



MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

850 Hungerford Drive ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850

March 20, 2014

Dr. Lillian M. Lowery
State Superintendent of Schools
Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Dear Dr. Lowery:

I am writing to share with you the urgent concern of the Montgomery County Board of Education regarding the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) plan to transition from the Maryland High School Assessments (HSA) to the Partnership for Assessment of College and Careers (PARCC) Assessments for purposes of fulfilling high school graduation requirements.

As we know, Maryland has been actively pursuing educational reform since 2010. The state's three major reform efforts, implementing the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and associated Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards (MCCRS), the PARCC Assessments, and new teacher and principal evaluations, have moved forward at an accelerated pace.

In recent weeks, there have been constructive efforts to delay the use of PARCC assessments for making personnel decisions. Just last week, legislation passed both the Maryland Senate and the House that would delay, until 2016-2017, the use of PARCC student growth data for purposes of personnel decisions. Similarly, MSDE, under your leadership, has written in its Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility waiver request its intent to delay use of PARCC data, for purposes of personnel decisions, until 2016-2017. Specifically, it wrote:

"From inception, it was recognized that the transition to the PARCC Assessments would create a two year hiatus on student growth measures attributed to state testing and this disruption in data would require an interim solution...While on-going instructional awareness and practice will build ever-increasing alignments between the Career and College Readiness Standards and the PARCC Assessments, unknowns remain in regard to the resulting construct and conduct of these assessments."

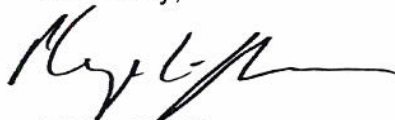
A significant unknown, yet to be satisfactorily addressed by all stakeholders, is the use of the PARCC Assessments for purposes of graduation. The Maryland State Board of

Education recently adopted, at its February 25, 2014 meeting, a framework for transitioning from the Maryland High School Assessments (HSAs) to the PARCC Assessments for purposes of fulfilling high school graduation requirements. Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, the state is now planning to use PARCC Assessments for the Algebra 1 and English 10 exit exams. The Montgomery County Board of Education is seriously concerned about the consequences for students who will be caught in the cross hairs of that transition. Beyond the conduct of the test itself, the impact of collateral issues related to the implementation of CCSS and MCCRS, including curricular resources, professional development, and teacher training, as well as lack of real-time experience delivering instruction associated with CCSS and MCCRS, must not be ignored at the risk of real-world harm for students.

It is imperative, in this time of uncertainty and transition, that we take the necessary time to make sure we do what is in the best interest of students. Specifically, we urge that, similar to teacher evaluations, there be a two-year hiatus on the use student performance on all end-of-course exams for the purpose of fulfilling graduation requirements.

The Montgomery County Board of Education looks forward to engaging all partners and stakeholders in a full and open conversation about the challenges of transitioning from the HSAs to PARCC, as well as what it truly means for our children to graduate from High School, College and Career Ready.

Sincerely,



Philip Kauffman
President

PK:kmy

Copy to:

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