

## **Maryland State Board of Education Briefing and Action on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) and High School Assessment (HSA) Program's Transition to PARCC Assessments**

### **State Assessments Now and in the Future**

The State Board received a briefing on the state assessment program, including the Maryland School Assessments (MSAs) and High School Assessments (HSAs). Dr. Jack Smith, MSDE's Chief Academic Officer, opened the presentation by noting that this final year for the MSA and HSA administration marks the end of the era of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) testing. He emphasized that although the law had its flaws, its greatest value was requiring disaggregated data on student performance and the resulting attention to individual student learning and growth.

Dr. Smith was joined by Assistant State Superintendent Dr. Henry Johnson, and Cecil County's Superintendent D'Ette Devine and Jeffrey Lawson, who presented on Cecil County's building of an MSA-based student learning objectives and teacher evaluation system.

Dr. Johnson briefed the State Board on the 2014 assessment results, highlighting that since 2003 there continues to be significant improvement in proficiency over the long term. He reported that over 80% of elementary students are demonstrating a proficient or advanced score in reading and over 75% are demonstrating proficient or better in mathematics. In addition, nearly 80% of middle school students met the performance standard in reading and in mathematics, and 63% of middle school students met the performance standard. Dr. Johnson reported the results for the science MSA, noting that scores dropped more than anticipated and that more work remains to be done to implement the science standards. Board members Gates and Staton voiced their concerns regarding the decline in science scores.

Dr. Devine, Cecil County Superintendent, introduced Dr. Lawson and presented what they are doing in Cecil County in regard to their student learning objectives (SLOs) informed by the MSA. They explained their examination of root causes as to why a student is not performing. Dr. Lawson described his creation of a workgroup to analyze how student suspensions, grades and attendance impact MSA scores. The analysis informed them that students who are absent more than 10 days, and have been suspended only one time, and have at least one D or F, will score lower than their peers on the MSA. Based on the data, it has been decided that students who are in jeopardy of falling into the aforementioned categories must be identified early and receive supports and interventions to address these root causes. Dr. Lawson stressed that supporting these students is a collaborative responsibility of all school staff, and that teachers want to see their students' academic and life circumstances improve.

Board member Montaro-Diaz shared that she looks forward to seeing how this plan works out in Cecil County, and requested additional information on specific interventions that are found to work. Dr. Devine responded that the readiness data for kindergarten closely matches the graduation rate, which shows that early childhood programs are critical. She emphasized that in Cecil County they are building a sense of urgency in the primary grades.

Dr. Johnson presented on the transition of the Maryland High School Assessment Program from the assessments developed under NCLB to the assessments developed through the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). He explained that during the 2014-2015 school-year, high school students in Maryland will take the PARCC assessments for the first time. Dr. Johnson further explained that the full range of options during the upcoming year could include PARCC assessments as end of course tests for students in English 9, English 10, English 11 as well as Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II. However, only the Algebra I and English 10 tests will be administered for purposes of graduation requirement program of four assessments, which also includes the Maryland-developed HSAs in Government and Biology. He emphasized that because these four assessments comprise the graduation requirement, it is critically important that consideration be given to the administration of the PARCC assessments during the first 2 years. He provided a chart on the Maryland High School Assessment Program (PARCC and HSA) for year one 2014-2015, which showed the timeline and calendar and the five opportunities for students to take the tests next year. He noted that limiting the number of assessments to Algebra I and II and English 10 was to mitigate the high level of anxiety for students as well as teachers arising from the new assessments and to focus on the assessments directly impacting high school graduation. He also noted the distinction in the calendar for students in block scheduling situations.

Dr. Johnson then reviewed the following recommendations are offered for the State Board's consideration:

1. During the 2014-2015 school year, students will be administered the end of course tests in PARCC English 10, PARCC Algebra I and PARCC Algebra II ONLY. The PARCC English 10 and PARCC Algebra I tests are graduation requirement assessments and the PARCC Algebra II test is an assessment that will be used to determine college and career readiness as part of the Maryland College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013.
2. The Maryland State Board of Education will determine the passing scores for students after administration during the 2014-2015 school year. Passing scores in Maryland *may* be different from the recommended passing scores designated by the PARCC consortium.
3. During the 2015-2016 school year, the PARCC assessments in English 9, English 11 and Geometry *may* be added to the list of end of course assessments for high school students.

4. HSAs/MOD HSAs in English 10 and Algebra I/Data Analysis will be administered for the final time during the Summer, 2015.

Dr. Lowery reiterated that this approach was designed to mitigate this transition for students, but also for teachers and principals to prepare for the third year. She also noted that this approach helps address the technology challenges and capabilities and she specifically praised the chrome device. Board member Eberhart asked if the PARCC tests were being implemented as graduation requirements too quickly. She asked whether administering the English 9 PARCC assessment wouldn't benefit the students who will take the English 10 assessment the next year. Dr. Lowery responded that what school districts want to do is deal with the graduation requirements as they stand, to minimize anxiety, and allow for the gear-up for the 2015-2016 school year. She added that she has heard from high school principals in particular that the assessments take so much time and they need a year to make a smooth transition.

Dr. Lowery further explained that she feels Maryland has been so progressive in terms of accountability and it would be a step backward and a mistake to have nothing in place. Board member Staton shared that this approach shows the amount of consideration in regard to the best approach into new territory given the multiple means of assessments. She moved to approve the set of recommendations with a second by board member DeGraffenreidt. The motion was approved unanimously.

[Handouts](#)