MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
850 Hungerford Drive ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850

October 7, 2014

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

Dr. Charlene Dukes, President
Maryland State Board of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Dear Dr. Lowery and Dr. Dukes:

I am writing to share the continuing 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 as end-of-course exams for purposes of fulfilling high school graduation requirements.

Our previously expressed concern about this issue (Enclosure 1) was incorporated into the charge to the legislatively-mandated Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards (MCCRS) and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Implementation Review Workgroup. The Workgroup was provided the August 6, 2014, update to the State Board of Education (Enclosure 2) in which MSDE acknowledged that the transition to PARCC may create test anxiety for some students, that students will need more information and supports during the transition period, and that the Bridge program will continue as an option for students to meet assessment graduation requirements. Additionally, the Workgroup was informed that the State Board will determine passing scores after the first administration of PARCC and that passing scores in Maryland may be different from the recommended passing scores designated by the PARCC consortium.

At the recent Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) annual conference, we heard from Dr. Lowery that Maryland, in fact, intends to implement two cut scores for the Algebra I and English 10 PARCC assessments. A lower cut score will be used for purposes of fulfilling graduation requirements and a higher cut score will indicate college and career readiness. For the first time, we also heard Dr. Lowery suggest that school systems use PARCC scores in lieu of locally-developed final exams as a way to limit student testing.

At the recent MABE conference, MABE members adopted a resolution in support of delaying, by two years, use of the PARCC assessments for purposes of fulfilling graduation requirements, with the understanding that the delay would provide sufficient time for passing cut scores to be developed and appropriate interventions and alternatives identified for those not passing the exam. The resolution also noted that the delay of two years would be consistent with 2014 legislation that prohibits the use of PARCC assessment results to evaluate teacher and principals for at least two years.

We continue to believe this is a critical moment in Maryland's education reform effort. According to a Center for Education Policy report, State High School Exit Exams: A Policy in Transition, the states that implemented end-of-course exit exams had hoped doing so would improve overall accountability and increase academic rigor. With the advent of the Common Core State Standards, exit exams will be more rigorous and "could have strong implications for the millions of students who will be entering high school…during the next few years. These students—some of

whom are already struggling to meet the current, less rigorous exit exam requirements—will soon be expected to meet college- and career-readiness standards...There is a good chance that many students will fail to do so…Policymakers must ask themselves if these expectations, and the assessments used to measure progress toward them, should come with stakes so high they prevent some students from graduating from high school at all."

Several states have already grappled with the implications of attaching high stakes to these exams. Massachusetts, for example, has decided to take a wait-and-see approach and has deferred use of PARCC as a graduation requirement for several years, for fear that students will be punished because school systems are "not ready to deliver a college-ready education right off the bat". Other states are also in the midst of such discussions.

It is time for an open, honest, and inclusive conversation among our state leaders and key education stakeholders about how Maryland should use the results of what all agree will be a significantly more rigorous assessment. If a college-ready cut score differs from the graduation cut score, what is the most meaningful indicator for institutions of higher education or employers? What messages do tiered cut scores send to students? Maryland now requires all students to be assessed for college and career readiness, and those found not ready, must be enrolled in transitional courses. Given this new paradigm, is there benefit added to continuing the requirement to pass end-of-course exit exams to receive a diploma? Moreover, if, during this period of transition from HSA to PARCC, it is appropriate to prohibit use of PARCC for purposes of personnel evaluations, why is it not equally appropriate to delay the use as a high stakes test for students?

We offer these questions as a way to help stimulate our collective thinking on this challenging policy issue. We believe it is time for you to take action and that a two year delay in using PARCC as a graduation requirement is in the best interests of students. Time is of the essence; this is a real issue that will impact the real lives of students. We look forward to finding opportunities in the near future to further engage with you and to work together to serve the best interests of our students, schools and community.

Sincerely,

Philip Kauffman
President

PK:kmy

Enclosures

Copy to:
Montgomery County Delegation
Members of the Board of Education
Dr. Starr
Mr. Bowers
Dr. Statham
Dr. Navarro
Mr. Ikheloa
Dr. Zuckerman
MABE
PSSAM

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
850 Hungerford Drive ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850

March 20, 2014

The Honorable Anne Kaiser, Chair
Montgomery County House Delegation
151 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Delegate Kaiser:

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 you 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 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:
Members of the Board of Education
Dr. Starr
Mr. Bowers
Dr. Schiavino-Narvaez
Dr. Statham
Mr. Ikheloa
Dr. Zuckerman

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PREPARING WORLD CLASS STUDENTS

Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD • MarylandPublicSchools.org

Maryland High School Assessment Program (PARCC and HSA)- Update August 6, 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

During the 2014-2015, high school students in Maryland will take the PARCC assessments for the first time. During the upcoming school year, PARCC assessments may be administered as end of course tests for students in English 9, English 10, English 11 as well as Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II. The administration of High School Assessments in Government and Biology will continue. Because all four assessments are a part of graduation requirements, it is important that consideration be given to the effects of the administration of the PARCC assessments on student performance during the first 2 years. Below you will find a calendar of PARCC and HSA test administrations for the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school year. Attached you will also find a visual depiction of this calendar for a clearer understanding of the direction of MSDE related to the Maryland High School Assessment Program (PARCC and HSA). A list of recommendations related to the administration of the PARCC and HSAs follows the testing calendar. Realizing that the transition to PARCC may create test anxiety for some students, MSDE intends to provide clarifying information to LEAs to assist them in providing support to students during the transition period. The Academic Bridge Validation program will continue as a way for students to meet assessment graduation requirements on the PARCC and HSAs.

HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENT CALENDAR

YEAR ONE (2014-2015)

- **October, 2014**- Algebra I/Data Analysis, English 10, Government and Biology HSAs and MOD HSAs (all 4 tests) administered to students who failed to meet passing score requirements during the spring, 2013 administration
- **November, 2014-January, 2015**- PARCC Operational assessments (performance-based (PBA) and end of year (EOY) along with HSAs in Government and Biology administered to students in block schedule schools only.
- **January, 2015**- HSAs and MOD HSAs administered to students who failed to meet passing score requirements during Spring, 2013 and October, 2014 administrations
- **March-April, 2015**- PARCC PBA (performance-based) assessments administered (online and paper/pencil)
- **April, 2015**- Senior (Class of 2015) administration of HSA/MOD HSAs
- **May-June, 2015**- PARCC EOY (end of year) assessments and HSA Government and Biology administered (online and paper/pencil)
- **May, 2015**- HSAs/MOD HSAs administered to students who failed to meet passing score requirements during spring, 2013, Fall, 2014 administrations
- **Summer, 2015**- Final administration of HSAs in English 10 and Algebra I/Data Analysis and MOD HSAs in English 10, Algebra I/Data Analysis, Government and Biology
- **July-August, 2015**- Scale score and standard setting completed by PARCC consortium for PARCC assessments

- **September, 2015**- College and Career Determination set for students in Algebra II
- **September, 2015**- Score reports sent to students and parents.

YEAR TWO (2015-2016)

- **November, 2015-January, 2016**- PARCC PBA (performance-based) and EOY (end of year) tests along with HSA Government and Biology administered to students in block schedule schools (online and paper/pencil)
- **November, 2015-January, 2016**- PARCC "re-takes" administered to students who failed to meet passing requirements during the Fall, 2014 and Spring, 2014 administration of PARCC assessments
- **March-April, 2016**- PARCC PBA (performance-based) assessments administered (online and paper/pencil)
- **May-June, 2016**- PARCC EOY(end of year) assessments along with HSAs in Government and Biology administered (online and paper/pencil)
- **July-August, 2016**- PARCC PBA (performance –based) and EOY(end of year)assessments along with HSAs in Government and Biology administered to students who failed to meet passing requirements during Fall, 2015 and Spring, 2016 administrations
- **August, 2016**- College and Career Determination set for students in PARCC English 11
- **August, 2016**- Score Reports sent to students and parents
- **September, 2016**- The Academic Bridge Validation program window opens for students in PARCC Algebra and PARCC English 10 along with HSAs in Government and Biology

RECOMMENDATIONS

Because of the significance of high school assessments as part of the graduation requirements, the following recommendations are offered for consideration by the State Superintendent and the State Board:

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. **(Approved by the Maryland State Board of Education on July 22, 2014)**

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.

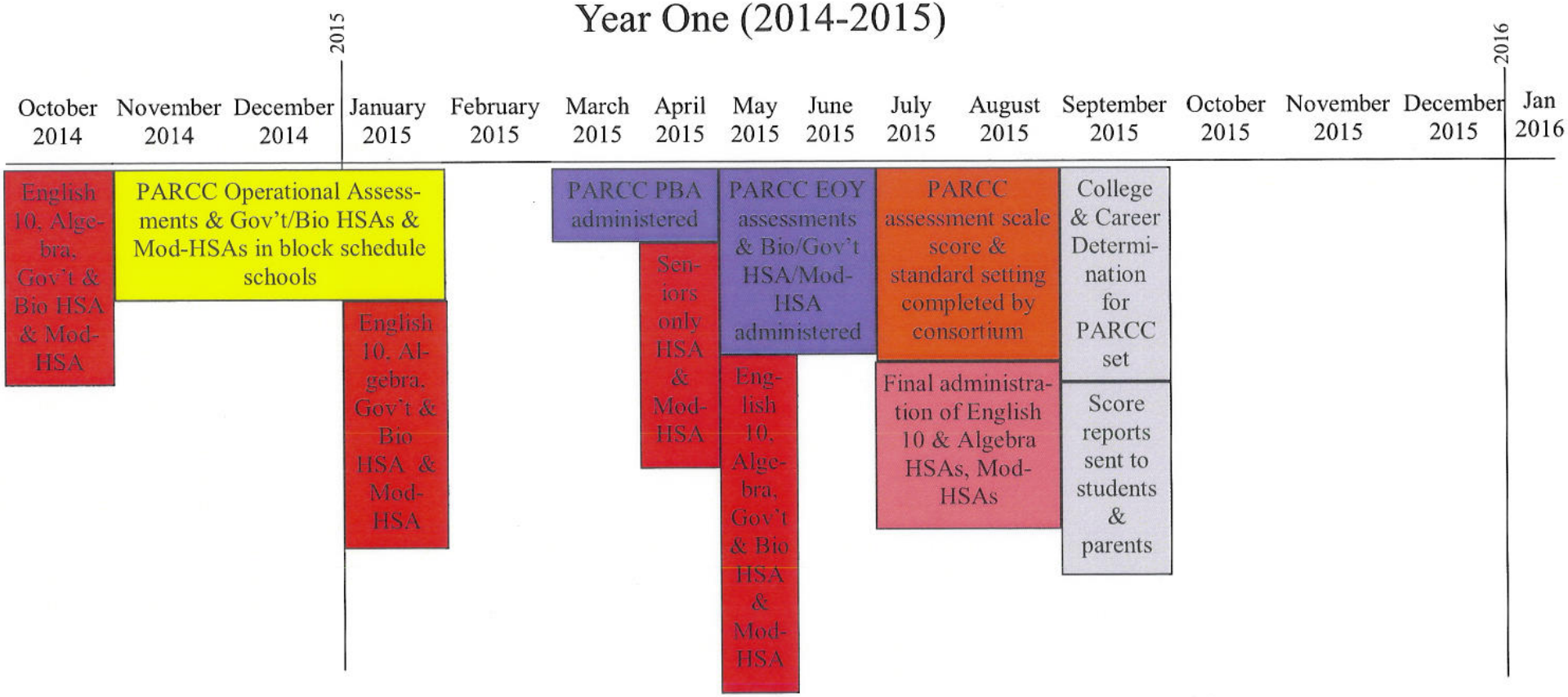
3. During the 2015-2016 school year, the PARCC assessments in English 9, English 11 and Geometry *may* be added to the list of end of course assessments for high school students.

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

Maryland High School Assessment Program

(PARCC and HSA)

Year One (2014-2015)



MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

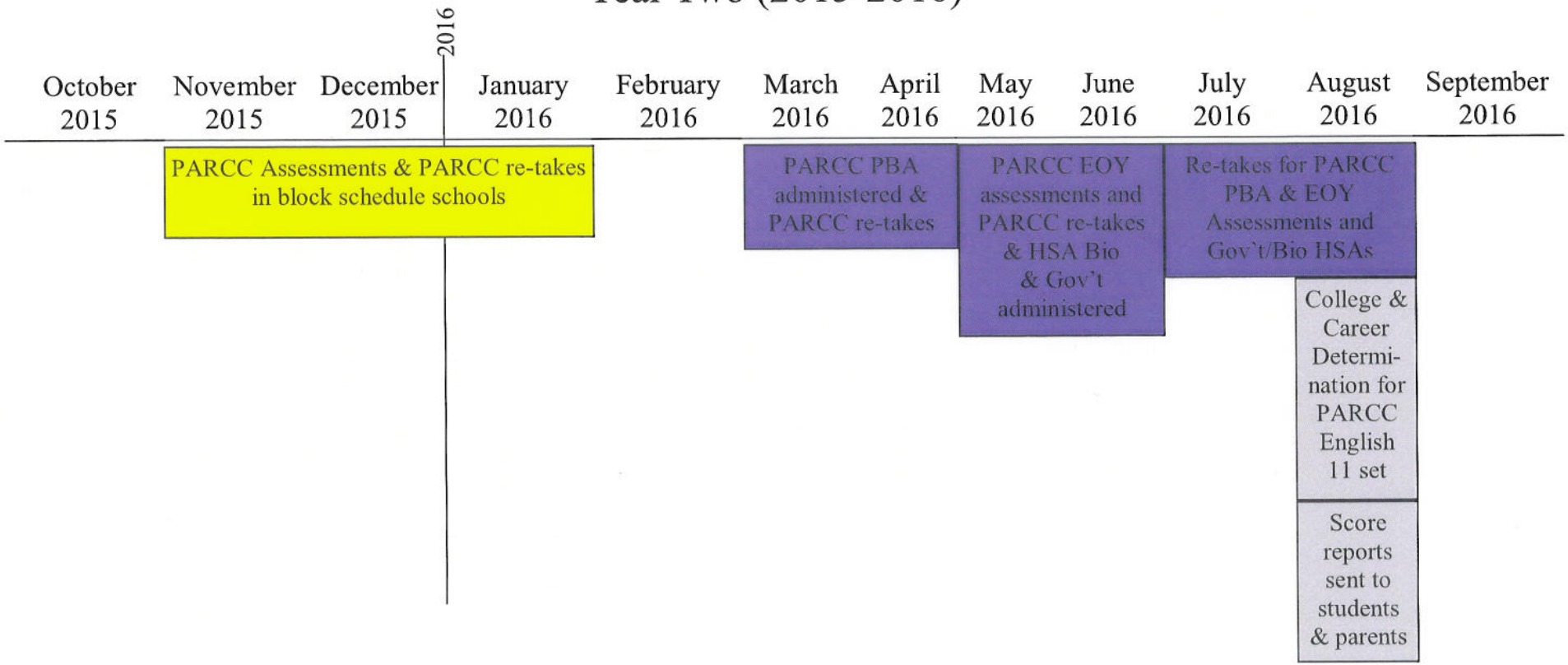
PREPARING WORLD CLASS STUDENTS

Red-HSA Re-takes
Yellow- PARCC test window-Block Schedule schools
Purple- PARCC test window- Other schools
Pink- Final HSA test: English 10 & Algebra
White- College and Career Determination/Score Reports
Orange– PARCC score & standard setting

Maryland High School Assessment Program

(PARCC and HSA)

Year Two (2015-2016)



MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Maryland High School Assessment Program (PARCC and HSA)

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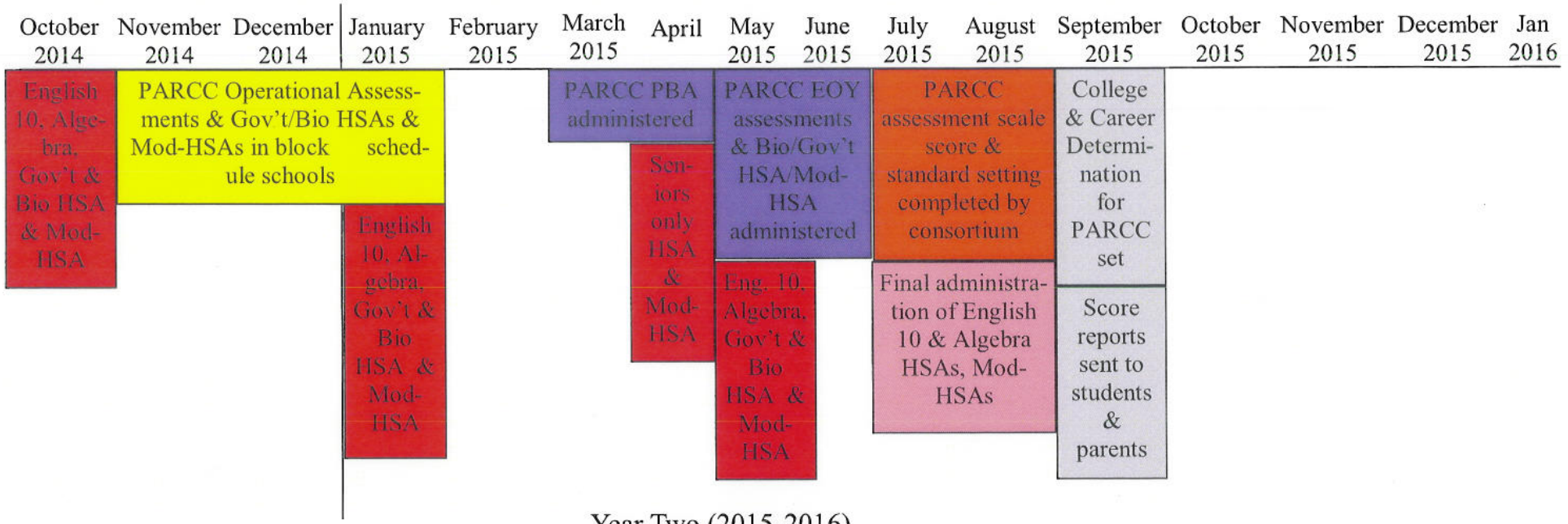
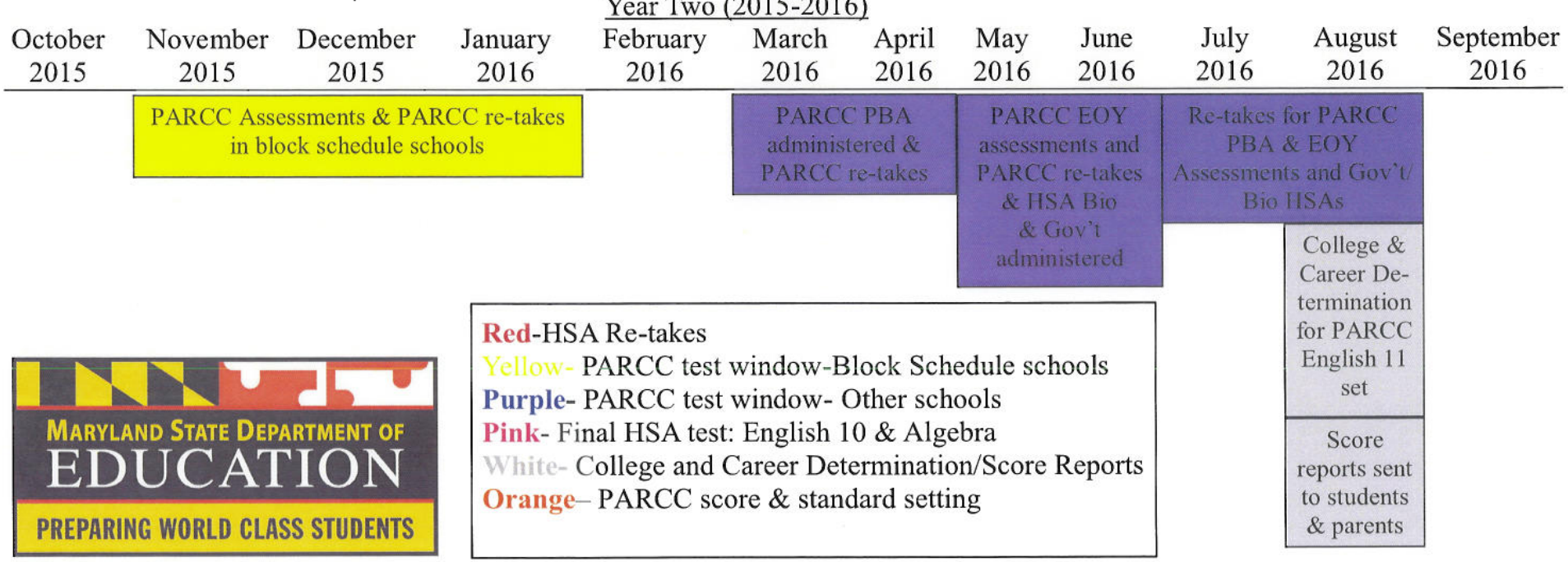


Year Two (2015-2016)



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