

**December 8, 2015**

## [Agenda](#)

### **2014-2015 PARCC Results: Grades 3 - 8**

State Superintendent Jack Smith introduced Assistant Superintendent Dr. Henry Johnson to make the second and final presentation of the results on the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments in elementary and middle schools. Dr. Johnson introduced Dr. Doug Strader who provided a broad overview and history of the state assessment program. He emphasized the historical trend data which establish the expectation that results on any new assessment will be low, and improve over time as instruction and assessments are increasingly aligned.

MSDE's Director of Accountability, Chandra Haislet, presented the grades 3 through 8 assessment results by performance levels for both the English Language Arts and Mathematics PARCC exams. Students taking the Algebra I and II exams in graded 6 through 8 are not included in these results, but are included in the high school assessment reports. The statewide summary results are reported by racial categories (American Indian, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian, White, and Two or More Races) and service group (Special Education, English Language Learners, and Free and Reduced Price Meals).

Board Member Chester Finn noted that the math results steadily decline in grades 6 through 8, and asked whether this may be because the higher performing students are taking the higher level Algebra I and II assessments in those grades. Ms. Haislet agreed that this may well be the case. Superintendent Smith spoke to the creation of the math advisory group to advance promising instructional strategies for use in local school systems.

Dr. Johnson described the score report interpretation guide for parents, which follows the guide for teachers presented to the board in the fall. He noted the Maryland PTA's coordination of 29 events across the state to inform parents. He indicated that more parents need to be reached through continued outreach efforts. Board Member Linda Eberhart stated that in Massachusetts parents, as do teachers, have the ability to go online to drill down to specific student results on questions to better understand and assist their children with test items and instructional areas. Dr. Strader responded that the item level questions have been released. Student specific results will be the next level of release to educators, but there is not the capacity to do so in Maryland at this time.

Mr. Finn criticized the Score Report Interpretation Guide for Parents, which includes sample student reports, as being too dense and complex for most parents to understand, and that it does not include Maryland specific information. Dr. Johnson responded that the Guide is not

Maryland specific, but instead is developed by the PARCC consortium for all Member states. He stated that work would be done to make the Guide more customized to Maryland in the future, with a goal of reassessing the report in April or May of 2016 based on feedback of parents and other stakeholders.

Board Member Larry Giammo voiced strong concerns about the need for greater clarity and timely reporting of results to parents. He expressed his frustration with the staff responses pointing to the role of the PARCC consortium rather than the steps being taken to ensure that the state and, more importantly, local school systems are reporting student results to parents in a timely and useful manner.

He also raised his concern that this is norm referenced rather than criterion referenced, based on the indications that the assessment will be modified in the future. Mr. Finn stated that he is increasingly convinced that the PARCC assessment is a good test, but that the reporting process is terrible, and turning him off PARCC in general.

Board Member Eberhart asked about the implementation of the high school assessments for college and career, and whether Algebra II and a score of 4 or 5, is the measure of readiness and the basis for transition courses in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Dr. Johnson responded that this is not the case, with each local school system being able to choose the assessments in English and Algebra for college and career readiness.

Dr. Johnson and Superintendent Smith responded that they have been meeting with the community colleges and legislators to determine whether we could possibly for the first couple of years use English 10 or 11 as the assessment to determine college readiness. Dr. Smith confirmed that this flexibility is available to local school systems.

Board Member Eberhart and Finn also addressed the use of the Bridge Plan alternative assessment program, and the delay in the use of the English and Algebra PARCC exams as two of the four High School Assessments (HSAs). Dr. Smith responded that it is confusing to discuss both the 2013 legislation on college and career readiness, and the HSA program, which are related but in very complex ways. Board Members Laura Weeldreyer and Andy Smarick addressed the need for greater clarity for the State Board on the roles and interplay of the PARCC, HSA, and college and career readiness assessments. Mr. Smarick stated that the board would benefit from a lengthy work session on these assessments and graduation requirements.

Board Member Giammo reminded the board and staff that the Board has a vote coming up on whether to continue in the PARCC consortium and the need for additional information to make an informed decision when that time comes. He continued by describing the lack of transparency based on information shared at a recent PARCC consortium meeting in Denver, Colorado.

[Handouts & Links](#)

## **Local, State, and Federally Mandated Assessments**

Dr. Henry Johnson, MSDE, briefed the board on the status of the statewide survey of student assessments in accordance with legislation passed in 2015 (House Bill 452) which mandated a statewide survey of assessments, and formed a “Commission to Review Maryland’s Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools.” He shared that the survey results were shared and responses to the survey were received, as required by the legislation, from stakeholders including MABE, PSSAM, MSEA and others. In addition, the Commission has met once, and will meet monthly. He described the goal to determine the types, uses, purposes, and redundancy of federal, state, and local school system wide student assessments. He reviewed the table displaying the time spent on local assessments in each grade; and the summary of comments received by stakeholders.

Board Member Giammo asked whether this is an apples to apples or apples to oranges comparison. Dr. Johnson responded that it is apples to oranges, and shared the example of a grade level arts assessment that may be required in one school system and not in others. Board Member Giammo concluded that it is therefore worthless data, and that it would be dangerous to use to make decisions. Board Member Eberhart agreed that the board needs to be clear about this based on the desire for clearer reporting in the media.

Board Member Giammo clarified that parents are interested in knowing how much time is spent on testing, as compared with instruction, and that the survey focuses on the number of assessments mandated by the federal and state governments and at the school system level.

Board Member Finn shared that he thinks Maryland gets it wrong in terms of state and local roles and responsibilities for testing. He believes the state should have a role in setting standards for college and career readiness, instead of each local school system; and which tests are given to which kids should be locally determined. Board Member Smarick countered that he finds the data useful in demonstrating the outcome of delegating decisions on assessments to local school systems.

Superintendent Smith reiterated that the report represents what was submitted by each local school system, and that more information could be requested by MSDE. He also noted that Maryland is in a tremendous state of flux in terms of student assessments and many other policy issues. Board President Guffrie Smith agreed with Dr. Johnson that it would be helpful to pursue additional local input on updates and clarification on their responses. Dr. Smith summarized that MSDE staff will draft a response for the board on the survey and upon review and approval provide to the General Assembly per the law.

[Handouts](#)

## **ESEA Flexibility Renewal Request Update**

State Superintendent Smith shared that the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is on schedule to pass the Senate today, and reach the President’s desk for signing into law in the very near future. He stated that today’s report would review the ESEA process under the current and expiring law but also reflect staff work on the reauthorization

which passed the House last week and is planned to become law very soon (Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), S. 1177).

Mary Gable, MSDE, reviewed the July 23, 2015 renewal of Maryland ESEA Flexibility Waiver which was approved to cover the next three years. She described the outcome that there are rules Maryland will be operating under this year only, based on the operation of the reauthorized federal law and forthcoming guidance. One example of a current compliance provision reflected in the ESEA Flexibility Waiver is the use of student assessments to evaluate teachers and principals. However, guidance under the new law will inform this work as well.

When do the new rules kick in? Ms. Gable responded that MSDE's understanding is that Maryland will operate under the ESEA waiver until August 1, 2016 when that will stop in some way. The 2016-2017 school year will reflect a combination of existing and new requirements, with the 2017-2018 school year being the first one operating fully under the new law.

Board Member Finn described the thrust of the new ESSA law as dramatically reducing the authority of the federal government to dictate education policy; and the corresponding need to determine what Maryland as a state will do with this new found freedom. Specifically, Mr. Finn stressed the need to work well in advance of the 2017-2018 school year to develop policy and the infrastructure to carry out those policies. Board President Smith agreed that there may be adjustments needed to how the state board carries out its business to provide ample time for briefings for the board, the public, and other stakeholders.

Board Member Smarick stated that the board has two years to think deeply about a new accountability system for the state; and asked about the authority to evaluate educators. Dr. Smith responded that the Education Reform Act of 2010 also provides authority for the State Board to proceed on this and other matters.

Chandra Haislet, MSDE, returned to the presentation and the current pause in updating the accountability measures as the new PARCC assessments are rolled out. The "pause" refers to the policy that schools will retain their 2014-2015 rating in 2015-2016 and continue to implement interventions based on that rating in the 2015-2016 school year. She emphasized that supports and interventions have and will continue to be required, as will the reporting requirements. The recommendation is to set the proficiency levels as scores of 4 or 5 on the PARCC assessments. She presented options, for the boards consideration, that the state may choose from to determine the Annual Measureable Objectives (AMOs); including, Option A: cutting the proficiency gaps in half within 6 years; Option B, reaching 100% proficiency; Option C, choosing another method. Staff recommends Option A. Dr. Smith confirmed that this is consistent with the goal in the current ESEA waiver.

[Handouts](#)

## **Career and Technology Education (CTE) Regulations Update**

MSDE staff recommended and the board granted final approval to comprehensively update CTE regulations based on the determination that the existing state regulations were very out of day and in need of updating (COMAR 13A.04.02). Board Members discussed the need to ongoing commitment to take a deeper dive on CTE and its role in the state mandate to prepare

all students readiness for college and career. Board Member Finn observed that there is much more clarity on the meaning college readiness than career readiness. Staff assured the board that there are many third party assessments of readiness to enter employment in specific areas, such as automotive service technician training, education paraprofessional training, and others. Board President Smith stressed that board Members should be more involved in attending briefings on the current status of CTE programs to learn more about the work being done.

[Handout](#)

## **Student Records of Students in State Supervised Care Regulations**

Kristina Kyles, MSDE, presented the regulations proposed for final adoption, granted by the board, to align state regulations with the federal Fostering Connections Act pertaining to students in foster care (COMAR 13A.08.07).

[Handout](#)

## **2015 Bridge to Excellence Master Plan Report**

The State Board received a briefing from staff on the 2015 five-year master plans required for each local school system aligned with the State's standards based accountability system and the federal ESEA accountability requirements. Kristina Kyles and Walter Sallee, MSDE, presented an overview of the Bridge to Excellence Act's master plan requirement, and subsequent state and national audits and reports validating the alignment of the increased state funding and the programs and services provided by local school systems to reduce achievement gaps and in other areas.

Mr. Sallee reviewed the master plan development, review and approval process. Kristy Michel, MSDE, reviewed the trends in per pupil funding and student performance over time. Board Member Finn criticized the presentation as making causative conclusions about the role of increased funding and student performance, and not the correlation between the two. Mr. Sallee referenced the MGT of America comprehensive analysis of the role of increased funding and did conclude a causative relationship between the increased funding and student performance. He stated that there is 50 years of study that shows the opposite correlation between funding levels and student performance.

Ms. Kyles responded that the master plans represent the combing of massive amounts of data on funding and student performance. She described the annual process of reviewing how school systems are aligning available funding with instructional goals and ability to deliver desired programs. Specifically, she noted the challenges to develop strategies to address increased numbers of English Language Learners and economically disadvantaged students; and the transition to the new PARCC assessments and curriculum changes. Board President Guffrie Smith and Superintendent Smith noted the reporting of successful programs cited later in their report to the board. Board Member Finn agreed that this indicated more analysis may be available, and Board Member Guyton agreed that staff should conduct more thorough analysis. Dr. Smith responded that MSDE does not have a statistician on staff and therefore has no ability to do such a complex analysis.

Ms. Michel continued to review and report on local school system progress and planned and actual revenues provided from state and local sources. She highlighted the increases in state funding and local revenues; noting the impact on state funding of the increased numbers of students qualifying for Free and Reduced Price Meals and the resulting increase in Compensatory Education funding. The numbers of English Language Learners have also increased. In addition, local funding has increased under the amended maintenance of effort statute.

Mr. Finn asked Dr. Smith in what sense this a master plan and not simply an expenditure tally. Dr. Smith responded that the plans are mandated by the Bridge to Excellence Act and recently reauthorized for another five year planning period. Board Member Weeldreyer spoke in favor of a state board role in helping local school systems to reframe the master planning process in the context of the new federal ESSA law and other factors. Board President Smith and Dr. Smith agreed that the process should be reassessed and improved with input from local school systems. Board Member Eberhart suggested the need for a state level workgroup involving board Members and local school systems representatives to develop a planning process that is more meaningful than the current process. The consensus, agreed to by a vote of the board, was for Dr. Smith to send a letter to the Governor and legislative leadership on the desire to revise the master planning process.

Board Members Giammo and Guyton suggested MSDE staff conduct more sophisticated statistical analysis on policy issues such as the PARCC assessments and the master plans being discussed. Board Member Giammo indicated the board would support additional resources for this purpose. Board Member Smarick shared examples from other states such as Colorado and New York, which has the New York Regents Research Fund to complement the work of the state agencies in those states.

[Handouts](#)

## **Interscholastic Athletics Regulations**

Andrew Warner, Director of the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA), presented the recommendation to grant final approval for regulations regarding the rescheduling of swimming competitions (COMAR 13A.06.03). The board adopted the recommendation.

[Handout](#)

## **Race to the Top Report**

Mary Gable, MSDE, introduced a panel including Queen Anne's County Superintendent Carol Williamson and Dorchester County Superintendent Henry Wagner, among others, on the strategic accomplishments of local school system under the Race to the Top (RTTT) grant program.

Dr. Wagner described the collaborative work involving MSDE staff, Dorchester County school system staff, and outside consultants. He focused on the role of the Breakthrough Center

program delivered through a partnership between the school system and MSDE to develop and implement new processes teacher evaluations through intensive training of principals in new techniques. He described the alignment of the evaluation system and the appraisal process which shows dramatic reduction in the numbers of ineffective teachers.

Dr. Williamson described the important role of the limited amount of RTTT funding received by Queen Anne's County Schools. She emphasized the results of her request to staff to trace the role of the modest \$400,000 per year in local RTTT funding; and learning that the state funding amounted to more than \$1 million, and the impacts on her school system are substantial. She highlighted the purchasing of laptops, chrome books, and the assurance new technologies are delivered as instructional tools. She noted the \$4 million loss of local funding under maintenance of effort, and the great benefit of the RTTT funding at the time it was received.

Dr. Hughes highlighted technology upgrades and professional development to prepare teachers and principals for the new state standards and PARCC assessments. He cited a number of consultants who provided expert training, including train the trainer work, to build sustainable alignment in the system.

William Burke, with Baltimore County schools, outlined the school system's development of student centered teaching and learning through the universal design for learning model. In addition, the system developed new e-learning approaches to delivering blended instruction to students in home and hospital instruction. He emphasized the intensive staff work, and collaborations with local universities, to build new professional development programs. He stressed that the training demands for a large school system required developing in person and online instructional modules for 8,500 educators. He thanked and praised the department's role, especially the assistance of Mary Gable and Donna Gunning.

Board President Smith asked about the benefits to parents of the RTTT grant funded programs. Dr. Wagner responded that Dorchester County parents now have access to Performance Matters as a portal of access to student data that was not available before. Dr. Williamson described the development of many informational factsheets, materials, and online resources.

Board Member Weeldreyer asked about the Breakthrough Center and its work. Dr. Wagner responded that detailed analysis and a study has been done, at least with regard to Dorchester County. Ms. Gable also shared that the Breakthrough Center does continue to operate, but with diminished resources made available through general funds.

[Handouts](#)

## **State Assessments Update**

Dr. Henry Johnson and Strader, MSDE, presented an update on state assessments, including PARCC and Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). Dr. Strader noted his regular brownbag lunches with local accountability directors and ongoing collaboration and sharing of experiences. He described the implementation of the online PARCC assessments, and continuing work by ETS and the consortium to analyze specific test items and the role of taking the tests on line or via paper and pencil. Board Member Eberhart requested additional information on Maryland's local school system experiences, such as Frederick County's

significant use of paper and pencil. Dr. Johnson responded that this information is already available and will be provided to the board. Board Member Eberhart requested an update on the KRA results. Board Member Giammo shared that he went to the PARCC site to review the released test questions and found the site to be difficult to navigate in terms of finding specific questions by grade level and subject. Lastly, Dr. Smith described the process of updating the MOE with the PARCC consortium and the options for PARCC Inc. to evolve and options for states to participate in PARCC in a variety of ways. In addition, the department's contract with Pearson is also affected.

[Handouts](#)

## **Board Member and Superintendent Updates**

Board Member Guyton suggested and made a motion that the State Board add a second meeting each month, devoting one to business and action items, and the second to informational presentations and deeper discussion. After brief discussion it was agreed to add a second day, or half day.

Board President Smith shared that the State Board has received three responses from firms interested in conducting the State Board's search for a new State Superintendent.

Board Member Finn reiterated his interest in having the legislature create a waiver procedure for the statutory qualifications to allow for the consideration of non-traditional candidates. Mr. Finn made a motion seconded by Mr. Giammo and supported by Mr. Smarick to pursue such legislation. The board voted but the vote failed due to the lack of at least seven votes in favor. Board counsel confirmed that statute not only establishes the quorum of seven but also a minimum vote of seven to take action.

Board Member Finn and other Members discussed their interest in learning more about local school system programs for gifted and talented students. Dr. Smith agree to have staff report on this.

Board Member Finn and others discussed the request for a survey of local board policies on intra-district student transfers. Board Members discussed the issues of student transfers and school choice within districts and their interest in learning more about the criteria in place locally.

## **Public Comment**

A representative of Cardinal Reading Strategies spoke in favor of a systematic approach to reading instruction, instead of the whole language approach in place today; a father of a teacher in Baltimore County raised concerns about his daughter who is experiencing problems with student behavior and discipline; and an individual spoke in support of greater efforts to close the achievement gaps and to reduce the numbers of students graduating with very low GPAs and underprepared for their futures.



## **Opinions:**

The State Board issued legal opinions in the following cases:

- Gloria Archer-Williams v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, affirming the local board's employee termination decision
- Patricia Karp v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, affirming the local board's non-renewal decision
- Marcia Martin v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, reversing and remanding the local board's non-renewal decision
- Greg and Sivan K. v. Montgomery County Board of Education, affirming the local board's student transfer decision
- Samira L. v. Howard County Board of Education, affirming the local board's early entry to kindergarten decision
- Stephen M. and Marilia M. v. Montgomery County Board of Education, dismissing the appeal for untimely filing

