

**Commission's Recommendations on the Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools**  
**Comments from the State Board of Education**



**Overview**

The Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools released a final report in July 2016 that describes recommendations to improve the process in which mandated assessments are administered and used to inform instruction. The State Board of Education was charged to review and consider the Commission's findings and recommendations; make comments and recommendations related to whether they accept or reject the Commission's findings and recommendations; and submit a compilation to the Governor and other stakeholders.

The State Board of Education participated in two facilitated work sessions (August 22 and September 26, 2016) to build consensus around recommendations presented in the Commission's final report. At the work sessions, the Board reviewed data submitted by the Maryland State Department of Education and comments submitted by local school boards of education to inform decisions regarding acceptance of recommendations. The attached table summarizes the State Board's comments from the work sessions.

Commission's Final Report may be found here >>

<http://marylandpublicschools.org/Documents/commissiononassessments/AssessmentsCommissionFinalReport072016.pdf>

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Recommendations from the Commission	Comments from the State Board of Education
<p align="center"><b>2.1A</b></p> <p>The creation of an additional assessment in social studies at the middle school level should not go forward. Rather, the Commission recommends a similar approach for middle school social studies as was previously taken to ensure local accountability for teaching and assessing the environmental literacy standards and financial literacy standards that were infused in students’ instructional experiences. The Commission requests the Maryland State Board of Education’s consideration to propose that districts be required to provide assurances that instructional program alignment exists for social studies content standards, skills, and processes at each middle school grade level, which are then matched to a locally designed and implemented assessment program measuring students’ progress toward the standards.</p>	<p>The Board recommends continuing with the existing practice for one year to allow additional research to occur. Further study is needed to assess the appropriateness of the current social studies assessment. The State Board is concerned about the quality of external assessments in measuring the totality of social studies content.</p> <p>The Board would like the legislation amended that mandates middle school assessment in social studies, and requests modification of recommendation 2.1A as described below.</p> <p><i>The creation of an additional assessment in social studies at the middle school level should not go forward <b>at this time</b>. Rather, the Commission recommends a similar approach for middle school social studies as was previously taken to ensure local accountability for teaching and assessing the environmental literacy standards and financial literacy standards that were infused in students’ instructional experiences. The Commission requests the Maryland State Board of Education’s consideration to propose that districts be required to provide assurances that instructional program alignment exists for social studies content standards, skills, and processes at each middle school grade level, which are then matched to a locally designed and implemented assessment program measuring students’ progress toward the standards.</i></p>
<p align="center"><b>6.2</b></p> <p>An additional assessment in social studies at the middle school level shall not be added. Rather, the Commission recommends that a similar approach for middle school social studies as was previously taken to ensure local accountability for teaching and assessing the environmental literacy standards and financial literacy standards that were infused in students’ instructional experiences. There should be district assurances that instructional program alignment exists for social studies content standards, skills, and processes at each middle school grade level, which are then matched to a locally designed and implemented assessment program measuring students’ progress toward the standards. MSDE shall seek guidance to ensure this approach complies with statute and monitors the locally designed assessment program so it does not impact an excessive amount of instructional time.</p>	<p>This recommendation is similar to recommendation 2.1A. As a result, refer to comments in recommendation 2.1A.</p>

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<p align="center"><b>2.1B</b></p> <p>MSDE shall continue the assessment of national, State and local government to assure knowledge in civics, but with a fundamentally different structure than that which currently exists. Innovative approaches to measuring student progress should be considered, and the assessment should be designed in a way that is least disruptive to classroom instruction. The current two hour and thirty minute schoolwide assessment structure creates a significant resource and time burden on the teaching and learning process. The Commission recommends strongly that an assessment structure be developed allowing for the assessment to be administered within class periods, on one or multiple days, without needing to alter the normal school day for students or overly impacting instructional time for students.</p>	<p>The State Board of Education accepts recommendation 2.1B with the condition that assessments move from an event to class periods beginning in the 2018-2019 school year.</p> <p align="center">Event – restructuring the school day to give an assessment. Period – administering assessments during the instructional day as part of class periods.</p>
<p align="center"><b>2.2A</b></p> <p>The primary purpose of a standardized assessment may not be to attain an SLO. Educators, in conjunction with school-based and district leaders, shall collaborate to determine what measures (including what, if any, standardized assessments are used) and targets to use, to monitor and to assess student progress. Districts should provide sample SLOs or assessments with clear language.</p> <p>SLOs will require multiple student measures that emphasize formative assessment or other measures which allow educators to provide feedback to students prior to summative assessment. SLOs should not be based singularly on mandated assessments.</p>	<p>The State Board of Education accepts recommendation 2.2A with the modification described below.</p> <p><i>The primary purpose of a standardized assessment may not <b>solely</b> be to attain an SLO. Educators, in conjunction with school-based and district leaders, shall collaborate to determine what measures (including what, if any, standardized assessments are used) and targets to use, to monitor and to assess student progress. Districts should provide sample SLOs or assessments with clear language.</i></p> <p><i>SLOs will require multiple student measures that emphasize formative assessment or other measures which allow educators to provide feedback to students prior to summative assessment. SLOs should not be based singularly on mandated assessments.</i></p>

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<p align="center"><b>2.2B</b></p> <p>School districts should require no more than two teacher directed SLOs for the purposes of meeting the student growth requirements within the TPE.</p>	<p>A survey conducted by the Maryland State Department of Education revealed that 23 school systems currently require two SLOs and one school system requires three SLOs. As a result, no policy change is needed at this time.</p>
<p align="center"><b>3.1</b></p> <p>Loosen the restrictions on who can administer, proctor and accommodate State and locally mandated assessments. Any staff member at a school whom the principal deems capable, by integrity, skill, work time, and appropriate training, is allowed to fully proctor a State and/or local standardized test. Training as currently in existence will remain an element of the administrator, proctor, and accommodator readiness, and additional training as the school administration sees necessary will be supported. It should be noted that if the structure of mandated testing is reduced in the amount of time necessary to administer and is changed to fit into class periods, teachers for those individual classes being tested would be easily available for test administration and proctoring without the disruption that currently exists. However, in that scenario, there is the potential to use these teachers for other types of instruction (such as in teams or in professional learning) during the testing time, while using other available staff for proctoring.</p>	<p>The State Board of Education reviewed the number of reported testing violations. Data revealed an overall increase in violations from 2011-2016 (refer to supplemental graph on page 15). The Board also reviewed comments submitted by local boards of education which supported the continued use of certificated staff for test administration. As a result, the State Board recommends keeping the current practice of only allowing certificated educators to administer, proctor, and accommodate State and locally mandated assessments.</p> <p>The State Board recognizes staffing challenges associated with administering and proctoring assessments. Staffing challenges should decrease as assessments transition from being administered as an event to within class periods (refer to comment for recommendation 2.1B).</p>

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<p align="center"><b>4.1</b></p> <p>Establish July 15 as the deadline for the return of PARCC assessment data for the purpose of allowing the time necessary for districts and schools to inform curriculum, instructional, and professional learning practices and to afford enough time to evaluate the need for students’ program and schedule changes. The Commission acknowledges the importance of high-quality, useable, and statistically reliable and valid data; therefore, in order to guarantee data integrity, MSDE (with PARCC’s assistance) shall provide a widely published timeline explaining any delay in meeting the July 15 deadline.</p>	<p>School boards expressed concerned that the July 15 deadline would not provide enough time to inform decisions regarding interventions and course scheduling. The State Board of Education recognizes these challenges. However, July 15 is the earliest feasible deadline to return PARCC assessment data without modifying the current testing window. As a result, the State Board accepts recommendation 4.1.</p>
<p align="center"><b>4.2</b></p> <p>MSDE shall form a statewide practitioner stakeholder advisory group to the dedicated PARCC Project Manager assigned by PARCC. The group should include school-based educators and test coordinators, who will provide feedback on the PARCC reporting mechanisms, the assessment window and time elements related to preparing for and assessments and administering the assessments.</p>	<p>Several groups currently exist where school-based classroom teachers and test coordinators can share concerns about PARCC. The development of additional groups would be redundant. The State Department of Education will publish a list of groups that teachers and test coordinators can participate in to have their voices heard. As a result, the development of another stakeholder group is not needed at this time.</p>

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<p align="center"><b>7.3</b></p> <p>MSDE shall develop a clear process for gathering, reporting, and responding to concerns concerning the impact of the newly revised single administration and the developmental appropriateness of the PARCC assessment from school-based educators and test coordinators. MSDE shall form a representative statewide practitioners’ stakeholder advisory group to include school-based classroom teachers and test coordinators who will share concerns directly with the dedicated project manager PARCC assigns to Maryland.</p> <p>After the representative statewide practitioner’s stakeholder advisory group shares their findings, the advisory group will determine and communicate what adjustments should be made to reduce the impact of the PARCC testing on instruction, and a representative from MSDE shall advocate for those recommendations.</p> <p>When individual students have completed the assessments, districts shall allow students to read or write regardless of whether other students are still testing.</p> <p>(refer to page 49 of the Commission Final Report for additional information about recommendation 7.3)</p>	<p>Several groups currently exist where school-based classroom teachers and test coordinators can share concerns about PARCC. The development of additional groups would be redundant. The State Department of Education will publish a list of groups that teachers and test coordinators can participate in to have their voices heard. As a result, the development of another stakeholder group is not needed at this time.</p> <p>Recommendation 7.3 requires school systems to allow students to read or write once they have completed an assessment. The decision as to whether students are allowed to read or write after an assessment should be decided by local school systems.</p>

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<p align="center"><b>5.1</b></p> <p>Require Superintendents to annually report two measures of testing time from the prior school year to their county Board of Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of hours students spend taking mandated assessments, disaggregated by grade level for all students, English Learners, and students with disabilities both at the county and school levels, and</li> <li>• The number of days the school schedule was changed schoolwide, beyond an individual classroom, by mandated assessments for each school.</li> </ul>	<p>House Bill 412 requires annual reporting about assessments by local boards of education. School systems also report assessment information in their Master Plans which are submitted to the Maryland State Department of Education. The Maryland State Department of Education will aggregate data submitted in Master Plans and present it publically to the State Board of Education. As a result, additional reports by local school boards should not be required.</p>
<p align="center"><b>5.2</b></p> <p>Provide timely results for local, State and federally mandated assessments to educators so the results can be used to inform instruction and to plan for prospective programming decisions.</p>	<p>The State Board of Education accepts recommendation 5.2 on the condition that a timeline is developed that is inclusive of other stakeholders.</p>

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<p align="center"><b>5.3</b></p> <p>MSDE shall review and update the current <i>Maryland Accessibility Features and Accommodations Manual</i> to create appropriate consistency regarding accessibility and accommodations guidelines and clearly communicate them to staff. In addition, all accessibility and accommodations guidelines should be effective and implemented for all State mandated assessments in 2017-2018.</p>	<p>The State Board of Education accepts recommendation 5.3.</p>
<p align="center"><b>5.4</b></p> <p>The State Board of Education shall analyze and disaggregate the results of MSDE technology needs assessment to determine the implications for administering the mandated federal, State and local assessments.</p>	<p>The State Board of Education accepts recommendation 5.4 on the condition that data will be reviewed and shared with local school systems. Additionally, the Board would like to include in the recommendation that testing tools must align with instructional tools.</p>



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<p align="center"><b>5.5</b></p> <p>Provide annual need-based competitive technology grants to districts designed to minimize the impact on instruction in the Maryland schools with technology deficits that drive extended testing schedules. MSDE shall develop evaluation criteria for awarding grants to districts that balance need—identifying schools that demonstrate assessment-related technology deficits that have significant extend testing schedules that impact instruction— with action plans to cost-effectively meet those needs—developing viable and sustainable plans to effectively reduce computer administered assessments impact on instruction. MSDE criteria should a) favor district plans that provide local funds to maximize the effectiveness of state grant funding and b) ensure that grant funds will not replace existing or planned local technology expenditures.</p>	<p>Currently, there are no financial means to support implementation of recommendation 5.5. The Maryland State Department of Education is willing to administer funds if money is appropriated.</p>
<p align="center"><b>6.1</b></p> <p>The Biology HSA during the 2016-2017 school year will be administered but achieving a passing score will not be a graduation requirement. The Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (MISA) will be designed in a way that is least disruptive to the school day and classroom instruction (each section will be of a length that allows testing within the classroom). Districts shall communicate the change clearly to parents and students. If there is a public comment period, the public shall be made aware of the reason for the change (that the curriculum is no longer aligned with the assessment). Students and parents shall be informed that the MISA science assessment may be required for graduation in the future. Students who failed the Biology HSA before the 2016-2017 school year shall also be granted an exemption; there shall be no Biology Bridge program students for the 2017-2018 school year.</p>	<p>The State Board of Education accepts recommendation 6.1.</p>

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<p align="center"><b>7.1</b></p> <p>Publicize information assuring comparability between the 2015 and 2016 PARCC assessment results. Employ appropriate messaging strategies focused on the information needs of a variety of stakeholders: students, teachers, parents, community members at the district level and to the Maryland General Assembly and the Department of Legislative Services.</p> <p>Establish a District Committee on Assessment in each school district for the purpose of monitoring, evaluating, and communicating the district’s assessment program. The goal of the committee is to ensure that assessment programs and practices within each district meet the highest quality standards for measuring students’ academic progress, learning progression or skill acquisition through timely and relevant feedback at the district and school level. The evaluation should include a measure of time invested in assessments, preparation for assessments (including technology) and the staffing resources devoted to various types of assessments.</p> <p>(Refer to page 47 of the Commission Final Report for a detailed list of the charges associated with this recommendation.)</p>	<p>House Bill 412 requires annual reporting about assessments by local boards of education. It also requires that reported information be posted on the website of the local board of education on or before October 15.</p>
<p align="center"><b>7.2</b></p> <p>Report out PARCC results by mode effect until 100% of students are administered the assessment online. A comparative analysis of the results by content/grade should be reported to the Maryland State Board of Education, local Boards of Education, the general public and the Maryland General Assembly.</p>	<p>The State Board of Education accepts recommendation 7.2 with the following modifications:</p> <p align="center"><i>Report out PARCC results by mode effect until <b>100% of school systems administer the assessment online.</b> A comparative analysis of the results by content/grade should be reported to the Maryland State Board of Education, local Boards of Education, the general public and the Maryland General Assembly.</i></p> <p>The State Board would also like for mode effect to be included in submitted reports.</p>

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<p align="center"><b>7.4</b></p> <p>MSDE shall publish a report of the observations and recommendations gleaned from each district. Include in the report steps for improving the ease of the assessment administration in future years. The report should be made available to the local Boards of Education, Maryland State Board of Education, and the Maryland General Assembly.</p>	<p>House Bill 412 requires annual reporting about assessments by local boards of education. School systems also report assessment information in their Master Plans which are submitted to the Maryland State Department of Education. The Maryland State Department of Education will aggregate data submitted in Master Plans and present it publically to the State Board of Education.</p> <p>The Maryland State Department of Education is in the process of establishing live streaming of State Board sessions so that information can be publically available. Since there is a public reporting mechanism currently being developed, the recommendation is not needed at this time.</p>
<p align="center"><b>7.5</b></p> <p>MSDE shall continue to report out the quality of early care whether districts choose a census or representative sampling approach to administering the KRA.</p> <p>Districts and MSDE shall work more closely to ensure that the communication is improved specific to the purpose and timing of the KRA administration, and the access to and use of available assessment results.</p> <p>MSDE shall develop additional new modules for professional learning and continue to employ strategies such as ‘train the trainer’ to ensure consistent and cohesive training in each district.</p>	<p>Local school system leaders currently have the option of administering the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) through census or representative sampling. Several local school boards were concerned about comparing KRA data among school systems due to variances in test administration. The State Board of Education understands the concerns of local school boards. The Maryland State Department of Education is working with a psychometrician from the University of Maryland to help with data comparison. As a result, the State Board of Education accepts recommendation 7.5.</p>

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<p align="center"><b>7.6</b></p> <p>MSDE shall investigate the option of providing an accountability mechanism that will satisfy the federal high school assessment requirement and improve College and Career Readiness as stipulated in the College Completion Act of 2013 or Statute §7-205.1 High School Curriculum and Graduation Requirements.</p> <p>MSDE should explore the option of applying for the Innovative Assessment System option which will be afforded to seven (7) states. Establishing comparability in accountability across a number of State approved assessments that will meet graduation requirements, federal testing requirements, and the College Completion Act of 2013 should result in a reduction in the number of assessments.</p> <p>Should MSDE apply and receive permission to employ an Innovative Assessment System, MSDE must support locals in the management of training and data collection and reporting regarding documenting students’ pathways of achievement in meeting the assessment and graduation requirements, the federal assessment regulations, and the College Completion Act of 2013.</p>	<p>The State Board of Education accepts recommendation 7.6.</p>

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<p align="center"><b>7.7</b></p> <p>MSDE shall provide resources information to parents on State mandated assessments that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>m.</b> Provide information about student performance on mandated tests and how teachers will use these data in their classrooms</li> <li><b>n.</b> Explain the assessment construction and format information</li> <li><b>o.</b> Identify the ties/links to curricular standards—assessment question examples and links to specific examples at all grade levels</li> <li><b>p.</b> Address how students with disabilities and who are ELs may be affected by various assessments and why</li> <li><b>q.</b> Communicate the information regarding assessment with parents/families whose first language is not English</li> <li><b>r.</b> Communicate information on Maryland HSA and PARCC that answers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Why does my child need to pass these tests to graduate?</li> <li>ii. What are the cut-off scores to meet the criteria?</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>s.</b> Create FAQs</li> <li><b>t.</b> Disseminate the assessment psychometrics</li> <li><b>u.</b> Communicate and provide access to statewide, countywide and local school aggregated and disaggregated results</li> <li><b>v.</b> Explain the results in layman’s terms</li> <li><b>w.</b> Interpret the assessment results</li> <li><b>x.</b> Help parents to understand and answer the questions: What does this mean for my child? What should be the next steps for their education? What can I do at home to support my child?</li> </ul> <p>Local Boards of Education shall communicate with parents before, during, and after testing by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>e.</b> Publishing a comprehensive assessment calendar for elementary, middle and high schools;</li> <li><b>f.</b> Providing and distributing information regarding what students will be tested, why, on what material, and how the assessments connected to the curriculum;</li> </ul>	<p>House Bill 412 addresses several items listed in recommendation 7.7. The State Board of Education accepts recommendation 7.7 with the condition that the questions currently listed under letter X (see below) are moved to the responsibility of the local school system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What should be the next steps for their education?</i></li> <li>• <i>What can I do at home to support my child?</i></li> </ul> <p>The Maryland State Department of Education will also assess the practicality of developing a rubric to be used by school systems to aid in the implementation of the recommendation.</p>

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<p><b>g.</b> Explaining what the results will mean, how they will be used, and how, when and where parents and students will be able to access results; and</p> <p><b>h.</b> Explaining what assessment results mean for the next steps in students education.</p>	
<p align="center"><b>8.2</b></p> <p>Administer the PARCC assessments to satisfy the high school assessment requirements and the participation requirements (95%) as specified by ESSA and the high school graduation requirements specified by the State Board (See 3(a) of 13A.03.02.09 Diplomas and Certificates). However, in 3(b) and 3(c) of 13A.03.02.09 stipulate alternatives to achieving a passing score. (refer to page 52 of the Commission Final Report for additional information about recommendation 8.2)</p>	<p>The State Board of Education accepts recommendation 8.2 with the condition that local school systems minimize testing burdens by using assessments that will satisfy as many testing obligations as possible within legal constraints.</p>

Testing Violation Category Summary 2011-2016

