family Learning Center in Adelphi about the success of the Judy Centers not only across the county and state, but their hope for a national impact as well. They also announced that [Education Week](#) named the state's public schools No. 1 for the third year in a row.

The Judy Centers, named after Hoyer's late wife, are a place where parents can find the services and help they need through the school system and community partnerships to help their young children, from birth to age 5, be ready for school.

Yet, being ready for school doesn't just mean academics. Instead, being ready means a student is socially adjusted, emotionally well and is able to communicate with other children and adults. This is especially helpful to those in the English Language Learners, or ELL, programs.

There are 25 Judy Centers in Maryland. The analysis released Friday demonstrates how students involved in the centers are doing better than those uninvolved.

Both Grasmick and Hite noted that the state's schools success is partly due to programs like this.

Hoyer said his late wife, who passed away in 1997, would have enjoyed seeing the centers become reality and would have been proud of their success.

“We should not ask taxpayers to invest money if they don’t see the results,” he said about the report.

The centers provide a means for people who need the most help to get that help, he said. Although Hoyer knows of similar centers across the nation, he'd said he'd like to see it become a national movement.

School Board Member Peggy Higgins (Dist. 2) said the success of the program really impacts the community.

“As a professional I certainly know the value,” said Higgins, the director of College Park Youth and Family Services. “I know the families [they help] and know how creative and individualized their interactions are.”