

October 27, 2015

2014-2015 High School PARCC Assessment Results

The State Board received report from MSDE staff on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Assessment and Accountability Update. The panel included Dr. Henry Johnson, Dr. Doug Strader, and Chandra Halslet.

Dr. Strader presented an overview of the history of state accountability assessments, and the typical experience of low scores at the outset of anew assessment, including the initial functional assessments, the subsequent Maryland School Assessments (MSAs), and the current PARCC assessments. Ms. Halslet presented the 2015 PARCC Assessment results for the high school level assessments in Algebra I, Algebra II, and English 10. The five levels of performance reported for each subject, include: Level 1-Did not meet expectations; Level 2-Partially met expectations; Level 3-Approached expectations; Level 4-Met expectations; and Level 5-Exceeded expectations. The statewide results for the 2014-2015 school year show that only 31% of students met or exceeded expectations in Algebra I; 20% met or exceeded expectations in Algebra II; and nearly 40% met or exceeded expectations in English 10.

The 2014-2015 PARCC High School Assessment Results

| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 | Level 5 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Algebra I | 13% | 28.6% | 27.1% | 29.4% | 1.8% |
| Algebra II | 32.1% | 26.9% | 20.8% | 19.3% | 0.9% |
| English 10 | 21.4% | 18% | 20.9% | 28.1% | 11.6% |

Dr. Johnson described the information included in the reports that will be provided to parents to explain these results. Interim State Superintendent Jack Smith described the state's relationship with the PARCC consortium through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and briefed the State Board on their need to determine next steps in the coming months. He indicated that a draft MOU will be made available in the next few weeks. He also stated that the current PARCC pricing agreement negotiated by the state of New Mexico and which is embedded in Maryland's and other PARCC consortium state contractual agreements with Pearson, so that each consortium member pays the same price for the assessments. In addition, he described actions in some other states, including the difficulties Florida has experienced since they decided to leave the PARCC consortium.

Dr. Smith further described the significant improvements in graduation rates and the numbers of students receiving the Maryland diploma, but that work continues on determining what the diploma

means in terms of providing meaningful opportunities and options for students. Lastly, he emphasized that we need to administer assessments as embedded activities rather than events.

Board member DeGraffenreidt asked if Maryland data can be compared side-by-side with other PARCC states; and Dr. Smith responded that this will be available following the release of data by all of the 8 PARCC states.

Board member Chester Finn described the release of the results as a “cold shower” and asserted that these results will not serve as a baseline if the state were to change the assessment. He also described the report to parents as misleading unless you have a Ph.D., and that it fails to clearly say to parents that their student is not performing at a level that is on track for college and career readiness.

Board member Guyton followed by sharing that while results were expected to be low, they may not have expected them to be this low, and asked about the value of even sharing these results. Dr. Johnson responded by describing the results as awake up call to teachers, who may not have been teaching to the standards with fidelity. The expectation is that students will have to be able to navigate this type of assessment in the future, and that instruction will have to prepare students accordingly.

Board member DeGraffenreidt stated that these results are providing us with indicators of performance aligned with the experience of students having to take remedial level courses upon entering college; so that these results, while low, are closer to the truth than the results of previous assessments.

Board member Iszard asked if the assessment results inform parents and teachers of where a student’s weaknesses are. Dr. Johnson responded that this data will be provided.

Dr. Johnson outlined the work to be done to communicate with local school systems on the needed professional development to prepare teachers and principals to motivate students, and to address the particular needs of English Language Learners and other groups of students. He also stressed the importance of the motivation factor at the high school level and that students will not do their best on a test that does not directly impact them.

Board member Giammo noted the questions about the validity of the PARCC assessment, but also asked about the correlation between the student’s performance on PARCC and in the respective high school course and even module. Dr. Smith explained that one significant shift needed in instruction arises from the fact that about 25-30% of Algebra I was probability and not algebra, and a portion of Algebra I was moved into Algebra II. This history and practice must be shifted in order to align instruction with the expected level of performance on the PARCC assessment.

Mr. Giammo also asked the panel to explain the results included in the parent report as if doing so for a parent. Dr. Strader described the data included in the report, and described the numeric values as largely arbitrary. Mr. Giammo responded that this response was not satisfying in terms of clearly explaining in English, for parents, what their child’s test results mean.

Board member Madhu Sidhu shared that PARCC promised precisely this type of material, and request staff to pursue these materials. She concluded by voicing caution to avoid the political reactions, such as in Louisiana, and to focus on professional development and improvements in outcomes for students.

Board member Andy Smarick spoke to his concerns about the State Board’s role in determining changes to the state’s accountability system, which is much broader than the PARCC assessment

component of that system. Dr. Smith responded that there are many decision points for the State Board, which will be informed by future assessment results and factors such as changes at the federal level. Mr. Smarick asked about potential questions from legislators such as contrasting these test scores with the billions of Thornton dollars already invested by the state, or the federal investment in Race to the Top. Board member Iszard echoed this concern by noting that insanity is doing the same thing and expecting a different result, and asked whether we need a different system.

Board member Eberhart shared her concerns with the focus on the high school scores when a high school teacher cannot be asked to make up 10 years of prior instruction that was delivered to a different standard. She added that she doesn't expect higher scores in December for elementary and middle school students on the MSAs, for the same reason.

Board member DeGraffenreidt stated that the work to date has been to bring us to the beginning point, not the end point, and these results are in fact aligned with what has been shared by the business community and employers and institutions of high education about the preparation of high school graduates for success at the next level.

Board President Guffrie Smith thanked the panel, and shared that he valued the presentation as good for the State Board in setting 2120, the course for further discussions and decisions.

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State Superintendent of School Vacancy and Search Process

Board President Guffrie Smith introduced the topic, for informational purposes, of the State Board's process in past years for conducting searches and filling vacancies in the position of State Superintendent of School.

However, board member Chester Finn proposed that some sort of decision needs to be made about the procedure, and not merely a discussion about the procedure. He asked if President Smith had any proposals, and after Mr. Smith responded that he preferred for the suggestions to be made by the members, Mr. Finn proposed that the Board contact a search firm tomorrow to commence the search for a new State Superintendent. This motion was seconded and the Board agreed to proceed to develop an RFP for a search firm.

Board member DeGraffenreidt shared his perspective and offered advice based on the search process which resulted in the hiring of Dr. Lillian Lowery, which included a very transparent process of soliciting general public opinion on the search criteria. He described the public survey used, and the closed session process of interviewing the shortlisted candidates. He also indicated the short list was shared with the Governor, to avoid any visceral negative reaction and to ensure there was nothing the Board had missed. In conclusion, he advised that 90 percent of the process be public.

Board members discussed the previous number of public forums, survey response rates, and potential to utilize new technologies such as virtual town meetings. Board President Smith also shared that the Board has already received input from MABE and PSSAM on the local superintendent search process.

Mr. Finn proposed that given the next meeting of the State Board is not until December, should not the State Board members who have volunteered to serve as a workgroup meet in the next couple weeks to proceed on developing the RFP. Board President Smith agreed, and introduced procurement staff to explain the routine and emergency process to develop the RFP for search firms. Mr. DeGraffenreidt

strongly recommended the emergency process, which was used before, and that he predicted a firm could be hired within the month, well in advance of the Board's next meeting.

The committee will include all board members except Mr. DeGraffenreidt and Mr. Giammo, who offered to not participate given that their terms are the soonest to conclude.

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Teacher and Principal Evaluation Data and Effectiveness Rations for the 2014-2015 School Year

Mr. David Volrath and Dr. Ben Feldman, MSDE, presented a report including descriptive analysis of the educator evaluations conducted in each of Maryland's 24 local school systems. He compared last year's and this year's results, including a slight increase in the percentage of teachers in the highly effective category. He emphasized that there has been great variation in the data provided by local school systems, which reflects the work being done.

Board member Finn asked Mr. Volrath why there is such great variability at the local level. Mr. Volrath responded that he doesn't know. Mr. Finn pressed for a response on the real differences in the capabilities and performance of teachers, and variability resulting from a relative lack of fidelity in the local administration of the evaluation system. Mr. Volrath agreed that these are the factors, and that more work is needed.

Mr. Finn and Mr. Giammo queried whether the results in the present form are of any value. Mr. Volrath responded that at there is a mission to move the local school systems to a more common methodology over time. Mr. DeGraffenreidt shared that clearly there is the objective to have highly effective teachers in every classroom, and that this imperative relates to the earlier discussion of improving the preparation of students for college and career.

Board member Weeldreyer described the process of adopting a policy allowing for wide variability in local evaluation methodologies and not for uniformity. Therefore, there is a need to take a deep breath and listen to the presentation in its entirety. Board President Smith agreed.

Dr. Feldman proceeded to present the distribution of teacher effectiveness in schools based on rates of poverty and minority students. He reported that students in low poverty schools are more than two times more likely to have a highly effective teacher than students in high poverty schools. Dr. Feldman also described the process of making tenure determinations and the opportunity to not grant tenure to teachers who are not effective. He contrasted this with the less experienced teachers, who do not perform well in high poverty schools but can be high fliers in low poverty schools.

Dr. Feldman further explained the use of the student learning objectives (SLOs) as anchors of hard objectives for teachers to improve student outcomes. The evaluations reflect the student assessment outcomes on the SLOs and on the professional practice domain scores on the observation tool adopted by the local school system. He noted that Maryland adopted the 50/50 model of utilizing objective student scores and subjective principal evaluations, and that this approach is validated by looking at modeling that shows that it is the least effective teachers who are most sheltered by the subjective evaluation system.

Board member Giammo asked whether it is always the principal conducting the evaluations. Mr. Volrath responded that the best principal will share the work among his or her assistant principals and teachers, but that in elementary schools it is likely to be the principal. Mr. Giammo also asked about whether any LEAs solicit student or parent input on teacher performance. The response included references to local climate surveys and actual incorporation of student input in the official evaluation process.

Board member Weeldreyer suggested correlating data from the PARCC assessments teacher effectiveness ratings to, hypothetically, identify teachers whose students are not succeeding on PARCC but who are being rated as highly effective by their principals. She also asked about sharing data with institutions of higher education as to how their teachers are doing in the classroom. Mr. Volrath responded that this is the web we are working to weave.

Ms. Eberhart shared that teachers in Baltimore City and Prince George's County school systems have received training in interrelated reliability to ensure that teachers are being evaluated based on the same measures from school to school, and classroom to classroom. Mr. Giammo asked about the process of sharing school level data; and Mr. Volrath responded that MSDE's website will provide the data included in this report, and additional more specific data pertaining to minority students.

Dr. Feldman reviewed the effectiveness report for principals in schools of low and high poverty, and the correlation between having a highly effective principal in schools of low poverty, and much greater chance of having an ineffective principal in a school of high poverty.

Mr. Volrath concluded this section of the presentation by asking several prevailing questions about what process is needed and can be adopted to improve the evaluation system, and to move from this evaluation system to continuous improvement processes for students. He then outlined the plan to do so, based on the drivers, charges to three teams, and the processes and outcomes. The three groups research teams, local school system teacher/principal evaluation teams, and a visionary committee.

Mr. Finn asked about the potential for a more uniform evaluation system. State Board counsel Liz Kameen described the 2010 Education Reform Act which was enacted by the general Assembly to provide local school systems and their educators the discretion to develop local evaluation systems. Mr. Finn and Mr. DeGraffenreidt discussed the need to take this report's data to the legislature to move beyond the 2010 transition to a system when there had never been one, and to demonstrate the need to assess what specific proposal is needed to be reflected in the statute moving forward.

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State Aided Institutions

Dr. Michael Gill, MSDE, and a panel including Van Reiner, President and CEO of the Maryland Science Center, and a fifth grade teacher from Prince George's County provided the State Board with a report on the State Aided Institutions (SAI) program. Dr. Gill presented an overview of MSDE's grant program supporting educational learning opportunities through more than 60 organizations and institutions. The representative of the Science Center described the aquarium's programs offering experiential learning to thousands of students. He emphasized the high level of accountability under the program and by Dr. Gill. The teacher described the value of the Alice Ferguson Foundation/Hard Bargain Farm program that exposed her students to science coming alive on the farm. She also noted the environmental literacy requirements which set clear learning objectives for students at grade level.

Board member Finn asked how organizations are selected and how grant amounts are determined. Dr. Gill described the process of reviewing applications for alignment with MSDE's content standards. All applicants who qualify are submitted in the budget request to the Governor. He shared that it is typical for approved programs to continue to qualify and receive funding. None of the new programs recommended last year were funded; and seven new applicants have been included in the pending FY 2017 budget request. Mr. Reiner shared that the Science Center is currently receiving 85% of the funding level before the recession. MSDE's CFO, Kristy Michel, added that the General Assembly has restored \$2 million to the SAI budget in recent years.

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Early Childhood Development Update

Dr. Rolf Grafwallner, MSDE, introduced a panel presenting on the status of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant Program, and the role of local Early Learning Advisory Councils. MSDE staff presented the update on the KRAs, highlighting the improvement made following the first year of test administration. Examples of improvements include increased purchasing and availability of tablets on which students take the assessments, and professional development for teachers to gain greater comfort with the new assessment. School systems, such as Prince George's County, were highlighted as utilizing the KRA to drill down to identify learning gaps of individual students.

Board member Eberhart asked for clarification on the KRA results and the evidence of the value of prekindergarten and correlation to previous assessments. She also asked about the merits of continuing to administer the KRA if most systems continue to administer a reading assessment. Dr. Grafwallner stressed that the KRA is broader, including physical development, social development and reading and math. A school system choosing to not administer the KRA and only a reading assessment would not be assessing these other domains. Ms. Eberhart pressed for any option for local school systems to opt out of portions of the KRA. Board President Smith responded by identifying this as one of the questions to be explored by the newly formed Commission on Testing. Board member Finn described the classic indictment of prekindergarten programs that the gains fade, which he noted may not necessarily be an indictment of the prekindergarten program, if it is the later grades that are failing to sustain earlier gains. Dr. Grafwallner and staff responded on the work being done on prekindergarten to grade three alignment.

Cathy Carnes, representing the Washington County Early Learning Advisory Council, highlighted the success of funding and implementing a process of planning goals, selecting strategies, and analyzing data to gauge successful programs based on actual outcomes. The councils coordinate the programs and activities of local school systems, local governments, nonprofits, and local management boards to improve the school readiness of prekindergarten students for kindergarten.

Initial program funding of \$1.1 million to establish the Early Learning Advisory Councils was provided through the \$50 million Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant program. As that funding has expired, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has been funding ongoing work to sustain the coordination and leadership within the 24 local councils. In addition, the State Board learned about the Reach out and Read (ROAR) program developed and coordinated by the

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State Superintendent Qualifications and Criteria in Statute

Board President Guffrie Smith recognized Mr. Finn who addressed the Board regarding his request that the State Board explore recommending a statutory change to amend the qualifications for state superintendent to at the very least allow for the waiver of one or more of the requirements specified in statute, such as the requirement for seven years of teaching or administration. Mr. Finn listed a number of excellent State Superintendents in other states who would not satisfy Maryland's statutory requirements.

Board members DeGraffenreidt spoke to his reluctance to support such a change given questions about evidence that Maryland has been impeded in finding excellent candidates under the current statute. Ms. Sadhu voiced her desire to have an educator with experience in the role of leading the state school system which pushes educational policies down on local school systems and educators. Ms. Weeldreyer suggested amending the law to remove the strict seven year minimum or simply allow for a waiver process. Mr. DeGraffenreidt voiced his concerns with negatively impacting the pool of candidates in the current search if legislation is pending. By contrast, Mr. Giammo shared that he would be open to removing the criteria in statute to trust the State Board, and future boards, to select a State Superintendent who is not unqualified. Mr. Finn noted that Maryland should not be smug, given the PARCC results reported earlier in the day. Ms. Guyton also voiced support for broadening the criteria. Mr. Giammo requested that a straw poll be taken at the Board's next meeting, given the number of absences at today's meeting; and Board President Smith agreed to do so.

Public Comment

The State Board heard public comment from individuals including:

- Jean Painter, speaking to the value of gifted and talented education and the need for interventions on behalf of minority and low income students to close the talent gap
- Cheryl Boast, Vice-President of MSEA, spoke to the growing recognition that we have too much testing and too many redundant tests and asked the State Board on behalf local educators to shorten the PARCC exams or whatever exam is selected by the State Board in the future
- Mary Weller, Howard County Public Schools, spoke to science literacy for all under the Next Generation Science Standards

Opinions

The State Board issued legal opinions in the following cases:

- Chioma K. v. Prince George's County Board of Education, dismissing the appeal of an early kindergarten enrollment decision
- Nick Myers v. Calvert County Board of Education, dismissing the petition for a declaratory ruling on the local board's authority to delegate authority to the superintendent
- Ted and Diane G. v. Montgomery County Board of Education, dismissing for untimeliness the appeal of a student transfer decision
- Monica Jones v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, affirming the local board's nonrenewal decision

- Langston Hughes Community Action Association v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, affirming the local board's school closure decision
- Abbe Milstein, et al., v. Montgomery County Board of Education, affirming the local board's decision to collocate two schools
- Colin Murphy, et al. v. Anne Arundel County Board of Education; affirming the local board's decision to lease school property for the construction of cell phone towers as consistent with the board's obligation to hold school property in trust for the benefit of the school system