

# Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools

<http://marylandpublicschools.org/Pages/commissiononassessments/index.aspx>

## Final Report



**Annapolis, Maryland  
July 2016**

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# Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools

## Membership Roster

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# Preface

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## **Establishing a Commission**

In 2015, the Maryland General Assembly established the Commission to Review Maryland’s Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools to make recommendations on how local school systems and the State can improve the process in which local, State, and federally mandated assessments are administered and used to inform instruction. In formulating its recommendations, the Commission was charged with reviewing, surveying, and analyzing a variety of issues related to assessments. Through this report, the Commission is submitting its findings to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the State and local boards of education.

## **Requiring a survey**

In addition to the work of the Commission, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) was required by the same legislation to:

- survey and assess how much time is spent in each grade and in each local school system on administering local, State, and federally mandated assessments; and
- compile the results of the survey into documents that are consistent across local school systems and grade levels.

The survey, conducted in the summer of 2015, contained a matrix of each federal, State and locally mandated assessment administered in each of the 24 Maryland school systems. The survey included the information required by the legislation for each assessment. MSDE submitted these documents to the Governor, the General Assembly, the State Board of Education, each local board of education, and other stakeholders on August 31, 2015. The State Board, local boards, and four stakeholder groups reviewed and commented on the results of the survey. These documents became the foundation of the Commission’s work.

The full legislation is in Appendix II.

The full scope of the work completed prior to the seating of the Commission is summarized in Appendix IV.

## Commission's Charge

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According to Chapter 421 from the 2015 General Assembly Legislative session, the Commission shall:

- (1) Survey and assess how much time is spent in each grade and in each local school system on administering local, State, and federally mandated assessments;
- (2) Review the purpose of all local, State, and federally mandated assessments administered by local school systems, whether summative or formative, and determine whether some assessments are duplicative or otherwise unnecessary;
- (3) Review and analyze the local school systems' and the Department's interests in requiring assessments and attempt to develop a statewide approach to administering assessments;
- (4) Determine whether the current local and State schedules for administering assessments allots enough time between administering a formative assessment and receiving the results of the formative assessment to meaningfully inform instruction;
- (5) Survey and assess if the testing windows implemented by the local school systems and the State have any negative ancillary effects on instruction, materials and equipment use, and school calendars;
- (6) Consider implications for the State if changes were to be made to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that would allow for more flexibility in administering assessments;
- (7) Make recommendations on:
  - i. How local school systems and the State can improve the process in which local, State, and federally mandated assessments are administered and used to inform instruction;
  - ii. If the Commission finds that the allotted time for administering assessments is resulting in reduced instruction time, the most efficient and effective methods to ensure that adequate time is allotted to both administering assessments and instruction;
  - iii. Which developmentally appropriate elements, if any, should be included in an assessment administered to kindergarten students; and
  - iv. Any other relevant issue identified by the Commission; and
- (8) Ensure that any recommendation retains the ability to compare student achievement across local school systems, the State, and the nation.

On or before July 1, 2016, the Commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the State Board of Education, each county board of education, and the General Assembly in accordance with §2-1246 of the State Government Article.

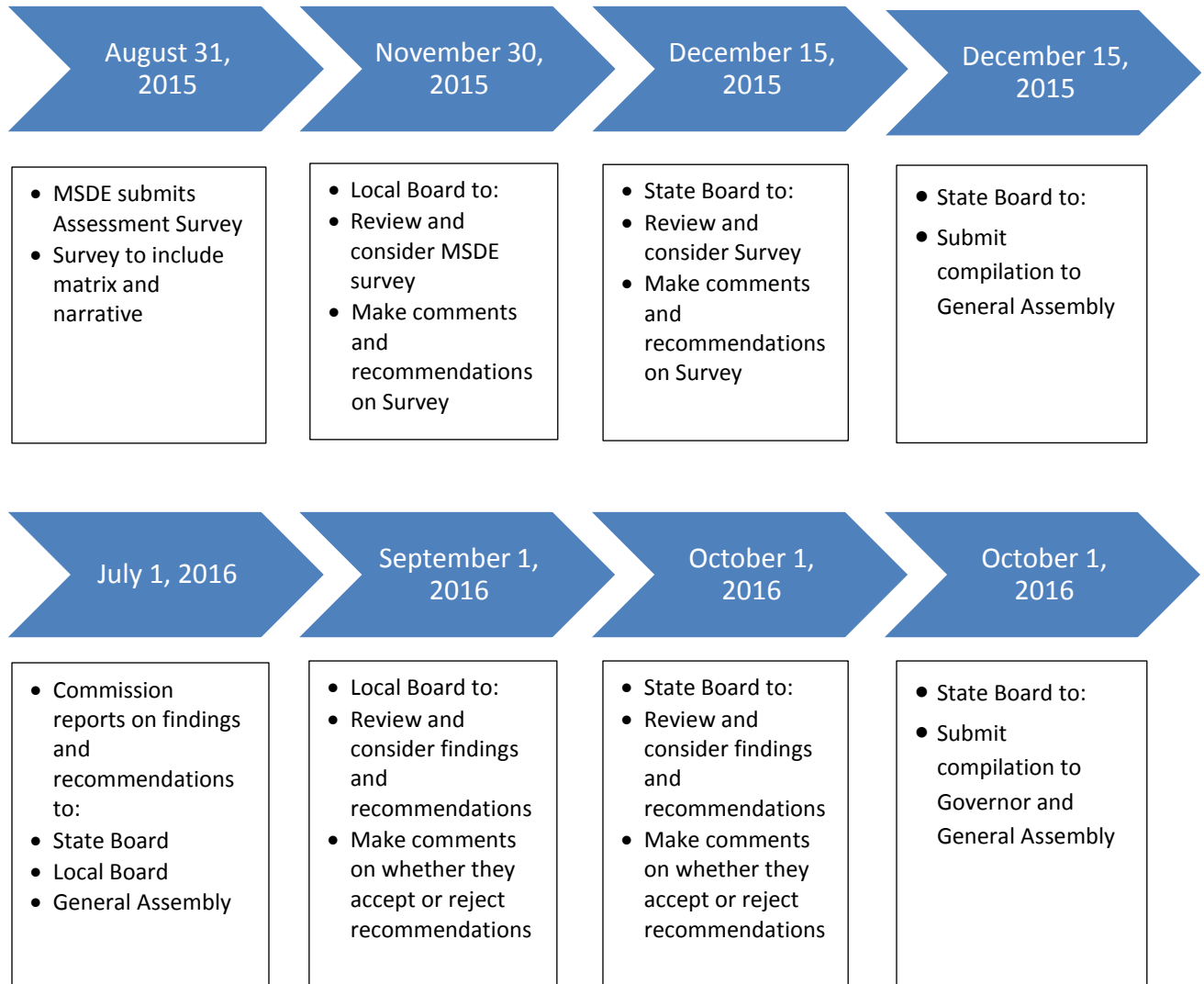
On or before September 1, 2016, each county board of education shall review and consider the Commission's findings and recommendations; and make comments and recommendations related to whether they accept or reject the Commission's findings and recommendations to the State Board; and make comments and recommendations available to the public on request.

On or before October 1, 2016, the State Board shall: 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, in accordance with §2-1246 of the State Government Article, the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Committee on Ways and Means of their comments and recommendations and the comments and recommendations of each county board of education.

Figure 1 contains a visual depiction of the legislation timeline.

Figure 1

# Commission on Assessments Timeline per House Bill 452/Chapter 421



## Common Understandings and Definitions

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During the course of its work, the Commission studied MSDE’s August 2015 Report, heard from a variety of stakeholders, and had vigorous discussions. Commission members came to the agreement that student assessments serve a number of important purposes, including the measurement of student progress, the provision of data to allow educators to meet student learning needs, and the means to hold schools accountable for student learning to ensure equity by shedding light on achievement gaps. In addition, time spent on taking and administering assessments must be balanced, and instructional time must be protected to the greatest degree possible. Thus, assessments should provide the most useful information possible while taking the least amount of time away from teaching and learning.

As a framework for its analyses and recommendations, the Commission used the key principles for good assessments put forward by John B. King, Jr., Acting Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education (USDE). According to Dr. King, the key principles are designed to:

*“...help States and districts reduce over testing by eliminating unnecessary and low-quality assessments while protecting the vital role that good assessments play in measuring student progress each year so parents and teachers have the best information – thus improving outcomes for all learners and ensuring equity. As described in more detail in the Plan, every assessment should be:*

- **Worth Taking:** *Assessments should be aligned with the content and skills a student is learning, require the same kind of complex work students do in an effective classroom and the real world, and provide timely, actionable feedback. Assessments that are low-quality or redundant should be eliminated.*
- **High Quality:** *Assessments should measure student knowledge and skills against the full range of State-developed college- and career-ready standards in a way that elicits complex student demonstrations of knowledge, and provide an accurate measure of student achievement and growth.*
- **Time-limited:** *States and districts must determine how to best balance instructional time and the need for high-quality assessments by considering whether each assessment serves a unique, essential role in ensuring all students are learning.*
- **Fair – and Supportive of Fairness – in Equity in Educational Opportunity:** *Assessments should provide fair measures of what all students, including students with disabilities and English Learners, are learning. As one component of a robust assessment system, States should administer key assessments statewide to provide a clear picture of which schools and students may need targeted interventions and supports.*



• **Fully Transparent to Students and Parents:** States and districts should ensure that students and parents have information on required assessments, including (1) the purpose; (2) the source of the requirement; (3) when the information about student performance is provided to parents and teachers; (4) how teachers, principals, and district officials will use student performance information; and (5) how parents can use that information to help their child.

• **Just One of Multiple Measures:** No single assessment should ever be the sole factor in making an educational decision about a student, an educator, or a school.

• **Tied to Improved Learning:** In a well-designed testing strategy, assessment outcomes should be used not only to identify what students know, but also to inform and guide additional teaching, supports, and interventions. “

The Commission decided that in order to most accurately address the charge areas in the legislation, it must base its work on common definitions. In collaboration with State and local education leaders, MSDE drafted and the Commission adopted the following definitions:

- **Mandated Assessment:** A mandated assessment is one that is required to be implemented by law, regulation, policy and/or practice; it is mandatory to administer a specific assessment.
- **Non-mandated Assessment:** A non-mandated assessment is one that is not required to be implemented by law, regulation, policy and/or practice; it is optional to administer the specific assessment.
- **Locally Mandated Assessments:** It is centrally determined that everyone in the district must give the assessment to an identified group of students, such as students determined by grade level, programs or subject area. Locally mandated assessments vary greatly in number, scope, format, and whether they are locally developed or vendor purchased. This variation reflects the strong tradition of local autonomy and decision-making that exists in Maryland. Local school boards are elected or appointed and superintendents are hired to make decisions that best reflect the values and desires of local communities. The following are the most commonly reported types of locally mandated assessments: Diagnostic Assessments, Pre-Tests/Benchmarks/Interim Assessments, Quarterly Assessments/Unit Assessments, End of Course Exams/Post-Tests, Vendor-Produced Assessments for Screening, Instructional Placement, Progress Monitoring, and Assessments to Measure Cognitive Ability.
- **Federal/State Mandated Assessments:** There is a federal/State law or regulation that requires everyone in the state to give the assessment to an identified group of students, such as students determined by grade level, program or subject area. State mandated assessments include the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), Maryland School Assessment

(MSA) Science, Alt-MSA Science, High School Assessments (HSA), and National Center for State Collaborative (NCSC) Alternative Assessment. In addition to being mandated by the State, some of these meet a federal mandate as well.

- **Teacher-Developed Assessments:** There are many assessments given in more than 1400 Maryland schools that are created by individual teachers, grade level teams, subject area teams, and some are building created and/or determined. These assessments are specifically excluded from this report by legislation. Daily quizzes, weekly tests, and in some local school systems even final exams are entirely teacher-developed. Teacher-developed assessments are not considered locally mandated assessments.

## Findings and Recommendations

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The State of Maryland, as well as the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and Maryland's 24 school districts, have a vested interest in ensuring a balanced and coordinated approach to assessment in public schools. The State and local districts have mandated a variety of individual assessments to serve specific and valid purposes. Individually, each assessment may require a reasonable amount of resources and provide a valuable set of results for a specified purpose. In total, these accumulated assessments may require more resources than their benefits warrant. The State's interest is not in assessments themselves, but in balancing the resources mandated assessments require with the benefits they produce.

The Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools was born out of concerns that the testing pendulum had swung too far, and that an inappropriate amount of public school resources have been devoted to mandated assessments. To respond to that charge in a responsible and transparent fashion, the Commission has undertaken a broad review of the assessments mandated by the federal government, the State and local school districts. This review will include information about the impact the implementation of these assessments has had on the instructional program in schools throughout the State.

Reviewing the impact of assessments requires an evaluation of the associated costs and benefits of each. The Commission is using a broad definition of costs to include all the resources required to administer them and return the results. Those resources would include the following:

1. Monetary costs of the assessment
2. Instructional time required for students to take assessments
3. Time required for teachers and supervisory staff administering assessments
4. Instructional time of students and teachers used specifically for test preparation
5. Instructional time for untested students and staff affected by the test administration
6. Facilities and computer resources required
7. Staff time, facilities and technology required to communication with families

The Commission considers the benefits of each assessment in two parts: the purpose and the quality and value of results. The purpose of each mandated assessment should be made explicit to establish the goals that assessment will help meet. However, understanding the quality of the results is also central to weighing the costs and benefits of an assessment. The breadth and depth of the content covered in any assessment is variable and should match the stated purpose of the assessment. For instance, a resource heavy assessment may produce results that are more detailed than necessary to meet the purpose of the assessment. Such assessments can be scaled back to free up resources for instruction and still meet the intended purpose. Conversely, a resource light assessment that provides results that are of insufficient quality to meet the assessments purpose may also need to be adjusted, possibly by increasing resources to improve the results to meet the purpose.

Assessing students is an integral part of the teaching and learning processes. Assessment is a process of gathering information to guide educational decisions and inform parents, teachers, and administrators about the growth and achievement of their students. Assessments provide information to help teachers inform their instruction, support student learning, and guide interventions and professional learning for teachers. Assessments also provide information about the efficacy and efficiency of schools to MSDE, the Maryland State Government, and the public. In general terms, purposes for assessments include measuring students' knowledge and skills at different grades for various subjects in order to:

1. Inform instruction by establishing baseline data on students' knowledge of content and specific skills and by assessing student progress towards content standards
2. Benchmark student scores at entry to a grade or program against State curricular standards
3. Measure student scores at the end of a grade or program against State curricular standards
4. Gauge students college or career readiness against State standards
5. Determine program placement
6. Benchmark student progress for graduation requirements
7. Provide information for teacher and principal evaluations through student learning objectives
8. Compare results across states, school districts and schools.

Local districts mandate a wide variety of assessments. A local district may include tests whose purpose is to diagnose students learning for initial placement in programs (these include diagnostic assessments; outside vendor-produced assessments for screening, placement and progress; and assessments of cognitive ability mainly for gifted and talented programs). Some districts mandate benchmark tests or interim assessments as well as quarterly or unit assessments with the purpose of monitoring student progress through a course. Generally, diagnostic and monitoring tests are used as formative assessments with the purpose of guiding instruction. Whether or not these assessments fall under the definitions of "locally mandated assessments" can depend both who is producing them and how they are used.

The purposes for assessments are important to delineate so that the resources required to achieve those purposes can be weighed against them. State and locally mandated assessments are the most resource intensive sets but are used for generally separate purposes. State mandated exams are primarily summative assessments and used for comparative and accountability purposes. In contrast, locally mandated assessments are primarily used as formative assessments that can inform instruction and program readiness.

The Commission performed its work between November 17, 2015 and June 14, 2016. During this time, various stakeholder groups, including students and parent, educator, principal, superintendent, and board of education associations testified before the Commission. The Commission broke into three subcommittees to discuss assessments and assessment administration in relation to elementary, middle and high schools, and infrastructure. The findings and recommendations were agreed to by a super majority (75% vote) of the full present

Commission and are reported here in relation to the specific charges delineated in legislation. Appendix III reports in more detail the work of the Commission.

**Charge 1: Survey and assess how much time is spent in each grade and in each local school system on administering local, State, and federally mandated assessments**

The survey, conducted in the summer of 2015, contained a matrix of each federal, State and locally mandated assessment administered in each of the 24 Maryland school systems. The survey included the information required by the legislation for each assessment. MSDE submitted these documents to the Governor, the General Assembly, the State Board of Education, each local board of education, and other stakeholders on August 31, 2015. The State Board, local boards, and four stakeholder groups reviewed and commented on the results of the survey. These documents became the foundation of the Commission's work, and the results of the survey are found within the documentation of the work of the Commission in Appendix III.

Recommendations concerning the length and impact of testing can also be found in the following Commission information under Charges 5 and 7.

**Charge 2: Review the purpose of all local, State, and federally mandated assessments administered by local school systems, whether summative or formative, and determine whether some assessments are duplicative or otherwise unnecessary**

***Finding 2.1:***

The current climate and attitude toward assessment is much different from the climate and attitude toward assessment that existed in 2012 when the State statute Md. Ed. Art. 7-203 (b) (3) (i) was passed. Assessing students' knowledge in high school social studies is not a federal requirement, rather a State requirement. The Government High School Assessment (HSA) is an assessment that is disruptive to cohesive classroom instruction. This is due to the way the assessment is designed to be given in a two hour and fifteen minute period of time. Many stakeholder groups reported that it was important for students to be assessed in social studies, but not at both the middle and high school level. In addition, removal of the Government HSA would possibly reduce funding to properly monitor correct implementation of social studies standards from Grades 6 through 12.

***Recommendation 2.1A:***

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.

***Recommendation 2.1B:***

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.

***Finding 2.2:***

The topic of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) has come up during presentations to the Commission as well as during discussions of mandated assessments by the Commission. The Commission has tried to determine the extent to which decisions have been made to use mandated assessments as part of SLOs; and when this has been done, has been decided by school system leadership or at the school level by the principals and the teachers.

The Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC) and the American Institute of Research (AIR), leading experts on SLOs, have conducted trainings for local district teams, primarily made up of executive staff, building administrators, and teachers for the past three years in collaboration between the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA). A major component emphasized by both groups is the need to have SLOs created, driven, and owned by teachers in order to garner the greatest impact on student learning.

Yearly, CTAC along with WestEd have been commissioned by MSDE to conduct statewide surveys on SLOs and the Teacher and Principal Evaluation (TPE). In their September 2015 report, they categorize districts as “instruction versus compliance.” Some districts link instruction and the TPE process, including SLOs, by focusing on improving instruction and building capacity, and welcome genuine teacher-district collaboration. However, others are driven more by compliance and implement the TPE process—including SLOs—because it is required, resulting in “haphazard” links to instruction caused by a lack of teacher input and buy-in.

There also is significant variability of local school district procedures for implementing SLOs. Each district has defined the number of required SLOs, the measures for the assessment of student academic progress, and the weight or percentage that each SLO counts in the evaluation ratings received by teachers and principals. Testimony presented to the Commission from both core and non-core subject teachers have suggested that the creation of the SLO student growth requirement in TPE has resulted in an increase in mandated standardized testing.

The SLO process in several districts has become a time intensive, top-down district mandate, and in many cases includes measures not directly relevant to the individual teacher and the students

he or she teaches. Additionally, the number and documentation of SLOs remains the focus in many districts versus to focus the dialog on instructional strategies that can assist students with specific needs. This information is again cited in the WestEd/CTAC study.

Educators can utilize multiple measures within the SLO process to determine and assist students to meet standards. The development and monitoring of up to two SLOs (as developed by the individual teacher) should provide sufficient measures to positively move instruction. Any number of SLOs more than two often results in increased testing and less time for instruction, rather than the aim of improving student learning.

SLOs frequently are based, in whole or in part, on teacher-developed quizzes, tests, or other forms of classroom-based assessment used as an on-going means of monitoring student progress. This enables teachers to modify their instructional practices during the period of SLO implementation, rather than relying exclusively on the summative administration of a State or district mandated assessment.

***Recommendation 2.2A:***

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. 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.

***Recommendation 2.2B:***

School districts should require no more than two teacher directed SLOs for the purposes of meeting the student growth requirements within the TPE.

**Charge 3: Review and analyze the local school systems’ and the Department’s interests in requiring assessments and attempt to develop a statewide approach to administering assessments**

***Finding 3.1:***

The limitation that only certified teaching staff can proctor some tests leads to disruption of classes not involved in the testing. Teachers are pulled from their regular instruction to proctor, and media specialists, staff development teachers, school counselors, special educators are pulled from their work with students and main job responsibilities. For teachers, the classes are typically covered by a substitute teacher/paraeducator or the classes are combined. In all situations, instruction and services to students are limited and/or disrupted. Students testified to the Commission that on school days when testing occurred and they were not participating in it, these were “free days,” indicating a complete absence of instruction. This problem can be partially ameliorated with the following recommendation.

### ***Recommendation 3.1:***

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.

### **Charge 4: Determine whether the current local and State schedules for administering assessments allots enough time between administering a formative assessment and receiving the results of the formative assessment to meaningfully inform instruction**

According to House Bill 452/Chapter 421 from the 2015 General Assembly Legislative session, a Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools was established. To inform the Commission's work and as part of the same legislation, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) was required to survey and assess how much time is spent in each grade and in each local school system on administering local, State, and federally mandated assessments. This information was compiled into documents that are consistent across local school systems and grade levels. The document was distributed to school districts and school boards for review and comment. According to stakeholder testimony, the statewide survey of local districts' document proved to prompt conversations at the Local Education Agency (LEA) leveraging a reflective practice centered on discussions about best practices in districts' assessment programs.

### ***Finding 4.1:***

As high stakes assessments, the PARCC assessment results will provide information for the evaluation of students' progress toward College and Career Readiness, a portion of a new accountability system required as part of ESSA, and be linked to high school graduation requirements. PARCC reports available to school communities at

<https://md.pearsonaccessnext.com/customer/index.action> include:

- **Parent Home Report**- Individual student score data
- **Performance Level Report** - PARCC, State, District, and School level score data in subgroup categories
- **District Summary of Schools Report**- Individual schools' score data
- **Student Roster Report**- Individual student score data



- **Evidence Statement Report-** Analyzes individual test items and specific indicators in English Language Arts and Mathematics
- **Content Standard Roster Report-** Analyzes specific indicators in English Language Arts and Mathematics

Stakeholder groups providing testimony to the Commission expressed concerns about acting on lagging PARCC results. Reporting mechanisms associated with PARCC assessment results were not available in a timely manner; and therefore, could not be used for informing decisions regarding a student’s program, the district curricular framework, or instructional adjustments. Since the PARCC assessment will be the means of identifying the bottom 5% of schools and are to be used to improve the overall curricular and instructional program, timely results are a critical first step for improving students’ outcomes.

***Recommendation 4.1:***

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.

***Recommendation 4.2:***

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.

**Charge 5: Survey and assess if the testing windows implemented by the local school systems and the State have any negative ancillary effects on instruction, materials and equipment use, and school calendars**

***Finding 5.1:***

Educators in the State of Maryland report that as a result of their current experiences in administering mandated assessments in their schools, there is a significant loss of instructional time.

- During the testing window, teachers have fewer hours to devote to instruction. This not only includes actual teaching time but also time spent in lesson planning. Planning time becomes focused on logistics and includes the modification of existing lesson for substitutes. It also includes adapting lesson plans to account for the significant classroom absences that relate directly to testing. In addition, teachers must administer the tests.
- Classroom absences are not limited to the specific test date. Class time is missed both during the official test dates as well as the additional days required to accommodate

student absences and testing accommodations. Instruction during the testing window must account for all these reductions and lesson plans must be adapted so that all students receive comparable instruction. This means that actual instruction content during the testing window must be reduced in both tested and non-tested courses.

- Not all students have the same level of technological skills. Those students that do not have the requisite skills to take online tests must receive supplementary technical instruction but, at the same time, their content area instruction cannot be reduced. Planning and administration of testing must accommodate the needs of these students.
- Early testing for kindergarten students is performed in September, which is prior to students' developing school behaviors, building relationships, and understanding classroom routines that would enable them to work independently while the teacher is assessing students.

### ***Recommendation 5.1:***

Require Superintendents to annually report two measures of testing time from the prior school year to their county Board of Education:

- 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
- The number of days the school schedule was changed schoolwide, beyond an individual classroom, by mandated assessments for each school.

### ***Finding 5.2:***

The amount of instructional impact to a given school depends upon a number of different factors, including: school size, grade level tested, special services provided, and student background knowledge of testing formats. While it is impossible to quantify the instructional impact of mandated assessments, the examples below provide a sense of the types of commitment required to implement the assessments:

- PARCC Elementary and Middle School (Grades 3–8): Requires approximately eight hours for students, including three 90-minute English Language Arts (ELA) units; four 60-minute mathematics units in Grades 3 through 5; and three 80-minute mathematics units in Grades 6–8.
- Maryland School Assessment Science: Requires two hours of instruction for students in Grades 5 and 8, and must be tested on two separate days.
- High School Assessments: Biology and Government HSAs; PARCC assessments in Algebra I, Algebra II, English 10, English 11, and Biology; and the ACCUPLACER are typically administered during the entire month of May or for four weeks, which require a change in the daily schedule and impact daily instruction. In addition, there are non-mandatory assessments such as the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate examinations that are also given in May.
- Alternate Maryland School Assessment Science (Alt-MSA) is an individually administered assessment developed for non-diploma bound students with disabilities in Grades 5, 8, and

10. It requires:
- A teacher-created, portfolio-based assessment with a four-month testing window from November through March.
  - Test examiners must participate in an annual three-hour professional learning session on the administration of the assessment.
  - On average, it requires forty hours per student for students in Grades 5, 8, and 10.
  - World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Reclassified English Language Learner (REL) students K–12: Requires approximately two to four hours over four days. It is an untimed assessment.
    - Reading – 35 minutes; Writing – 35 to 65 minutes depending on grade level and Tier; Listening – 40 minutes; and Speaking – 30 minutes.
  - ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 for active English learners including parent refusals in Grades K–12:
    - It requires approximately two to three hours over two to four days.
    - It is an untimed assessment.
    - The suggested time for each sub-section is: Reading – 35 minutes; Writing – 35 to 65 minutes depending on grade level and Tier; Listening – 40 minutes; and Speaking – 30 minutes.
    - An online or paper-pencil assessment with an approximately six-week testing window in January and February.
    - Test administrators must participate in an annual two hour online professional learning session.
    - Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is an individually administered English language proficiency assessment developed for English learners who have significant cognitive disabilities in Grades 1–12.
      - At the state-level, approximately 130 students take this each year.
      - There are four sections of the Alt-ACCESS assessments—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—each section takes approximately twenty minutes to individually administer.
      - Test administrators are responsible for scoring student responses.
  - Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) is an individually administered assessment in English Language Arts and mathematics developed for non-diploma bound students in Grades 3–8 and 11.
    - An online assessment with a six-week testing window from the end of March to mid-May.
    - Test administrators must participate in an annual six-hour online professional learning session.
    - On average, the reading language arts assessment takes approximately three and a half hours to administer per student and the mathematics assessments takes approximately three hours to administer per student.
    - Test administrators must also spend an average of two additional hours preparing materials as indicated in the Directions for Test Administration (DTAs) for each content area of the test.

- Benchmark or interim assessments to measure students’ progress in reading and mathematics throughout the school year:
  - Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI): Administered three times per year (fall, winter and spring) to students in Grade 2 through high school for a total of five to six hours.
  - Elementary and Middle School Benchmarks: Administered mid-year and end-of-year in reading and mathematics for thirty to ninety minutes per administration in Grades 3–8.
  - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP): Requires four to six hours of instruction for students in Grades 1–8 and selected high school students.
    - MAP Reading: Two to three sessions in the fall, spring and winter, which are untimed and can range from thirty to ninety minutes per administration.
    - MAP Math: Two to three sessions in the fall, spring and winter, which are untimed and can range from thirty to ninety minutes per administration.
- District-developed curriculum-based mandatory summative assessments are administered to measure a student’s academic progress and attainment of course or grade level standards.
- Assessments that require one-on-one administration to students (e.g., running records, language eligibility testing, Individualized Education Program [IEP] required assessments, etc.) take the teacher and student away from instruction.
- Mandated assessments impact instructional programs. The number of assessments coupled with the requirements related to those assessments heightens the impact. Resources are diverted from instruction to assessment support. In order to ensure that instructional impacts are kept to a minimum, each school district should track and report on the degree of that impact. While all student instruction is affected to some degree, some populations are disproportionately impacted. In particular, special needs populations (ESL and IEP), are heavily impacted both by testing and the loss of educational support. In addition, technology instruction is often impacted when media centers and computers are not available to support instruction due to their use for mandated assessment. Because the assessments will disrupt instruction, it is critical that all stakeholders view them as an instructional aid. This requires that test results be provided in a timely manner. The Commission recommends that the following action be taken to reduce the instructional impact of test coordination of mandated assessments on the instructional program in the State of Maryland.

***Recommendation 5.2:***

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.

***Finding 5.3:***

Services to students, particularly for students with disabilities, ESOL students, and students with Section 504 Plans, are disrupted or decreased significantly.

- Students with special needs (including ESOL, IEP and students in need of counseling) do not receive services when those who support them (ESOL teachers, reading specialists, special educators, counselors, related service providers, and paraeducators) are needed to support the administration of mandated assessments. For all these students, but especially for:
  - General test proctoring/administration during the testing window
  - Individual administration and scoring of cognitive, speech and language, and achievement assessments that require specialized certification to administer
- Students who are severely disabled are subjected to a significant amount of testing resulting in the loss of an excessive amount of instructional time related to IEP goals.
- Students with accommodations require additional testing time; therefore, schools with large English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and special education populations are greatly impacted by the additional time that is required to administer the assessments.

There are general concerns with the accommodations for students.

- When students receive an accommodation on a test, but do not regularly receive that accommodation during the instruction leading up to the test, it can cause unneeded stress and may result in underperformance.
- Giving the test in a student’s native language is only a support if the student receives instruction and is literate in that language. It does not help a student that is instructed in English only.
- The “word-to-word bilingual dictionary” accommodation is being given to students who are not able to read their native language.
- There is still much confusion with "extended time." With previous testing such as MSA, it was clearly stated that students with extended time would receive an additional time amount of fifty percent. Therefore on a thirty minute test, a student with extended time would have forty-five minutes. With PARCC, students are given as much time as they need.

Additional concerns have been identified with the accommodation guidelines, resources, and forms.

- Guidelines are often not specific enough and therefore left open to interpretation. For example, “decoding issues” needs to be broken down more to explain exactly when accommodations are allowed.
- The Accommodation Form needs to be updated and redesigned, since it still has MSA (Reading and Math).
- Currently, form Tool EL-5A needs to be completed within forty-five days of the start of school and then in the spring another form titled *PARCC Accessibility Features and Accommodations Documentation For English Language Learners* has to be completed. This needlessly takes away time that could be spent on other responsibilities.

All students must be provided with equitable access to high-quality, 21<sup>st</sup> century assessments. The

State of Maryland acknowledges that some student populations require accommodations to ensure that they receive equitable access to education and assessment. PARCC offers a number of high quality accommodations. The State of Maryland, too, has developed a number of supports for its special needs populations. It has documented these in its *Accessibility Features and Accommodations Manual*. The accommodations in the manual need to be reviewed and clarified with respect to the PARCC accommodations, but the educational needs of the students of the State of Maryland need to drive decisions with respect to accommodations. It is in the interest of the students and the State that MSDE create appropriate consistency in the allowable accommodations for State assessments.

**Recommendation 5.3:**

MSDE shall review and update the current *Maryland Accessibility Features and Accommodations Manual* 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.

**Finding 5.4:**

Technology is an issue in mandated assessment when the resources that are used to support the test are not available to support instruction. In addition, many districts reported infrastructure issues related to technology. Although some districts reported progress in ensuring that technology is available to support instruction during testing windows, improvement in this area is clearly necessary. Moreover, when tests are required to be taken on a computer, performance for students who lack technological proficiency may be negatively impacted.

The simple reality is that school systems across Maryland, as is true of their counterparts across the nation, are at varying stages of integrating technology into the instructional and assessment programs. This variance does not refer to the simple marketing headlines trumpeting the use of technology in teaching and learning. Rather it speaks to the far more complex systemic and systematic integration of digital instructional curricular content, the deployment of sufficient student devices to access and consume this content directly in their classrooms, and the implementation of a robust network that integrates wireless and wired networks with enhanced building bandwidth and connectivity to the Internet, along with appropriate ongoing professional learning and technical supports.

**Table 1. State Assessments Offered Online**

Percentages and Counts of Online versus Paper Test-Taking by October 2013

LEA	Elementary Schools			Middle Schools			High Schools		
	Online %	Paper %	Count	Online %	Paper %	Count	Online %	Paper %	Count
Allegany	54.91%	45.09%	1273	60.27%	39.73%	1241	89.17%	10.83%	4606
Anne Arundel	14.83%	85.17%	11585	14.71%	85.29%	11166	32.36%	67.64%	33927

Baltimore City	0%	100%	11551	0%	100%	10700	11.56%	88.44%	46667
Baltimore County	19.60%	80.40%	15656	24.33%	75.67%	14998	62.81%	37.19%	61777
Calvert	49.61%	50.39%	2433	50.28%	49.72%	2522	67.49%	32.51%	6059
Caroline	34.38%	65.63%	832	14.29%	85.71%	777	18.98%	81.02%	2266
Carroll	56.78%	43.22%	4058	48.96%	51.04%	4003	79.43%	20.57%	9349
Cecil	99.83%	0.17%	2384	100%	0%	2321	87.05%	12.95%	7296
Charles	96.12%	3.88%	3788	98.86%	1.14%	3870	98.83%	1.17%	14009
Dorchester	0%	100%	609	19.87%	80.13%	614	99.42%	0.58%	2749
Frederick	50.03%	49.97%	5864	49.31%	50.69%	5910	57.80%	42.20%	17526
Garrett	97.23%	2.77%	542	99.34%	0.66%	608	94.89%	5.11%	1624
Harford	42.14%	57.86%	5805	48.89%	51.11%	5629	54.60%	45.40%	16515
Howard	48.65%	51.35%	7807	49.27%	50.73%	7582	93.14%	6.86%	19734
Kent	50%	50%	288	49.01%	50.99%	302	65.27%	34.73%	1100
Montgomery	10.64%	89.36%	21488	16.99%	83.01%	20647	45.16%	54.84%	52281
Prince George's	46.79%	53.21%	17889	85.02%	14.98%	9532	45.89%	54.11%	70183
Queen Anne's	38.18%	61.82%	1265	37.51%	62.49%	1165	14.64%	85.36%	3128
St. Mary's	49.79%	50.21%	2635	49.63%	50.37%	2446	4.61%	95.39%	6614
Somerset	100%	0%	406	99.48%	0.52%	385	100%	0%	1512
Talbot	100%	0%	684	100%	0%	613	100%	0%	1657
Washington	52.67%	47.33%	3349	55.77%	44.23%	3355	88.56%	11.44%	10011
Wicomico	99.69%	0.31%	1926	99.75%	0.25%	1968	99.11%	0.89%	7508
Worcester	49.82%	50.18%	851	51.80%	48.20%	915	92.29%	7.71%	2348

The following table summarizes the perspective of bandwidth capacity (only one portion of that consideration) to illustrate the variety of starting places from which Maryland school systems began working to make improvements in preparation for the PARCC administration. The challenges that under-capacity networks present are highlighted by the fact that approximately only eleven of the twenty-four Maryland school systems administer eighty percent or more of their HSAs online. It is important to note that in Maryland, the largest numbers of assessments administered online are completed in the high schools.

**Table 2. Maryland School Districts Connectivity Summary**  
Starting at Time of Field Tests 2013-2014 School Year

School District	Total Schools	Total Students	Bandwidth	ESH Avg Kbps/student	ESH Avg Mbps/School
Allegany	26	8,812	1 Gbs/Wifi	21.07	13.23
Anne Arundel	122	80,387	1 Gbs/50 Mps	90.17	45.08
Baltimore City	181	83,666	1 Gbs	60.46	24.37
Baltimore County	174	111,138	30 Mbps	52.97	20.14
Calvert	25	16,017	Wifi	61.43	*
Caroline	10	5,602	*	13.18	13.61
Carroll	47	25,551	10 Gbs/Wifi	119.49	237.01
Cecil	28	15,859	N/A	16.62	16.60
Charles	38	26,307	10 Gbs/Wifi	85.79	41.36
Dorchester	13	4,739	1 Gbs/Wifi	*	*
Frederick	67	40,655	1.6 Gbs	*	*

Garrett	12	3,856	*	212.33	51.45
Harford	54	37,448	500 Mbs	14.31	8.15
Howard	76	54,870	1 – 5 Gbs	47.52	25.77
Kent	7	2,029	100 Mbs	44.97	13.33
Montgomery	207	156,380	100 Mbs	78.25	40.32
Prince George’s	211	128,936	100 Mbs – 1 Gbs	120.99	58.40
Queen Anne’s	14	7,717	300 Mbs	254.16	120.40
St. Mary’s	30	17,941	500 Mbs	62.53	36.40
Somerset	9	2,908	*	82.77	43.19
Talbot	8	4,625	1 – 10 Gbs	34.65	19.73
Washington	46	22,303	*	779.76	93.72
Wicomico	25	14,790	1 Gbs	141.40	52.17
Worcester	14	6,660	*	36.84	13.01
	1445	879,601			

These data were collected by the Education Super Highway—an organization MSDE retained to complete a needs assessment.

In summary, school systems across Maryland face significant challenges in funding the required infrastructure, device, and staffing enhancements to efficiently administer PARCC/MSAA with minimal disruption to schools’ instructional programs. For most school systems, this remains an unfunded State mandate that local systems are struggling to address.

**Recommendation 5.4:**

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.

**Finding 5.5:**

Mandated assessments that are administered on computers or other technology require that technology be made available for assessment purposes. Costs, in terms of resource utilization and lost instruction, are associated with the use of technology. It is in the interest of the State of Maryland to determine the costs of technology in the administration of mandated assessments. Further, because not all students possess the same level of technical skills, equitable assessment requires that districts determine the special technological accommodations that may be required to support students until they develop adequate technical skills.

**Recommendation 5.5:**

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.

**Charge 6: Consider implications for the State if changes were to be made to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that would allow for more flexibility in administering assessments**

***Finding 6.1:***

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to have standards for science. In addition, ESSA requires MSDE to demonstrate, in consultation with local agencies, that a high quality science assessment will be implemented at least once in Grades 3-5, and in Grades 6-9 and at least once in Grades 10-12 (S. 1127-55). The 2016-2017 school year will be a transition year for implementation of ESSA, with full implementation expected in the 2017-2018 school year. Maryland Public Schools are currently working towards aligning their science curricula to the Next Generation Science Standards in order to be ready for the new Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (MISA). COMAR 13.A.02.06 requires that Maryland students pass the Biology HSA. In addition, Maryland is still operating under the rules in place before the enactment of ESSA, as federal funds are still tied to NCLB at least through the 2016-2017 school year.

The High School Subcommittee reviewed specific recommendations of stakeholders after learning that the Biology curriculum would no longer be aligned with the Biology HSA for 2016-2017 school year. Feedback included:

- The Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland (PSSAM) had consensus that curriculum, instruction and assessments be aligned.
- The Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) has provided survey data from educators and the public from across the State showing a common belief that there is too much testing negatively impacting instructional time.
- The Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU) recommended that tests should be tied to the curriculum and that large amounts of instructional time are lost due to testing.
- The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) stated that more time was needed for instruction.
- Maryland Parent Teacher Association (PTA)'s biggest concern was the loss of in class learning time and they recommended audits of assessments to reduce misaligned, unnecessary and redundant exams.
- The National Governors Association (NGA) presented at the Commission meeting on December 17, 2015. Richard Laine, Division Director of NGA's Education Division, presented that "assessments should have the purpose of reinforcing good teaching and should provide actionable feedback to students, educators and parents." He also included that, "as the assessments change, accountability cycle needs to be reset."

Despite the misalignment with the curriculum, the Biology HSA must still be administered and

students must take the test in 2016-2017 for the State to be eligible for federal funding. It is recommended that COMAR regulations are amended to remove the Biology HSA as a graduation requirement during this transition year.

***Recommendation 6.1:***

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.

***Finding 6.2:***

In 2012, the Maryland General Assembly passed COMAR Regulation 7-203 which mandated that MSDE develop and implement a middle school social studies assessment. The current climate and attitude toward assessment is much different from the climate and attitude toward assessment that existed in 2012 when the State Statute Md. Ed. Art. 7-203 (b) (3) (i) was passed. In short, the footprint of mandated assessment in Maryland has been expanded greatly, subtracting from time dedicated to instruction.

There has also been a tremendous diversion of human and capital resources to support the mandated assessment process, particularly in the eighth grade. This would include the multiple test administrations in mathematics, English Language Arts, and science. The addition of the mandated middle school social studies assessment would increase the time spent on assessments in the eighth grade.

***Recommendation 6.2:***

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.

**Charge 7: Make recommendations on:**

- i. **How local school systems and the State can improve the process in which local, State, and federally mandated assessments are administered and used to inform instruction;**
- ii. **If the Commission finds that the allotted time for administering assessments is resulting in reduced instruction time, the most efficient and effective methods to ensure that adequate time is allotted to both administering assessments and instruction;**
- iii. **Which developmentally appropriate elements, if any, should be included in an assessment administered to kindergarten students; and**
- iv. **Any other relevant issue identified by the Commission; and**

The PARCC assessment program, designed to measure what students should know and be able to do based on the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards, is in the second year of full administration. The implementation of the second year of the PARCC assessment represented a change in the administration schedule, moving from two testing windows to one and to a reduction of the timeframes for each grade level. The changes to the second year of the full administration of the PARCC assessments were the result of concerns expressed regarding time spent on assessments leading up to the PARCC administration, the actual PARCC assessment timeframe, and lost instructional time. Instructional time is not restricted only to the PARCC assessed areas, but also to the non-assessed areas, due to the need for staff across content areas to assist with testing administration. This creates varying degrees of school-based schedule adjustments during assessment windows.

***Finding 7.1:***

PARCC is the State and federally mandated assessment and is considered a summative evaluation for Grades 3-8, Algebra I and English 10. If Algebra I is taken at the middle school level, then another PARCC assessed mathematics administration must be provided at the high school level to meet the high school test requirement of a 95% participation rate. The State Board has established criteria linking high school assessments' score criteria to Maryland graduation requirements.

Principals, as the school-based instructional leaders, along with their school-based leadership teams, have autonomy in some districts to implement school-based testing measures deemed appropriate for addressing the unique challenges that may or may not be represented at a district level. Complexities surrounding an individual school's demographic indicators (subgroup assignments, socio-economic status, enrollment shifts, special education, etc.) sometimes require additional assessments which are not required by the school district. Periodic high-quality assessments of all types are necessary for eliminating gaps in learning by allowing the teacher at the classroom level or in a particular content area to adjust the instructional program to strengthen the areas with which a student may be struggling. School-based assessments specific

to schools and not part of the district’s assessment program add a dimension of consideration to the overall amount and types of assessment given at a grade level and/or content area to particular students.

In addition, diagnostic assessments are given for the purpose of assigning learners to specific programs designed to meet their unique learning needs (intervention, accelerated programs, specific vendor programs, and progress monitoring evaluations). Additional assessments such as benchmark assessments, end-of-course assessments, mid-terms, unit tests and other types of assessments may be locally-mandated or be created and administered by teachers.

Assessments are an important component of a comprehensive approach to developing curriculum, monitoring instructional delivery strategies, and ascertaining strategies for continuous improvement. These steps are essential to support the academic achievement of individual and groups of students. That said, there must be assurances that the assessment program in each district is cohesive and comprised of high-quality and purposeful assessments. Therefore, the Commission is recommending that each district form a District Committee on Assessment (DCA) for the purpose of reviewing its assessment program on a cyclic basis, establishing baseline evaluation of the assessment program, identifying adjustments based on the evaluation, implementing the adjusted program, and re-evaluating the assessment program for the impact of those adjustments.

During the preparation for and administration of mandated assessments, supports to staff are reduced or eliminated during the administration of mandated assessments. For example:

- Staff responsible for providing professional learning, coaching, modeling, and facilitating Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and data chats are not available to support teachers due to their roles as test coordinators, proctors, or test accommodators.
- Administrators who serve as testing coordinators are challenged to complete informal and formal observations, participate in essential grade level and department PLCs, and fulfill their other instructional and operational duties.
- Due to the security requirements of the test administration, many teachers use their planning periods to ensure they are in compliance with the testing rules, knowledgeable of the instructions, and have all of the instructional resources and materials available to students. This requires them to work longer hours after school to do their planning and other related instructional tasks.

***Recommendation 7.1:***

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.

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.

Charge 1: The superintendent shall establish and appoint the District Committee on Assessment by December 2017 which reflects the size of the district and diversity of its schools. The Committee shall include administrators, teachers, and parents, along with community and business partners. The administrators and the teachers shall be inclusive of elementary, middle, and high school with an emphasis on representation of the various student service groups, such as Special Education and English Learners. The local education association shall be represented by the association president or designee. The district may choose to assign the assessment review task to an existing stakeholder advisory group representing those stakeholders.

Charge 2: The District Committee on Assessment shall develop and complete a customized rubric designed to evaluate local assessments based on best practices in assessments. Forms of assessments, timelines, and use vary by district. Particular attention should be paid to the investment of time to administer each assessment, redundancy, purpose, meaningful use, and timeliness of results. To provide for a comprehensive evaluation of the district's assessment program, the rubric should evaluate district mandated assessments and school-based assessments required by someone other than the teacher. Examples of assessments include, but are not limited to, benchmarks, unit and midterm/final tests, district or schoolwide vendor programs serving a variety of purposes, and those used to validate a student learning objective.

Charge 3: The District Committee on Assessment shall develop a means by which to seek input from general educators, content specialists, and teachers working with specific service groups, such as Special Education and English Learners and populations who are not represented on the committee when establishing the baseline information. Examples include a school-based focus group, public comment session, or survey.

Charge 4: The District Committee on Assessment shall submit a baseline report, along with recommended adjustments and the timeline for the implementation of those adjustments, to the Local Board of Education by October of the year in which the District Committee on Assessment completes its assessment. Each district Board of Education shall adopt or reject the District Committee on Assessment's findings and recommendations and make comments and recommendations related to whether they adopt or reject the District Committee on Assessment's findings and recommendations.

Charge 5: MSDE shall compile a summary of the information from districts' Local Board approval and submit the report to the Maryland General Assembly as verification that districts are evaluating local assessment systems against best practices.

Charge 6: The District Committee on Assessment shall publish on the district website a yearly calendar of assessments, expected feedback dates, the value of the assessment and how it is contributing to improved classroom instruction, curriculum, and student outcomes.

Charge 7: The District Committee on Assessment shall examine the issue of the funding necessary to implement mandated assessments in local school systems. Complete a needs assessment to determine both the human and financial resources needed to accomplish:

- Planning of logistics, scheduling and resource allocation to accomplish mandated assessment
- Collection, distribution, and analysis data related to assessment to all stakeholder groups in a timely fashion
- Facilitating data chats related to assessment results, empowering educators, parents and students themselves to understand student results and the implication for learning
- Facilitating/leading professional learning opportunities for teachers to understand the standards-based implication of assessments and their results, particularly as related to career and college readiness
- Coordinating/disseminating student information specifically on the career and college readiness of students as it relates to State requirements
- Providing updates and professional learning to staff on changes and adjustments to State and district mandated assessment programs

***Finding 7.2:***

Mode effect or mode of delivery - online vs. paper is a subject of discussion and concern. In a March 21, 2016 presentation entitled *Study of PARCC Results by Mode of Delivery (Mode Effect)... A Deeper Dive*, the Maryland State Board of Education heard that in 2014-2015 713,672 (80%) of the 876,787 tests in Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and English 10 and Grades 3-8 Mathematics, Algebra I and Algebra II were delivered online. The 2015-2016 administration will realize 90% of tests completed online. An examination of the mode effect provided the following findings:

- Comparison of mode by performance level illustrates students that took the test on paper tended to outperform the online test-takers on the English Language Arts tests and higher level mathematics tests
- Greater percentage of higher performing students in Maryland took the paper form
- There is no evidence of any particular student group being impacted more than the population as a whole
- Items requiring extended responses most greatly impacted by mode favoring paper

- There is no evidence of any technical issues in the development, administration, scoring or reporting of the results

The mode effect results can be attributed to a number of factors including, but not limited to:

- Paper no longer being the standard as with previous Maryland assessment programs
- Writing expectations surpass Maryland’s prior assessments
- Introduction and use of Technologically Enhanced Items (TEIs), tools and the multimedia presentation of information
- Use of technology in the day-to-day instruction has grown but students’ experience with technology for learning is uneven across the State
- Students’ skill levels vary in accordance with the pace and implementation schedule of the Maryland Career and College Readiness Standards in schools and districts

It is expected that in 2016-2017 and beyond, all students will be assessed online with the exception being made for students with specific accommodations and in cases where the school infrastructure is not conducive to maximize online testing opportunities.

As gaps close in the access to technology for learning and skill levels increase across content and grade levels, scores on the computerized assessment are expected to increase over time with the computer administered PARCC assessments.

**Recommendation 7.2:**

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.

**Finding 7.3:**

The structure, timeframe, and schedule of the PARCC assessments are notable concerns among stakeholder groups representing all levels. It is important to recognize that the administration of the new single administration PARCC assessments came after the majority of the stakeholder testimony about the structure, timeframe, and schedule of the PARCC assessments.

Standardized assessments administered at high school level vary among districts but include tests such as the High School Assessments (HSA), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT I & II), American College Testing (ACT), Advanced Placement Exams (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) exams. The two-part PARCC assessment that is now reduced to a single assessment was a welcome change among stakeholders. The length and structure of PARCC assessments is not commensurate with other assessments that are administered at the high school level. Below is a chart outlining the length of each assessment:

Test Name	Length: ELA	Length: Mathematics	Length: Other
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<b>PARCC</b>	5 hours 10 minutes	4 hours 30 minutes	
<b>SAT</b>	1 hour 40 minutes	1 hour 20 minutes	
<b>ACT</b>	45 minutes	1 hour	
<b>Accuplacer</b>	Unlimited (multiple choice)	Unlimited (multiple choice)	
<b>Advanced Placement</b>	Language and Comp: 3 hours 15 minutes Literature: 3 hours	Calculus: 3 hours 15 minutes Statistics: 3 hours	
<b>HSA</b>			Biology and Government: 2 hours 15 minutes

The way that PARCC assessments are currently designed requires many high schools to alter the periods of the school day, which is disruptive to classroom instruction. Classroom periods are lengthened, shortened and/or eliminated. Students miss instructional time as a result of PARCC assessment administration. It should be acknowledged that PARCC testing has been reduced considerably during the 2015-2016 school year compared to the 2014-2015 school year; however, additional adjustments can be made to limit the amount of testing and the disruption to the school day.

Additionally, the developmental appropriateness and meaningful use of time during the PARCC assessment has been called into question by a number of stakeholder groups. There are several areas of concern surrounding the developmental appropriateness of the PARCC assessment. These include the PARCC test times per unit, per grade level for each of the two assessed areas in the Grades 3-8; keyboarding skill requirements and the impact the lack of keyboarding skills and experience has on assessed performance; and, in some school districts, the inability to make more meaningful use of time when students complete the assessment. In addition, concerns exist regarding the readability of the assessments (For the PARCC test times see Appendix IV).

***Recommendation 7.3:***

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.



This representative statewide practitioner’s stakeholder advisory group, along with MSDE and PARCC representatives, shall work together to discuss how changes to the PARCC assessments would impact the data collection, assessment of standards and integrity of the test. MSDE shall then communicate to all appropriate stakeholder groups the consequences of further streamlining the testing process. Further streamlining of PARCC assessments should consist of one or more of the following:

- Reducing the total length of the test
- Reducing the number of units of the test
- Making the units shorter so as to be administered during an instructional period

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.

When individual students have completed the assessments, districts shall allow students to read or write regardless of whether other students are still testing.

***Finding 7.4:***

MSDE has a process in place for gathering feedback specific to observations and recommendations regarding the ease of the technical aspects of the assessment administration from local school district’s Local Accountability Coordinators (LAC).

***Recommendation 7.4:***

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.

***Finding 7.5:***

Stakeholder groups expressed concerns about the administration timeframe, purpose, and feedback timing of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. The developmental appropriateness of the assessment was also a stated concern.

**Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Information**

The purposes for the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment are to:

- **Help teachers** by providing them information about each child’s skills, abilities, and any learning gaps that will be used to guide their instruction and intervention with students.
- **Advise district and school leaders** so they can address the achievement gaps of children in approaching and emerging levels, inform professional learning, and make curricula enhancements.
- **Inform families** by providing them with an Individual Student Report with suggestions on ways to support their child’s strengths and areas of need.

- **Instruct community leaders and policy makers** on how well-prepared children in their communities are for kindergarten, which helps them make well-informed programmatic, policy, and funding decisions about early care programs (birth-5).

The table below provides information of how the KRA data can be used for either sample or census administration:

	Sample Administration	Census Administration
Informing prior education and care stakeholders of early learning standards and experiences that promote kindergarten readiness	x	x
Identifying individual children’s needs and providing necessary supports to children and teachers		x
Assisting teachers in data-driven instructional decision making at the child and classroom level		x
Providing families with information about their children’s learning and development		x

50 items are administered over 8-10 weeks (beginning of school until November 1<sup>st</sup> (2016 legislation has changed that to October 1st):

21 observational and 2 performance task items can be done in a whole class or small group setting, anytime during the day – e.g., center time, recess, independent time or during instruction.

12 of the app items can occur while the teacher is providing small instruction.

12 items are best administered with the teacher one on one while the class is at centers or working independently.

Provides performance levels on whether students are **demonstrating** the foundational skills and knowledge from prekindergarten in order to begin with kindergarten curriculum, **approaching** (will need some re-teaching of the foundational prekindergarten skills and knowledge, or **emerging** (lack the prekindergarten foundational skills and knowledge and need much instruction and intervention before beginning kindergarten curriculum).

Type of administration	Individual student	Individual student and	School, district, and	Valid results for ELLs, Special Education,

	results to all parents	classroom results to teachers	State overall results	FaRMS, and Prior Care subgroups
Census	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Representative sampling	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>District and State only</b>	*

\*In order to meet psychometric standards for a sample, at least 30 students must be in a subgroup to yield results that are valid and reliable. Reporting of subgroup KRA results at the district level will only be provided for those demographic variables that have a **sample** of at least 30 students in that subgroup who were assessed.

<b>Timetable for data availability</b>				
<b>Item scores available to teachers</b>	<b>Student performance levels and reports available to teachers</b>	<b>Individual Student Reports available to parents</b>	<b>School System Reports</b>	<b>State Report</b>
As soon as teacher administers items	<i>October 3</i>	<i>October 3</i> for classrooms that participate in <b>census administration only</b> *	<i>November 15</i>	<i>November 15</i>

\*Individual Student Reports are available in 4 languages for parents and can be printed from teacher’s computer October 3 or bulk by district. English version is attached.

**Recommendation 7.5:**

MSDE shall continue to report out the quality of early care whether districts choose a census or representative sampling approach to administering the KRA.

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.

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.

**Finding 7.6:**

The emphasis on College and Career Readiness designed to afford students opportunities to be College and Career Ready based on certain pre-identified measures and specific score criteria assigned to those measures may be adding to the concerns regarding too much testing. Per the College Completion Act of 2013 or Statute 7-205.1, High School Curriculum and Graduation

Requirements, districts must report the number of students considered College and Career Ready to the General Assembly in 2017.

***Recommendation 7.6:***

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.

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.

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.

***Finding 7.7:***

Parents are one of the three major members of a strong academic support team for students. In addition to the student and school team members, communication and interaction with parents is a key component of any student's success. It is the school systems' responsibility to build strong communication ties with parents, keeping them informed about the academic progress of their child. Educating and empowering parents with information about the State and local school system assessment programs is vital in their support of their child's academic life.

In part, the current climate of parent frustration with the extent, impact and lack of clarity surrounding the purposes of mandated assessment has been borne out of less than ideal communication between individual schools, districts, MSDE, and parents.

Whether for veterans or first-time parents to the school system, communication regarding standardized assessments should be clear, concise, and meaningful and at a level that is understandable by all. It should convey why students are being tested, what they are being tested on and how the results will be used to program for their child's educational career. Information about assessment programs should be disseminated from the State by providing local school boards with the background and rationale for the current State mandated assessments and how it ties to the curriculum. Resources should be provided to the school systems as well as the parents to support this effort.

When communicating assessment information to parents/families, there are three factors that

should be considered:

- What is being communicated? The information provided to parents must include any information that will enable them to collaboratively engage as partners with the school and make informed decisions about their children’s education.
- How is the information being communicated? The process of communication must address language barriers and represent diverse medium options such as websites, face-to-face sessions, and workshops.
- When is it being communicated to parents? There must be a steady flow of two-way communication that must occur before, during and after the assessment.

It is important that MSDE provides information to the local school systems so they feel fully empowered to support the needs of their students and parents when addressing State mandated assessments.

***Recommendation 7.7:***

MSDE shall provide resources information to parents on State mandated assessments that will:

- a. Provide information about student performance on mandated tests and how teachers will use these data in their classrooms
- b. Explain the assessment construction and format information
- c. Identify the ties/links to curricular standards—assessment question examples and links to specific examples at all grade levels
- d. Address how students with disabilities and who are ELs may be affected by various assessments and why
- e. Communicate the information regarding assessment with parents/families whose first language is not English
- f. Communicate information on Maryland HSA and PARCC that answers:
  - i. Why does my child need to pass these tests to graduate?
  - ii. What are the cut-off scores to meet the criteria?
- g. Create FAQs
- h. Disseminate the assessment psychometrics
- i. Communicate and provide access to statewide, countywide and local school aggregated and disaggregated results
- j. Explain the results in layman’s terms
- k. Interpret the assessment results
- l. 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?

Local Boards of Education shall communicate with parents before, during, and after testing by:

- a. Publishing a comprehensive assessment calendar for elementary, middle and high schools;

- b. Providing and distributing information regarding what students will be tested, why, on what material, and how the assessments connected to the curriculum;
- c. 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
- d. Explaining what assessment results mean for the next steps in students education.

**Charge 8: Ensure that any recommendation retains the ability to compare student achievement across local school systems, the State, and the nation.**

***Finding 8.1:***

The changes to the administrative format of the PARCC assessment has raised some questions and concerns about the comparability of the scores between the first and second full year administration of the PARCC assessment. There are assurances that the format changes will allow for comparability with high confidence levels at the student report, grade/content assessment, district and State levels. According to Douglas Strader, Ed. D., Assessment Director, Maryland State Department of Education, the following measures have been or will be taken:

- Standard psychometric equating procedures will be used to equate the 2016 PARCC tests to the 2015 PARCC reporting scale
- The equating approach was vetted with and approved by the PARCC Technical Advisory Committee
- Detailed written procedures documenting the equating procedures were approved by the PARCC Research and Psychometrics Committee.
- A common item equating design and item response theory analyses will be utilized in equating
- All equating analyses will be replicated by an external vendor and reconciled by a third party
- Projected 2016 results will be compared to 2015 results for each test as part of the equating process

***Finding 8.2:***

To meet the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements, districts must have not less than 95% participation of all students and 95% of all students in each subgroup of students on state assessments with the ability to meaningfully differentiate all public schools in the state [for comparisons to be made between schools, districts, and PARCC states].

***Recommendation 8.2:***

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.

13A.03.02.09

### **.09 Diplomas and Certificates.**

A. The types of diplomas and certificates specified in §§B—D of this regulation shall be awarded to any student who meets the requirements for award.

B. Maryland High School Diploma. Except as provided in Regulation .12 of this chapter, and in §C of this regulation, to be awarded a Maryland high school diploma, a student shall:

(1) Complete the enrollment, credit, and service requirements as specified in this chapter;

(2) Complete local school system requirements; and

(3) Satisfy one of the following:

(a) Achieve a passing score as established by the Department on the Maryland High School Assessments for algebra, biology, English, and government;

(b) Achieve a combined score(s) as established by the Department on the Maryland High School Assessments;

(c) Achieve a score as established by the Department on Department-approved substitute assessments for algebra, biology, English, and government, aligned with the Maryland High School Assessments such as Advanced Placement examinations, SAT I, SAT II, ACT, and International Baccalaureate examinations;

## Conclusion and Final Observations

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The establishment of the Commission to Review Maryland Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools was born from a sense that schools in the State had reached a tipping point in its assessment structure. Parent, educator and public groups raised concerns about time spent on assessment versus instruction, human and capital resources necessary to implement mandated assessment programs, and the core purpose of numerous assessments. The introduction of the PARCC Assessments in Maryland and nationwide have brought about increased questions regarding the purpose, scope and lack of cohesiveness of a wide variety of assessment structures for students.

### **Assessment Has a Purpose**

The Commission wishes to affirm the important role of appropriate assessment in the public school setting. At the outset of this report, we stated that, “assessing students is an integral part of the teaching and learning processes. Assessment is a process of gathering information to guide educational decisions and inform parents, teachers, and administrators about the growth and achievement of their students. Assessments provide information to help teachers inform their instruction, support student learning, and guide interventions and professional learning for teachers. Assessments also provide information about the efficacy and efficiency of schools to MSDE, the Maryland State Government, and the public.” The numerous stakeholders that came before the Commission confirmed the need to properly measure student, teacher, school and district progress. It is incumbent upon us to thoughtfully develop assessment systems and aligned professional learning experiences for educators that support student learning. The debate is how to best accomplish this.

### **How Did We Get Here?**

The expansion of student assessment has been the unintended consequence of numerous policy decisions. Each of those policy decisions is sensible when viewed in isolation, and those who have supported them had the best interest of our students and our schools at heart. Federal and State policymakers invest billions of dollars in public schools and feel an obligation to ensure that all students are making meaningful academic progress. Since the 1980s there has been an understandable movement toward assessing academic achievement. The information gleaned from these tests is one measure that may let us know how our financial investments are paying off, and whether individual students or groups of students are struggling.

Because of the nationwide concern about persistently under-performing schools and achievement gaps in otherwise successful schools, policymakers tied consequences to these test scores. Along the way, policymakers who were concerned about too much testing came to focus on literacy and math tests. They did so based on the belief that these fundamental skills were the most instrumental to long term success and that performance on these assessments would serve as a proxy for school and district effectiveness.



As a consequence, our school systems became intently focused on literacy and math scores. Federal rules looked to them, and State accountability systems were based on them. Along the way, States and districts created other tests to ensure that not all attention was consumed by literacy and math scores. There were end-of-course and end-of-year tests, tests associated with graduation requirements, and tests associated with "college-and-career-readiness" determinations. But other tests (such as Advanced Placement, the SAT, and the ACT) were embraced by families and educators too because they helped gauge students' progress toward post-secondary work.

More recently, when policymakers and the general public began discussing measures of educator effectiveness (the degree to which teachers were contributing to student learning), testing expanded once again. If teachers in literacy and math were going to be evaluated based on end-of-year State tests, teachers naturally wanted to check throughout the year to confirm that their students were on pace to succeed, therefore, more mid-year and practice tests. Teachers in subjects other than literacy and math needed measures of student performance in their evaluations, hence the creation of "student learning objectives" and other new tests.

### **Unintended Consequences**

The list of causes for assessment proliferation could go on and on. However, less debate has occurred over the negative consequences that have resulted from more frequent assessment. Primary among them has been what educators report as the negative impact on student instruction: encroachment upon instruction time, resources required for assessment cannot be used for instruction, and educators required to administer assessment cannot teach and engage students in non-assessment activities. There appears to be duplication in assessment programs on the school, local and State levels. Resources necessary to implement new mandated assessment programs are not readily available, leaving educators and systems viewing these programs as "unfunded mandates."

### **There are No Simple Solutions**

Many of the proposed public and policy solutions regarding mandated assessments have centered on seemingly simple solutions: across the board caps on testing times, the elimination of specific assessments (which in many cases are mandated by the federal government), and a return to one-dimensional test formats such as multiple choice. Had the Commission viewed these as feasible solutions, they would have become recommendations. However, many of these seemingly straightforward options were not realistic; they would create their own unintended consequences.

As a result, many of the Commission's findings became the basis for recommendations that attempt to address the time, manner and resources associated with assessment. The current status quo in terms of "testing events" that lessen learning opportunities, change student scheduling, and divert resources are not acceptable. Many of the Commission's recommendations lead to greater clarity of assessment procedures and reporting of results in a timely manner. There

was a broad consensus that MSDE and LEA communication about the manner, purposes and expectations of assessment programs must be improved to gain broader public support for complex assessment programs.

As appropriate, the Commission made recommendations which, if adopted, would lead to the reduction of the impact of the “assessment footprint”: curtailing the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), ceasing development of the statewide middle school social studies assessment, administering the Biology HSA a participation only-basis for the 2016-17 school year, and restructuring the Government HSA to become classroom-based test. These recommendations are a beginning point, and reflect a pragmatic approach that will make a significant difference for students and educators. Moving forward, we encourage the various policymakers to continue their creative and refined approaches to assessment issues.

### **Continuing the Work at the Local Level**

Particularly challenging aspects of the Commission’s work were determining the scope of local assessment, mandated versus non-mandated assessments, and where overlap and duplication existed. Indeed, the legislation that established the Commission on Assessments also required MSDE to survey and assess how much time is spent in each grade and in each local school system on administering local, State, and federally mandated assessments. The Commission members chose to refrain from making recommendations based on concerns of the comparability of the data among LEAs.

While the amount may vary, it is clear that mandated assessments at the local level have contributed to the overall assessment dilemma. A number of LEAs stressed that their assessment programs are in a period of transition. They are transitioning to more technology-based assessments; they are transitioning in how they use the information produced through the assessments; and they are analyzing which assessments provide the most valuable information about teaching and learning. As a result, many school systems have recently made or are considering changes to their local assessment programs that are responsive to the concerns the public has raised.

For these reasons, the Commission views the establishment of the District Committees on Assessment (DCAs) and annual reporting by superintendents of the scope of local assessment to their local Boards of Education as two of its most important recommendations. Once established, DCAs will be better able to address assessment concerns raised by stakeholder groups, and make their own recommendations tailored to the needs of districts’ students and educators.

### **Opportunities Moving Forward**

The recent passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has redefined federal educational accountability measures. It mandates that states must provide challenging academic standards and coursework that is aligned with these standards. However, unlike recent federal guidelines, nature of the benchmark assessments associated with these standards is very much determined

by the states. In addition, ESSA is encouraging states to examine multiple and non-standardized assessments as a means to meet these standards.

Based on the still developing ESSA guidelines, the Commission strongly encourages MSDE to pursue an evolution to a state accountability system that reflects the important things that schools do. As long as we primarily assess schools and districts based on literacy and math scores, district behavior will be aligned with literacy and math scores; that is, more and more assessments. Were the State to give greater weight to other non-standardized test-based measures of student and school success, such as indicators of parent and student satisfaction and the acquisition of other skills, habits, and information, the Commission is confident we would see a substantial and lasting decrease of the kinds of tests at issue.

### **Not Just Less, But Different**

This shift requires State-level discussion and consensus about our core beliefs and fundamental values for our schools. Teachers, administrators, and district leaders can reorient their practices around a more expansive set of priorities, and they must be aligned with a diversified, robust, and flexible accountability system. Any rhetorical change regarding priorities must be matched by a real change in school and district evaluation away from an over-reliance on standardized test scores; we can't say "we care about more than literacy and math scores" but then continue to hold them accountable for just literacy and math scores. Likewise, there must be a conscious effort to reduce the quantity of, time allocated for, and impact on instructional time for all mandated assessments, irrespective of the subject or grade level.

Assessment literacy for all stakeholders is part of the learning cycle, and it is critical that educators have the tools and abilities to use data to inform their teaching and learning, and change their practice. To achieve results, we must instill a sense of collective responsibility for the growth and achievement of all students.

As MSDE creates the new accountability system for LEAs, it should expand and diversify the measures that demonstrate student and school success with the purpose of de-emphasizing assessment. It is essential that a variety of representative stakeholder groups be part of meaningful decision-making conversations regarding accountability measures.

The Commission has concluded that a change in assessment policy is absolutely possible. But just as countless defensible micro-decisions led us to where we are, only countless micro-decisions will produce the shift we all want. And that is wholly contingent on a comprehensive state-level change in how we talk about and assess student and school success in Maryland.

# Appendix I

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## Recommendations

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**Charge 1: Survey and assess how much time is spent in each grade and in each local school system on administering local, State, and federally mandated assessments**

*See Recommendations concerning the length and impact of testing under Charges 5 and 7.*

**Charge 2: Review the purpose of all local, State, and federally mandated assessments administered by local school systems, whether summative or formative, and determine whether some assessments are duplicative or otherwise unnecessary**

***Recommendation 2.1A:***

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.

***Recommendation 2.1B:***

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.

***Recommendation 2.2A:***

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.

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.

***Recommendation 2.2B:***

School districts should require no more than two teacher directed SLOs for the purposes of meeting the student growth requirements within the TPE.

**Charge 3: Review and analyze the local school systems’ and the Department’s interests in requiring assessments and attempt to develop a statewide approach to administering assessments**

***Recommendation 3.1:***

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.

**Charge 4: Determine whether the current local and State schedules for administering assessments allots enough time between administering a formative assessment and receiving the results of the formative assessment to meaningfully inform instruction**

***Recommendation 4.1:***

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.

***Recommendation 4.2:***

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.

**Charge 5: Survey and assess if the testing windows implemented by the local school systems and the State have any negative ancillary effects on instruction, materials and equipment use, and school calendars**

***Recommendation 5.1:***

Require Superintendents to annually report two measures of testing time from the prior school year to their county Board of Education:

- 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
- The number of days the school schedule was changed schoolwide, beyond an individual classroom, by mandated assessments for each school.

***Recommendation 5.2:***

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.

***Recommendation 5.3:***

MSDE shall review and update the current *Maryland Accessibility Features and Accommodations Manual* 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.

***Recommendation 5.4:***

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.

***Recommendation 5.5:***

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.

**Charge 6: Consider implications for the State if changes were to be made to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that would allow for more flexibility in administering assessments**

***Recommendation 6.1:***

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.

***Recommendation 6.2:***

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.

**Charge 7: Make recommendations on:**

- v. **How local school systems and the State can improve the process in which local, State, and federally mandated assessments are administered and used to inform instruction;**
- vi. **If the Commission finds that the allotted time for administering assessments is resulting in reduced instruction time, the most efficient and effective methods to ensure that adequate time is allotted to both administering assessments and instruction;**
- vii. **Which developmentally appropriate elements, if any, should be included in an assessment administered to kindergarten students; and**
- viii. **Any other relevant issue identified by the Commission; and**

***Recommendation 7.1:***

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.

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.

Charge 1: The superintendent shall establish and appoint the District Committee on Assessment by December 2017 which reflects the size of the district and diversity of its schools. The Committee shall include administrators, teachers, and parents, along with community and business partners. The administrators and the teachers shall be inclusive of elementary, middle, and high school with an emphasis on representation of the various student service groups, such as Special Education and English Learners. The local education association shall be represented by the association president or designee. The district may choose to assign the assessment review task to an existing stakeholder advisory group representing those stakeholders.

Charge 2: The District Committee on Assessment shall develop and complete a customized rubric designed to evaluate local assessments based on best practices in assessments. Forms of assessments, timelines, and use vary by district. Particular attention should be paid to the investment of time to administer each assessment, redundancy, purpose, meaningful use, and timeliness of results. To provide for a comprehensive evaluation of the district's assessment program, the rubric should evaluate district mandated assessments and school-based assessments required by someone other than the teacher. Examples of assessments include, but are not limited to, benchmarks, unit and midterm/final tests, district or schoolwide vendor programs serving a variety of purposes, and those used to validate a student learning objective.

Charge 3: The District Committee on Assessment shall develop a means by which to seek input from general educators, content specialists, and teachers working with specific service groups, such as Special Education and English Learners and populations who are not represented on the committee when establishing the baseline information. Examples include a school-based focus group, public comment session, or survey.

Charge 4: The District Committee on Assessment shall submit a baseline report, along with recommended adjustments and the timeline for the implementation of those adjustments, to the Local Board of Education by October of the year in which the District Committee on Assessment completes its assessment. Each district Board of Education shall adopt or reject the District Committee on Assessment's findings and recommendations and make comments and recommendations related to whether they adopt or reject the District Committee on Assessment's findings and recommendations.



Charge 5: MSDE shall compile a summary of the information from districts' Local Board approval and submit the report to the Maryland General Assembly as verification that districts are evaluating local assessment systems against best practices.

Charge 6: The District Committee on Assessment shall publish on the district website a yearly calendar of assessments, expected feedback dates, the value of the assessment and how it is contributing to improved classroom instruction, curriculum, and student outcomes.

Charge 7: The District Committee on Assessment shall examine the issue of the funding necessary to implement mandated assessments in local school systems. Complete a needs assessment to determine both the human and financial resources needed to accomplish:

- Planning of logistics, scheduling and resource allocation to accomplish mandated assessment
- Collection, distribution, and analysis data related to assessment to all stakeholder groups in a timely fashion
- Facilitating data chats related to assessment results, empowering educators, parents and students themselves to understand student results and the implication for learning
- Facilitating/leading professional learning opportunities for teachers to understand the standards-based implication of assessments and their results, particularly as related to career and college readiness
- Coordinating/disseminating student information specifically on the career and college readiness of students as it relates to State requirements
- Providing updates and professional learning to staff on changes and adjustments to State and district mandated assessment programs

***Recommendation 7.2:***

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.

***Recommendation 7.3:***

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.

This representative statewide practitioner’s stakeholder advisory group, along with MSDE and PARCC representatives, shall work together to discuss how changes to the PARCC assessments would impact the data collection, assessment of standards and integrity of the test. MSDE shall then communicate to all appropriate stakeholder groups the consequences of further streamlining the testing process. Further streamlining of PARCC assessments should consist of one or more of the following:

- Reducing the total length of the test
- Reducing the number of units of the test
- Making the units shorter so as to be administered during an instructional period

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.

When individual students have completed the assessments, districts shall allow students to read or write regardless of whether other students are still testing.

***Recommendation 7.4:***

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.

***Recommendation 7.5:***

MSDE shall continue to report out the quality of early care whether districts choose a census or representative sampling approach to administering the KRA.

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.

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.

***Recommendation 7.6:***

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.

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.

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.

***Recommendation 7.7:***

MSDE shall provide resources information to parents on State mandated assessments that will:

- m. Provide information about student performance on mandated tests and how teachers will use these data in their classrooms
- n. Explain the assessment construction and format information
- o. Identify the ties/links to curricular standards—assessment question examples and links to specific examples at all grade levels
- p. Address how students with disabilities and who are ELs may be affected by various assessments and why
- q. Communicate the information regarding assessment with parents/families whose first language is not English
- r. Communicate information on Maryland HSA and PARCC that answers:
  - i. Why does my child need to pass these tests to graduate?
  - ii. What are the cut-off scores to meet the criteria?
- s. Create FAQs
- t. Disseminate the assessment psychometrics
- u. Communicate and provide access to statewide, countywide and local school aggregated and disaggregated results
- v. Explain the results in layman's terms
- w. Interpret the assessment results
- x. 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?

Local Boards of Education shall communicate with parents before, during, and after testing by:

- e. Publishing a comprehensive assessment calendar for elementary, middle and high schools;
- f. Providing and distributing information regarding what students will be tested, why, on what material, and how the assessments connected to the curriculum;
- g. 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
- h. Explaining what assessment results mean for the next steps in students education.

**Charge 8: Ensure that any recommendation retains the ability to compare student achievement across local school systems, the State, and the nation.**

***Recommendation 8.2:***

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.

*13A.03.02.09*

**.09 Diplomas and Certificates.**

A. The types of diplomas and certificates specified in §§B—D of this regulation shall be awarded to any student who meets the requirements for award.

B. Maryland High School Diploma. Except as provided in Regulation .12 of this chapter, and in §C of this regulation, to be awarded a Maryland high school diploma, a student shall:

(1) Complete the enrollment, credit, and service requirements as specified in this chapter;

(2) Complete local school system requirements; and

(3) Satisfy one of the following:

(a) Achieve a passing score as established by the Department on the Maryland High School Assessments for algebra, biology, English, and government;

(b) Achieve a combined score(s) as established by the Department on the Maryland High School Assessments;

(c) Achieve a score as established by the Department on Department-approved substitute assessments for algebra, biology, English, and government, aligned with the Maryland High School Assessments such as Advanced Placement examinations, SAT I, SAT II, ACT, and International Baccalaureate examinations;

# Appendix II

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LAWRENCE J. HOGAN, JR., Governor

Ch. 421

Chapter 421

(House Bill 452)

AN ACT concerning

**Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools**

FOR the purpose of establishing the Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools; providing for the composition, chair, and staffing of the Commission; prohibiting a member of the Commission from receiving certain compensation, but authorizing the reimbursement of certain expenses; requiring the Commission to survey, assess, review, and make recommendations regarding certain matters; requiring the Commission to report its findings and recommendations to the State Board of Education ~~and~~, and the General Assembly, on or before a certain date; requiring the State Board and certain county boards to review and consider the Commission's findings and make certain comments or recommendations on or before a certain date; requiring the State Department of Education to survey, review, and assess certain data relating to local, State, and federally mandated assessments; requiring the Department to report certain findings and recommendations results to the State Board of Education, each county board of education, certain educational organizations, and certain legislative committees on or before a certain date; requiring each county board and certain educational institutions to review and consider certain findings and recommendations results and make certain comments on or before a certain date; requiring the State Board to review and consider certain findings and recommendations results, make certain comments, and submit a certain compilation; requiring certain county boards to make certain comments and recommendations available to the public on request; requiring the State Board to submit a certain compilation to the General Assembly on or before a certain date; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools.

Preamble

WHEREAS, Maryland has been recognized nationally for its leadership in education; and

WHEREAS, It is of crucial importance to assess children so that local school systems and states can gain formative information on student achievement levels and how students compare to other students locally, statewide, and nationwide; and

WHEREAS, Because of Maryland's nationally recognized success in education, we can play an integral part in both the State's and the nation's efforts in developing greater efficiency and efficacy around administering local, State, and federally mandated assessments; and

- 1 -

WHEREAS, While assessing children is necessary to continue to make educational gains, there is a need to examine the interplay between and the possible duplication of local, State, and federally mandated assessments; and

WHEREAS, All assessments administered to children should have instructional value and a stated purpose; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That:

(a) (1) In this section, “assessment” means a local, State, or federally mandated test that is intended to measure a student’s academic readiness, learning progress, and skill acquisition.

(2) “Assessment” does not include a teacher–developed quiz or test.

(b) There is a Commission to Review Maryland’s Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools.

(c) The Commission consists of the following members:

(1) two members of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of the Senate;

(2) two members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(3) the State Superintendent of Schools, or the Superintendent’s designee;

(4) the Governor, or the Governor’s designee;

(5) one member of the State Board of Education, appointed by the President of the State Board; and

(6) the following members, appointed by the Governor:

(i) one representative of the Maryland State Education Association;

(ii) one representative of the Baltimore Teachers Union;

(iii) one representative of a local education association;

(iv) one county school board member;

(v) two county superintendents, at least one of whom is from a local school system with over 120,000 students;

(vi) one principal of a public school;

(vii) one National Board Certified teacher who teaches in the State;

(viii) two parents of children who attend a public school in the State who:

1. are active in the local school system; and

2. have a background in education policy; and

(ix) two nationally recognized education experts in the field of student assessment, at least one of whom specializes in duplicative testing.

(d) The Governor shall designate the chair of the Commission.

(e) The State Department of Education shall provide staff for the Commission.

(f) A member of the Commission:

(1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Commission; but

(2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

(g) The Commission shall:

(1) survey and assess how much time is spent in each grade and in each local school system on administering local, State, and federally mandated assessments;

(2) review the purpose of all local, State, and federally mandated assessments administered by local school systems, whether summative or formative, and determine whether some assessments are duplicative or otherwise unnecessary;

(3) review and analyze the local school systems' and the Department's interests in requiring assessments and attempt to develop a statewide approach to administering assessments;

(4) determine whether the current local and State schedules for administering assessments allots enough time between administering a formative assessment and receiving the results of the formative assessment to meaningfully inform instruction;

(5) survey and assess if the testing windows implemented by the local school systems and the State have any negative ancillary effects on instruction, materials and equipment use, and school calendars;

(6) consider the implications for the State if changes were to be made to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that would allow for more flexibility in administering assessments;

(7) make recommendations on:

(i) how local school systems and the State can improve the process in which local, State, and federally mandated assessments are administered and used to inform instruction;

(ii) if the Commission finds that the allotted time for administering assessments is resulting in reduced instruction time, the most efficient and effective methods to ensure that adequate time is allotted to both administering assessments and instruction; ~~and~~

(iii) which developmentally appropriate elements, if any, should be included in an assessment administered to kindergarten students; and

~~(iii)~~ (iv) any other relevant issue identified by the Commission; and

(8) ensure that any recommendation retains the ability to compare student achievement across local school systems, the State, and the nation.

(h) (1) On or before ~~April~~ ~~September~~ July 1, 2016, the Commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the State Board of Education ~~and~~ each county board of education, and the General Assembly in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article.

(2) On or before ~~June~~ ~~November~~ September 1, 2016, ~~the State Board and~~ each county board of education shall:

(i) review and consider the Commission's findings and recommendations; ~~and~~

(ii) make comments and recommendations related to whether they accept or reject the Commission's findings and recommendations to the ~~General Assembly, Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Committee on Ways and Means~~ State Board; and



(iii) make the comments and recommendations available to the public on request.

(3) On or before October 1, 2016, the State Board shall:

(i) review and consider the Commission's findings and recommendations;

(ii) make comments and recommendations related to whether they accept or reject the Commission's findings and recommendations; and

(iii) submit a compilation to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Committee on Ways and Means of their comments and recommendations and the comments and recommendations of each county board of education under paragraph (2) of this subsection.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

(a) The State Department of Education shall:

(1) survey and assess how much time is spent in each grade and in each local school system on administering local, State, and federally mandated assessments; and

(2) compile the results of the survey referred to in item (1) of this subsection into documents that are consistent across local school systems and grade levels;

~~(3) review and analyze the local school systems' and the Department's interests in requiring assessments and attempt to develop a statewide approach to administering assessments; and~~

~~(4) determine whether the current local and State schedules for administering assessments allot enough time between administering a formative assessment and receiving the results of the formative assessment to meaningfully inform instruction.~~

(b) (1) The compilation referred to in subsection (a)(2) of this section shall include the following information for each assessment administered in a local school system, in matrix form:

(i) the title of the assessment;

(ii) the purpose of the assessment;

(iii) if the assessment is a local, State, or federal assessment;

- (iv) the grade level to which the test is administered;
- (v) the subject area of the assessment;
- (vi) the testing window of the assessment;
- (vii) how long a student has to complete the assessment; and
- (viii) if the assessment requires a change in the school schedule.

(2) The compilation referred to in subsection (a)(2) of this section shall include the following information for each assessment administered in a local school system, in narrative form:

- (i) if the assessment requires any test preparation;
- (ii) if the assessment must be taken by pencil and paper or by electronic device;
- (iii) if the assessment must be taken by electronic device, the student to electronic device ratio;
- (iv) if the assessment is a high-stakes assessment;
- (v) the date the assessments are turned in to receive results;
- (vi) the date the results of the assessment are or were released;
- (vii) to whom the results of the assessment are or were released;
- (viii) how much time passes between administration of the assessment and the receipt of the results of the assessment;
- (ix) if the assessment requires proctors or other personnel to administer the assessment;
- (x) if the assessment requires technological support to administer the assessment;
- (xi) if the assessment allows for accommodations for students with disabilities; and
- (xii) if the assessment is available in other languages for English language learners.

(c) (1) ~~(i)~~ On or before August 31, 2015, and October 15, 2015, the Department shall ~~report its findings and recommendations~~ submit the documents referred to in subsection (b)(1) and (2) of this section, respectively, to:

~~1.~~ (i) the State Board of Education;

~~2.~~ (ii) each county board of education;

~~3.~~ (iii) the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Committee on Ways and Means; and

~~4.~~ (iv) the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, Maryland State Education Association, Maryland PTA, Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland, and any other education organization in the State that the Governor chooses.

~~(ii) The Department shall compile the information gathered from the survey referred to in subsection (b) of this section into a document that is consistent across local school systems and grade levels.~~

(2) (i) On or before ~~October 31, 2015~~ November 30, 2015, each county board of education and each organization listed in paragraph ~~(1)(i)4~~ (1)(iv) of this subsection shall:

1. review and consider the ~~Department's findings and recommendations~~ results of the Department's surveys;

2. make comments and recommendations related to ~~whether they accept or reject the Department's findings and recommendations~~ the results of the Department's surveys to the State Board; and

3. make the comments and recommendations available to the public on request.

(ii) The organizations listed in paragraph ~~(1)(i)4~~ (1)(iv) of this subsection shall provide comments and recommendations that are one to three pages in length.

(3) On or before December 31, 2015, the State Board shall:

(i) review and consider the ~~results of the Department's findings and recommendations~~ surveys;

(ii) make comments and recommendations related to ~~whether they accept or reject the Department's findings and recommendations~~ *the results of the Department's surveys*; and

(iii) submit a compilation to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Committee on Ways and Means, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, of the comments and recommendations of the State Board, each county board of education, and each organization listed in paragraph ~~(1)(i)~~ (1)(iv) of this subsection.

SECTION ~~2~~ 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June 1, 2015. It shall remain effective for a period of ~~3~~ 2 years and, at the end of May 31, ~~2018~~ 2017, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

**Approved by the Governor, May 12, 2015.**

# Appendix III

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## Summary of Commission’s Work

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The Commission met on the following dates:

· November 17, 2015	· February 8, 2016	· May 10, 2016
· December 17, 2015	· March 7, 2016	· May 16, 2016
· January 11, 2016	· April 14, 2016	· June 8, 2016
		· June 14, 2016

All meeting materials are posted at

<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/commissiononassessments/index.html>

In November and December, the Commission discussed the August 2015 report and assessment survey mandated by HB452/CH421 conducted by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Many school systems reported during the data collection that they were in a period of transition, so the matrices completed in June 2015 were updated to reflect what was in place for school year 2015-2016. MSDE validated and collected information from each school system regarding the number of hours students spend taking local, State and federally mandated assessments at each grade and produced a chart summarizing the information. Through this process, it became apparent how much variability exists among school systems regarding the type and number of locally mandated assessments.

During the discussion, Commission members noted that with so much variation among systems, it is hard to compare data. During the discussion, members made the following points:

- Differences among the systems could be partially explained by variations in the definition of what constitutes a “mandated” assessment.
- Some systems have a more centralized approach to testing students. Having more centrally mandated assessments does not necessarily mean that students in that system take more tests than students in systems where testing decisions are made at the school or classroom level.
- Some assessments might be used solely for the purpose of developing and measuring Student Learning Objectives, which are used for teacher and principal evaluations.
- There are multiple variables that need to be looked at when deciding if an assessment is duplicative and how much it disrupts instruction.

To fully address all charge areas, the Commission asked to have a presentation about the status of

the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), hear from various education organizations, including those listed in the legislation, and hear from students about their perspectives on testing.

Commission members also expressed an interest in hearing about the following topics: the testing imprint on schools, mandated formative assessments, data in the context of student outcomes, the importance and purpose of testing, comparing the usefulness of an assessment with how much instructional time is lost (benefit/cost analysis), how accurately an assessment measures learning, what is the psychological effect of testing on students, whether there are adequate resources to prepare students and administer assessments, how school systems can share best practices, how other states meet federal mandates, whether Maryland is tied to PARCC, whether Maryland's standards are the correct standards to measure, whether the High School Assessments should continue, the interplay between PARCC and the College and Career Ready testing bill, and whether the administration of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) can be adjusted.

### **Presentations:**

What follows is a brief summary of the presentations to the Commission by various stakeholder groups, including their summaries and the recommendations. At times, these recommendations conflict with each other. This information, in conjunction with the MSDE Report, the prior knowledge of each Commission member, and individual research informed the Commission's final recommendations. Additional information about the stakeholder presentations can be found on the Commission's webpage.

#### ***Update on Elementary and Secondary Education Act***

Richard Laine, Director of the Education Division of the National Governor's Association, presented *Considerations for How Maryland Can Use Assessments to Reinforce Good Teaching and Improve Student Learning*. The presentation included information about opportunities for states in the areas of standards, assessments, accountability, interventions, and teacher and principal evaluations under the newly reauthorized ESEA, known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The full presentation is on the Commission webpage.

#### ***Maryland State Education Association (MSEA)***

Two panels presented on behalf of the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA). The first panel consisted of three MSEA staff and the second of four teachers.

The first pane said that MSEA established 21 Time to Learn Committees across the State to identify information which they believed was inaccurate in the MSDE August 2015 Report and the local school system assessment matrices. MSEA also conducted an educator survey and received 5451 responses from its membership, which includes teachers and support personnel.

Based on the Committee reports and survey results, MSEA made the following eight

### recommendations:

1. Create teams at the State and local level that include MSDE and other stakeholders to collect and report accurate data.
2. Establish State and local assessment task forces and maintain annual reporting to stakeholders on mandated testing.
3. Adopt a 2% testing cap.
4. Testing transparency with monthly reporting to parents about mandated tests in each school district.
5. Push to secure one of the seven slots allowed in ESSA to seek innovation in testing with a focus on performance-based assessments.
6. Eliminated duplicative high school testing by replacing PARCC in high school grades with some combination of the SAT, ACT, or Accuplacer.
7. Allow for the opt-out of any testing for special education students/parents when approved-IEP accommodation is not allowed.
8. Change the KRA [Kindergarten Readiness Assessment] to a sampling test.

The second panel made the following points:

1. Instructional experiences in the Arts are in jeopardy because of the focus on testing.
2. Special Education students depend on consistent services which are disrupted when teachers are pulled from the classroom to proctor tests, etc. There are many concerns in the Special Education arena that need to be addressed in relation to mandated standardized testing. These concerns focus on the development of the test as it relates to accommodations.
3. Many hours of instructional time are lost administering the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) for very little gain for students and teachers in return for information that has little meaning delivered on a timeline that is not conducive to using the results for instructional purposes.
4. Good assessments provide valuable information. Local school systems should implement policies with stakeholder input.

### ***Students' Perspectives***

Six high school and middle school students from Kent County answered questions from Commission members. In summary, they made the following points:

1. Students feel under pressure to do well on tests. Results reflect on the student, teacher and school. Some students, however, do not take tests seriously. What is on a standardized test does not necessarily correlate to what was learned in class.
2. There is a large amount of time devoted to testing, which takes away from instructional time and learning.
3. Testing does not necessarily give an accurate picture of a student's abilities. PARCC results should not be part of a student's grade or appear on the student's report card.

### ***Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland (PSSAM)***

The PSSAM panel consisted of two local school system superintendents each with a principal and teacher from that system. In summary, the panel made the following points:

1. There is consensus among local superintendents that curriculum, instruction and assessments need to be aligned. Multiple means of assessing and measuring progress are essential. Both formative and summative assessments are important. Accountability through assessments is important to all stakeholders.
2. There must be a balance between assessment, teaching and learning. Timely results inform teachers and students on progress toward learning.
3. Putting limits on time spent on assessments does not respect the various needs among schools and districts.
4. Assessments ensure that instructional decisions are based on data rather than assumptions. PARCC scores are used to adjust curriculum and instruction moving forward.

### ***Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU)***

The panel consisted of the BTU president and two teachers. The panel made the following points:

1. High quality assessments are important. Tests need to be aligned with the curriculum.
2. BTU supports the MSEA recommendations.
3. Administering the KRA takes a great deal of time away from instruction. The results are still not back, so they are not useful. The KRA should be administered before students start school.
4. There are too many tests given at the high school level. This testing takes other resources, such as the media center, and teachers are pulled out of class to administer tests to other students.

The BTU made the following seven recommendations:

1. The tests should be data driven for students first. The data should be available immediately for students, parents, and teachers. It should not take weeks for students to get the results of the test. This way students can find out exactly what their needs are as well as the teachers. This should be the purpose of the test. The results should be available to plan around instruction.
2. The test should be tied to the curriculum. This way you know what has been taught and what needs to be adjusted for the students to improve. Students should not be tested on material that has not been taught. Often students are tested on information that has not been taught because of the timeline for testing.
3. Assessments should be for Career Ready students as well as College Bound. Currently, assessments are for college bound.
4. The school district should pilot tests before they are given system wide. This way the district can be given feedback as to how to give the test and if the test is testing what needs to be tested.
5. Kindergarten students should be tested before they enter school in August. Currently, the results are not available until later in the year and time is wasted testing students during



class time and the results are late. Teachers need these results before students come into the classroom

6. There needs to be an OPT-Out provision for parents of special needs and parents of non-special education who want to opt-out of the assessment.
7. Support of the 2% cap on testing.

### ***Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE)***

One member of the MABE staff and one local board member presented. The presenters made the following points:

1. MABE firmly believes that policy considerations regarding testing methods should remain within the purview and decision-making authority of local boards of education, superintendents, and local school systems.
2. Standardized assessments are critical to the work of school boards. They give data to determine whether students are college and career ready, evaluate policies, address achievement gaps, and ensure equity. Multiple assessments are essential.
3. Technology is a concern. Training is needed and there needs to be adequate resources for both testing and instruction.
4. Boards of education oppose a 2% testing cap; they are uniquely positioned to make assessment decisions about what individual school communities need.

### ***Maryland Parent Teacher Association (MDPTA)***

The president of MDPTA said that assessments should be viewed as a process of gathering information to guide educational decisions. It is essential to have multiple assessments to reflect the breadth and depth of knowledge and skills. There must be a balance so students do not lose too much instructional time. Having annual data on the performance of students helps identify achievement gaps. This can help guide instruction to better meet the needs of students and ensure that all students receive a high-quality education. MDPTA does not support students opting out of assessments. Opting out could lead to diminished funding, and resources for interventions for students. This would have a disparate impact on minorities and students with special needs, leading to a widening of the achievement gap.

MDPTA made the following six recommendations:

1. The Commission review how many tests are provided every year, so that we can determine what makes sense for our students
2. Establish an accountability system for multiple measures of student growth and achievement that is aligned with academic standards and supports college and career readiness. The State should encourage statewide audits of their assessment system to reduce low-quality, misaligned, unnecessary and redundant exams.
3. Create a Task Force to clearly articulate to parents the assessments and the accountability system in place at their child's school. Parents should be notified through multiple communication resources of required assessments, their purpose, and when they will occur as well as when the results will be available. Additionally, families should

be notified on how the administration will use assessment data and how parents can use the information to support their child's academic growth.

4. Provide clear and easily accessible information to parents, educators, school districts and the community regarding nonparticipation in state assessments and the consequences it may have on students, schools and educators. The state should collect data on the number and frequency of students who opt-out of state assessments and report on the impact of instructional practices and school accountability measures.
5. Provide adequate professional learning experiences to teachers and principals to ensure assessment data is used appropriately to guide instruction and support evidence-based interventions for identified students, subgroups of students and school improvements.
6. School districts should work with schools to design the assessment calendar to guarantee minimal disruption to in-classroom learning opportunities as well as disruption to those students not taking the assessment.

### ***Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)***

The MASSP President and President Elect, both high school principals, spoke on behalf of the organization. Their points related specifically to Charge #5 regarding whether the testing windows have negative ancillary effects on instruction, materials, equipment use and school calendars. The impact on high schools are evident on the day of the tests, through the number of tests, on the amount of time administrators and test coordinators spend on testing, through the ramifications of mistakes, and regarding technology concerns. On test days, schedules must be changed and teachers giving tests cannot teach their own classes. When technology is used for testing, students cannot use it for instructional purposes.

The MASSP made the following seven recommendations based on their members' survey responses:

1. Principals believe the scope of existing assessments and the time devoted to administering existing assessments at the high school level must be reduced. Broad agreement exists to eliminate the Government HSA in high school. However, no consensus emerges regarding elimination of other assessments. Thus, we fully support a test redesign that reduces the scope and reduces the administration time of ALL assessments.
2. At the middle school level, there is broad agreement to test only one grade level, not all three, in English Language Arts and Math.
3. MASSP supports the MSEA proposal to limit testing to no more than 2% of instructional time. HOWEVER, we do NOT believe that legislative action should bring about this end. Rather, we believe the State Board of Education, in collaboration with Local Education Agencies (LEA), should take this action.
4. MASSP members show interest in exploring alternative assessment models where teachers administer tests within their own classrooms over multiple sessions. Noting that there are many design and implementation issues that such a proposal generates,

we believe that such a proposal significantly reduces the assessment burden on schools and should be fully studied.

5. MASSP fully supports placing a moratorium on computer-based testing in schools until issues of bandwidth, infrastructure, and device availability meet an acceptable standard. This proposal is critical in ensuring that technology resources devoted to instruction most of the year are not displaced for long periods of time when assessments are administered.
6. MASSP issues a clarion call to provide additional human resources to schools to support assessment. Providing a full time testing coordinator in every school garners the broadest support from our members.
7. MASSP fully supports providing additional resources to schools to assist in providing testing accommodations for special education students. This is critical so that instruction for special education students continues without disruption during testing.

### ***Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP)***

Two representatives of the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP) said that it is important to consider both the purpose and intent of each assessment. Assessments can be diagnostic – individual assessment of student strengths and needs; formative – monitoring of learning progress over time and assessment of learning and for learning; and summative – accountability for teachers, schools, systems, and the State.

MAESP made the following fourteen recommendations:

1. Local area schools and school systems should have control of all assessments – not federally or State mandated.
2. Standardized testing must assess what it is designed to assess first and foremost.
3. Instructional time should not be utilized to teach to the test, rather instructional time may be used to allow students practice with new testing formats, presentations and response choices (for example use of technology devices, resources).
4. Local education agencies (LEA) should utilize an assessment team to review type, format, and time allotment for all LEA assessments on an annual basis to determine ongoing purpose, reliability and validity for schools within the LEA.
5. All assessment data results – LEA, State and federal – should be returned in a time efficient manner to be utilized to measure student achievement and school accountability including as one data point for teacher and principal performance.
6. Sampling of kindergarten students to assess reading skills does not give information to teachers for learning and instruction – a reflection of a sample.
7. All kindergarten students assessed in pre-academic skills, social-emotional skills, gross and fine motor skills gives teachers information for instruction and student learning.
8. Summer assessment of kindergarten students is financially prohibitive in some LEAs; summer assessment of entering kindergarten students does not capture classroom observational data.

9. ESSA was passed, therefore pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade is included under the same guidelines (i.e. assessments required).
10. The audit of all assessments required by the State and local school systems.
11. Use of clear and common language to conduct the audit and to enter into a database accessible for all stakeholders.
12. Monitor that all LEAs have adequate materials and technological resources to facilitate all assessment administrations within a timely manner without impact to instructions (paper vs. computer based).
13. PARCC and NAEP are the only summative assessments that meet the item on the Commission's Charge to compare student achievement across LEAs, the State and the nation.
14. Local area school systems should have control of all other assessments.

### **Subcommittee Work**

To develop recommendations that address all charge areas, the Commission broke into three subgroups: elementary and middle school assessments, high school assessments, and general/infrastructure issues. Each subcommittee developed recommendations that were presented to the full Commission for consideration and adoption.

The subcommittee membership is as follows:

<b>Elementary/Middle</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>General/Infrastructure</b>
Janet Wilson, Chair	Laura Potter, Chair	Larry Bowers, Chair
Alohaa Chin Leon Frison Shelly Hettleman Julie Hummer Guffrie Smith	Eric Ebersole Laurie Halverson Andy Smarick	Nate Mikalus Mark Newgent Paul Pinsky Karen Prengaman
Rotate as needed: Chris Berry, Henry Johnson		

# Appendix IV

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## **Summary of MSDE’s August 2015 Report**

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### **Introduction**

States have been mandating standardized testing programs for decades. These assessment programs evolved over time and provided schools, parents, students and the public varying levels of information about student achievement. As states refined the use of data and as technology provided more sophisticated tools for data use and analysis, assessments took on new forms. Maryland made significant modifications to its assessment program approximately every decade from the early 1970s through the present. See Table 1 for a graphic depiction of the evolution of Maryland’s student assessment program.

### **The Purpose of Student Assessment**

When completing the assessment matrices for local, State and federally mandated assessments, state and local school systems reported that they most commonly used student assessments to:

- assess student learning at the end of instruction (summative assessment)
- shape instruction by establishing baseline levels of knowledge and periodically assess student progress toward learning consistent standards (formative assessment)
- determine program placement (e.g. magnet schools, gifted and talented programs)
- serve as graduation requirements
- provide information for teacher and principal evaluations through student learning objectives
- hold the school system, schools, and educators accountable for student learning

### **Report Requirements and Organization**

The August 2015 report fulfills two requirements of House Bill 452/Chapter 421. The report only includes information on local, State and federal assessments that are mandated by federal or State entities or local school systems for all children in a grade level, a specific course or discipline, or an identified student population. Tests created and administered by individual teachers, grade level teams and subject area teams were excluded from the report by legislation.

The August 2015 report includes information about federal and international testing, state mandated assessments, locally mandated assessments, and other assessments that are not mandated but are commonly administered for specific reasons (e.g. SAT, ACT, Advanced Placement, and career and technology licensure and certification exams).

### **Survey Methodology**

The Maryland State Department of Education developed a data collection tool that included the specific legislative requirements for both the matrix and narrative sections. MSDE teams

conducted interviews during June and July 2015 with key staff in each of the 24 local school systems. Reporting the matrix and narrative information together gave context to understanding the data.

The conversations in the 24 school systems were comprehensive and dynamic. Local educators indicated that they were grappling with how best to use assessment to inform instruction and increase learning opportunities for all students. School systems said they were in a period of transition regarding assessments and were in the process of or planning to change their assessment programs.

### **National and International Assessments Administered in Maryland in 2015-2016**

National and international assessments administered in Maryland in 2015-2016 included:

- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) – sampling of 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in mathematics, reading, science and writing; results are not reported for districts, schools or individual students
- Progress in International Reading Study (PIRLS) – administered every 5 years to a small sample of 4<sup>th</sup> graders in reading; school participation is voluntary
- Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) – administered every 3 years to a small sample of 15 year olds in science, reading and mathematics; school participation is voluntary
- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) administered to a small sample of students in 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade every 4 years in mathematics and science; school participation is voluntary
- ACCESS for English Language Learners – administered to all students in English as a Second Language programs grades K – 12; the assessment is high stakes because it is used for placement in educational programming

### **State Mandated Assessments**

State mandated assessments include:

- Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) – administered to all kindergarten students
- Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) – mandated administration in grades 3 – 8 in English and mathematics, Algebra I and English 10 (These meet a federal mandate.)
- Maryland School Assessment (MSA) Science – administered in grades 5 and 8 (This meets a federal mandate.)
- Alt-Maryland School Assessment (MSA) Science - administered in grades 5 and 8 to students with significant cognitive disabilities (This meets a federal mandate.)
- National Center for State Collaborative (NCSC) Alternative Assessment – administered to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in English Language Arts and mathematics to students in grades 3-8 and 11

- High School Assessments (HSA) – administered at the end of Biology (also meets a federal mandate) and Government courses
- **NOTE:** When MSDE conducted the assessment survey in the summer of 2015, the assessment options required by Maryland’s College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013 had not been finalized; therefore, they were not included in the report. Senate Bill 740/Chapter 533 states, “Beginning with the 2015-2016 school year, all students shall be assessed using acceptable college placement cut scores no later than 11<sup>th</sup> grade to determine whether the student is ready for college-level credit-bearing course work in English Language Arts, Literacy, and Mathematics.” If a student is not determined College and Career Ready through the assessment because he/she did not meet the minimum required score, the student must complete a transition course. After the course, the student must be reassessed. Working in collaboration, MSDE, local school systems and higher education developed a menu of assessments options that can be used to meet this state mandate. Each local school system may choose from this menu. Assessment options include certain PARCC tests, SAT, ACT, AP, IB, or Accuplacer; in place of an assessment, a student may use enrollment in certain courses through the dual enrollment option.

### **Locally Mandated Assessments**

Locally mandated assessments vary greatly in number, scope and whether they are locally developed or purchased from a vendor. This variation reflects the strong tradition of local autonomy and decision-making that exists in Maryland.

The types of locally mandated assessments include:

- Diagnostic assessments
- Pre-tests/benchmarks/interim assessments
- Quarterly assessments/unit assessments
- End of course exams/post-tests
- Vendor produced assessments for screening, instructional placement, progress monitoring
- Assessments to measure cognitive ability

The matrices provide details for each local school system and are posted on the Commission webpage.

### **Non-mandated but Commonly Administered Assessments**

Non-mandated but commonly administered assessments include:

- PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)
- SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test)
- ACT (American College Test)
- AP (Advanced Placement)
- IB (International Baccalaureate)
- Assessments for Career and Technology Education Programs

## **Summary and Final Observations**

Each Maryland school system makes unique decisions regarding what assessments it mandates and what assessment decisions are made at the school or classroom levels. This variation reflects the strong tradition of local autonomy that exists in Maryland.

A number of school systems stressed that their assessment programs are in a period of transition. They are transitioning to more technology-based assessments; they are transitioning in how they use the information produced through the assessments; and they are analyzing which assessments provide the most valuable information about teaching and learning. As a result, many school systems have recently made or are considering changes to their local assessment programs.

MSDE submitted the full report on August 31, 2015. The report and surveys formed the foundation of the Commission's work. The August report and the surveys of local, State and federally mandated assessments can be found on the Commission's webpage at <http://marylandpublicschools.org/commissiononassessments/>.



**Table 1: The evolution of Maryland’s student assessment program**

**For more than 40 years, Maryland has been focused on student achievement and school effectiveness. This focus has been the foundation of Maryland’s work in assessment.**

1970's	1980's	1990's	2000's	2010's
<p>Focus shifted from the process of school to what students learned from their courses.</p> <p>Maryland General Assembly passed the Educational Accountability Act, to establish a Statewide educational accountability program.</p> <p>Developed Maryland Accountability Program assessing reading, writing, and mathematics using Iowa Tests of Basic Skills in Grades 3, 5, 7, and 9 and state developed tests to assess functional reading competencies at Grades 7 and 11.</p>	<p>A Nation at Risk brings more rigorous curricula and more testing for accountability.</p> <p>The classes of 1989 through 2003 were required to pass the Maryland Functional Tests, which measured basic competencies in reading, mathematics, writing and citizenship in order to graduate from high school.</p> <p>At the beginning of the program, students were tested beginning in Grade 9 and continued to take the test until they passed. By the end of the program, students were taking and passing tests in grade 6.</p>	<p>New assessment program measures ability to apply higher order thinking to real-world problems.</p> <p>The Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) administered to students in grades 3, 5 and 8 in conjunction with other assessments, including the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills and Maryland Functional Tests.</p> <p>Maryland began the process to phase out the Functional Test graduation requirement and require students to pass the high-stakes, standards-based High School Assessment (HSA) tests.</p>	<p>New assessments provide individual student scores which allows for disaggregation of student achievement data.</p> <p>High School Assessments were administered at the completion of English 10, algebra/data analysis, government and biology.</p> <p>The English, mathematics and science tests satisfy a federal mandate while the government test satisfies a requirement of Maryland law.</p>	<p>Maryland adopts the Common Core State Standards, a set of more rigorous standards to raise the bar on student learning.</p> <p>Maryland joins the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium for new assessments in reading and mathematics.</p> <p>In 2013-14, PARCC assessments were field tested in Maryland, and in 2014-15 the English language arts and mathematics tests were administered for the first time to students in grades 3-8 and high school (algebra, English 10)</p> <p>In 2015-16 the assessments will be reduced by 90 minutes and administered after 80% of the school year or the high school course.</p>
<p>To comply with No Child Left Behind, Maryland began the development of a new testing program known as the Maryland School Assessments (MSA) which were given to students in grades 3-8 in reading and mathematics, and in science grades 5 and 8.</p>				
<p><b>The Maryland Accountability Program, Project Basic and the implementation of the Maryland Functional Tests were initial efforts to fully embed assessment into the instructional cycle. Since that time, a great deal of work has been done to better understand the effects of both formative and summative assessments as an integral part of the teaching and learning process.</b></p>				



## **State and County Boards of Education Comments on MSDE’s Survey**

Per the legislation, all 24 school systems and four educational organizations submitted their comments and recommendations to the State Board of Education. The State Board considered these responses, and, on December 22, 2015, sent its own comments with the compiled responses to the General Assembly.

Since the State Board letter is brief and summarized the most common local school system and educational organization responses, it is quoted here in total. The 28 compiled responses are posted on the Commission webpage at <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/commissiononassessments/index.html>

*“The State Board of Education reviewed and considered the results of the Maryland State Department of Education’s survey of Maryland public school systems regarding how much time is spent in each grade on administering local, State and federally mandated assessments. In addition, the State Board compiled the responses due November 30 from the 24 school systems and from four educational organizations - the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, the Maryland PTA, the Maryland State Education Association, and the Public School Superintendent Association of Maryland.*

*In our review, it was apparent that the approach to student assessment in Maryland is in a period of transition. Since MSDE surveyed the school systems this summer, a number of school systems refined their assessment programs, reducing the number of hours students spend taking locally mandated testing. To be able to report the most current information available, MSDE gave school systems the opportunity to update their information to accurately reflect the time students are spending taking mandated assessments in the 2015-2016 school year. This updated information is in the attached chart Time Spent on Locally Mandated Assessments in Each Grade (Hours) 2015-2016. (See Table 2)*

*In the chart, the hours of locally mandated assessments are listed by school system by grade level. The column titled Other HS Courses Not Included by Grade includes those assessments that could not be assigned to a particular high school grade level because the assessment is administered when a student is enrolled in a particular course, not in a particular grade. The two rows at the bottom of the chart show the time students spend taking federally and state-mandated assessments. To determine the total number of hours a student in a particular school system spends taking mandated assessments, one must total the time listed for local (school system), state and federally mandated assessments.*

*School systems reported that they will continue to review and refine their assessment programs as more data is made available through the PARCC assessments.*

*It is important to note that the data in the attached chart and in the August MSDE report tell only part of the story. Per the requirements of House Bill 452/Chapter 421, only mandated assessments were included in the survey. The legislation specifically excluded teacher-developed quizzes and tests. Thus, the report and attached chart do not include all of the testing a student experiences during the course of a school year. Consequently, the reported time spent testing does not necessarily relate to the actual number of hours that a student spends testing.*

*When examining the data, it is apparent that the amount of time spent taking mandated tests varies greatly from one school system to another. This reflects the strong system of local control that exists in Maryland. Some school systems have a more centralized approach to assessing students while others grant more control to individual schools and classrooms. Each approach has its advantages. The data also show that the vast majority of mandated testing comes from local requirements. Only a small portion of these assessments are State or federally mandated. However, it is also true that in some cases, districts mandate tests in response to State or federal policies; for example, a district may decide to administer a mid-year benchmark (or interim) assessment to gauge students' preparation for an end-of-year test administered by the State and required by federal law.*

*All 28 responses the State Board received from local school boards and other educational organizations are attached. Some common responses include:*

- Assessments serve several purposes and play important roles informing the instructional process, monitoring progress and measuring mastery. (17)*
- Results of the MSDE survey accurately reflected the mandated assessments given in the school system at the time of the survey. (11) Three responses said that the survey did not accurately reflect the mandated assessments.*
- The State should continue to allow as much local control as possible. (10)*
- There must be a balance between time needed for the administration of assessments and optimizing instructional time. Assessments should be administered in a way that minimizes disruption to instruction and the school schedule. (10)*
- The school system has reflected on and made changes to its assessment program since last school year. (8)*

*The State Board of Education appreciates this opportunity to submit comments and looks forward to reviewing and commenting on the recommendations of the Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools."*

The letter was dated December 22, 2015, and was signed by Guffrie M. Smith, Jr., President of the Maryland State Board of Education.

**Table 2: Time Spent on Locally Mandated Assessments**

TIME SPENT ON LOCALLY MANDATED ASSESSMENTS IN EACH GRADE (HOURS) 2015-2016 *exclusive of any State or Federal Assessments															
Locally Mandated (Central Office)	PreK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Other HS Courses Not Included by Grade
Allegany	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	19.10	19.10	19.10	12.40	15.15	12.4	12.4	
Anne Arundel	0.00	2.50	2.75	15.75	8.75	14.50	14.50	23.75	23.75	28.75	29.20	27.20	27.20	25.00	
Baltimore City	1.00	1.58	9.58	10.83	9.00	9.00	9.00	9.00	9.00	9.00	21.00	21.00	21.00	18.00	
Baltimore County	0.00	4.00	6.00	6.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	10.50	10.50	13.50	7.50	
Calvert	3.34	3.66	4.82	6.99	13.28	14.04	11.97	9.00	9.75	9.75	19.50	22.50	21.00	21.00	1.50
Caroline	0	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.40	2.40	3.40	7.30	7.30	7.30	7.30	11.80	7.30	7.30	
Carroll	2	11.17	16.17	24.67	28.00	28.00	29.00	16.00	16.00	16.00	32.00	32.00	32.00	32.00	
Cecil	0.00	0.00	3.33	7.83	7.92	8.00	8.00	36.50	36.50	36.50	36.50	36.50	32.00	32.00	
Charles	0.00	6.00	7.67	4.50	8.50	7.67	9.67	8.08	7.50	8.75	9.30	8.67	6.92	4.16	
Dorchester	0	6.05	20.05	33.05	42.72	41.05	42.72	36.00	36.33	34.00	19.67	19.67	19.67	19.67	9.00
Frederick	4.92	9.16	11.82	13.82	17.58	17.58	20.40	14.82	16.89	16.82	20.25	15.75	13.75	4.00	
Garrett	0	0	4.00	4.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	25.00	28.00	25.00	22.50	
Harford	2.00	5.00	4.99	12.82	10.82	10.82	10.82	11.65	10.82	18.31	24.39	23.56	23.06	20.90	
Howard	0.00	3.33	7.00	7.00	6.17	5.67	11.84	5.67	5.67	5.67	2.00	3.00	3.00	0.00	
Kent	1.00	7.00	8.50	13.00	13.00	10.00	10.00	12.00	11.00	11.00	12.00	19.00	19.00	12.00	
Montgomery	0	2.25	2.25	4.00	4.50	4.50	4.50	21.50	21.50	21.50	23.00	26.00	23.00	23.00	10.00
Prince George's	0	0	1.00	8.00	6.75	6.00	12.00	7.00	7.00	13.42	3.00	5.75	3.00	3.00	13.00
Queen Anne's	0.17	13.00	25.25	28.25	31.00	28.50	33.00	17.25	17.25	17.25	25.00	25.00	25.00	22.00	
St. Mary's	1.00	3.50	10.42	12.00	19.67	19.25	19.25	22.50	22.50	22.50	21.50	19.50	19.50	17.50	
Somerset	1.00	1.00	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.67	20.83	20.83	23.17	15.83	14.00	13.00	9.33	23.83
Talbot	0.00	0.00	6.50	6.50	6.50	8.17	6.50	13.00	13.00	13.00	19.60	27.83	14.00	14.00	0.00
Washington	3.08	2.25	9.72	8.67	7.67	7.67	8.78	11.00	11.00	11.00	4.83	7.00	7.00	4.83	
Wicomico	0.00	1.00	9.25	11.00	8.25	8.25	8.25	7.17	8.50	8.25	4.58	6.83	7.58	4.58	12.00
Worcester	0.00	8.00	14.00	8.50	9.25	10.75	11.25	14.50	17.25	18.75	15.75	16.00	11.00	5.00	
<b>Federally Mandated</b>					8.15	8.30	10.30	7.00	7.00	9.00					11.95*
<b>State Mandated</b>		0.75													2.25**

\* = PARCC Algebra I (4.5 hours), PARCC English 10 (5.2 hours), Biology HSA (2.25 hours)  
 \*\*= Government HSA (2.25 hours)

## **Updating the Local School System Assessment Matrices**

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The survey in MSDE's August Report formed the foundation of the Commission's work. The August report can be found on the Commission's webpage.

At the request of the Commission, on November 3, 2015, a team of MSDE specialists from across the Division of Curriculum, Assessment, & Accountability, compiled the matrix of assessments information for each LEA into one aligned and comparable *Time Spent on Local Assessments in Each Grade Level Chart*. In order to be consistent in compiling the data, the following "rules" were applied:

- Where there was a range of time provided, the higher number was used.
- Unless specified, a class period was recorded as one hour (60 minutes).
- A comment column was added on the right to record any questions or clarifications that were needed.

The goal was to convert the original matrix into a uniform format that allowed for LEA-to-LEA data comparison and enabled Commission members to accurately interpret the time spent on assessment data and draw conclusions.

On November 6, 2015, MSDE sent LEAs their individual data charts for verification that the totals reflected the original matrix already approved and submitted by LEAs. LEA Assistant Superintendents were asked to review and verify their data. If there were clarifications or discrepancies, Assistant Superintendents were asked to note them in the *Comments Column* and return to MSDE by November 13, 2015. Some discrepancies existed because school systems adjusted their assessment programs after the original survey. Updating the matrices ensured that the Commission was considering information current to the 2015-2016 school year.

November 20, 2015 was the deadline to have any data discrepancies identified and resolved with MSDE. LEAs continued to send updates and all requested changes were accepted and made; the process concluded on December 10, 2015.

According to House Bill 452, local boards of education were required to comment on their survey by November 30, 2015. It was shared with Assistant Superintendents that this was the appropriate mechanism to share any annotations or variances that they wished to include regarding the interpretation of their data.

At their December 17, 2015 meeting, the Commission received MSDE's compiled information. Additional clarification was requested about whether any of the assessments listed in the charts were generated solely for the purpose of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). Therefore, on December 18, 2015 it was shared with Assistant Superintendents at their monthly meeting that the Commission had requested clarification regarding whether any assessments that were

included in their charts were generated because of SLOs. Assistant Superintendents were asked to do one of two things by January 6, 2016: (1) if none of the assessments listed were created for the purpose of SLO use, respond with that statement, or (2) if some were created for the purpose of SLO use, send MSDE the list of those assessments. Therefore for the January 11, 2016 Commission meeting MSDE was prepared to share that no LEAs reported assessments on the chart being created for the sole purpose of SLOs, but an update was not requested.



# Appendix V

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**James Hubert Blake High School** *Fine Arts and Humanities*

300 NORWOOD ROAD • SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND 20905  
Phone 301-879-1300 • Fax 301-879-1306 • Counseling 301-879-1310 • [www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/blakehs](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/blakehs)



June 16, 2016

Maryland State Board of Education  
200 West Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Members of the Maryland State Board of Education:

In 2012, the Maryland General Assembly passed COMAR regulation 7-203 which mandated that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) develop and implement a middle school social studies assessment. The current climate and attitude toward assessment is much different from the climate and attitude toward assessment that existed in 2012 when the State statute Md. Ed. Art. 7-203 (b) (3) (i) was passed. In short, the footprint of mandated assessment in Maryland has been expanded greatly, detracting from time dedicated to instruction. There has also been a tremendous diversion of human and capital resources to support the mandated assessment process.

Therefore, the Commission on Assessments recommends that an additional assessment in social studies at the middle school level 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. 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.

At the high school level, the Commission requests that the Board endorse the continued 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 school-wide 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.

On behalf of the Commission, I would like to share their clear commitment to the need for content-specific social studies assessments. The Commission is fully aware of the expectations of the Maryland General Assembly regarding the assessment of social studies in the middle school as expressed in COMAR regulation 7-203. Given the current climate regarding

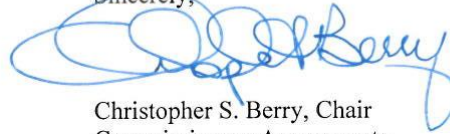
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MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS • ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

Maryland State Board of Education  
June 16, 2016  
Page Two

standardized assessment in Maryland, the costs associated with the development, implementation, scoring, and reporting of an entirely new assessment in social studies, and the budgetary realities faced by this institution make it difficult to move forward with the traditional assessment approach.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. Berry, Chair  
Commission on Assessments

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS • ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND





June 16, 2016

The Honorable Michael Erin Busch  
Speaker of the House of Delegates  
State House, H-101  
Annapolis, MD 21401 - 1991

Dear Delegate Busch:

In 2012, the Maryland General Assembly passed COMAR regulation 7-203 which mandated that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) develop and implement a middle school social studies assessment. The current climate and attitude toward assessment is much different from the climate and attitude toward assessment that existed in 2012 when the State statute Md. Ed. Art. 7-203 (b) (3) (i) was passed. In short, the footprint of mandated assessment in Maryland has been expanded greatly, detracting from time dedicated to instruction. There has also been a tremendous diversion of human and capital resources to support the mandated assessment process.

Therefore, the Commission on Assessments recommends that an additional assessment in social studies at the middle school level 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. The Commission requests the Maryland General Assembly'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.

On behalf of the Commission, I would like to share their clear commitment to the need for content-specific social studies assessments. The Commission is fully aware of the expectations of the Maryland General Assembly regarding the assessment of social studies in the middle school as expressed in COMAR regulation 7-203. Given the current climate regarding standardized assessment in Maryland, the costs associated with the development, implementation, scoring, and reporting of an entirely new assessment in social studies, and the budgetary realities faced by this institution make it difficult to move forward with the traditional assessment approach. The Commission respectfully requests that the Maryland General Assembly give strong consideration to changing the statute.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christopher S. Berry".

Christopher S. Berry, Chair  
Commission on Assessments

Cc: Senator Mike Miller



June 16, 2016

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.  
President of the Senate  
State House, H-107  
Annapolis, MD 21401 - 1991

Dear Senator Miller:

In 2012, the Maryland General Assembly passed COMAR regulation 7-203 which mandated that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) develop and implement a middle school social studies assessment. The current climate and attitude toward assessment is much different from the climate and attitude toward assessment that existed in 2012 when the State statute Md. Ed. Art. 7-203 (b) (3) (i) was passed. In short, the footprint of mandated assessment in Maryland has been expanded greatly, detracting from time dedicated to instruction. There has also been a tremendous diversion of human and capital resources to support the mandated assessment process.

Therefore, the Commission on Assessments recommends that an additional assessment in social studies at the middle school level 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. The Commission requests the Maryland General Assembly'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.

On behalf of the Commission, I would like to share their clear commitment to the need for content-specific social studies assessments. The Commission is fully aware of the expectations of the Maryland General Assembly regarding the assessment of social studies in the middle school as expressed in COMAR regulation 7-203. Given the current climate regarding standardized assessment in Maryland, the costs associated with the development, implementation, scoring, and reporting of an entirely new assessment in social studies, and the budgetary realities faced by this institution make it difficult to move forward with the traditional assessment approach. The Commission respectfully requests that the Maryland General Assembly give strong consideration to changing the statute.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Berry".

Christopher S. Berry, Chair  
Commission on Assessments

Cc: Delegate Michael Busch



June 16, 2016

Maryland State Board of Education  
200 West Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Members of the Maryland State Board of Education:

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to have standards for science. In addition ESSA requires MSDE to demonstrate, in consultation with local agencies, that a high quality science assessment will be implemented at least once in grades 3-5, and in grades 6-9 and at least once in grades 10-12 (S. 1127-55.). The 2016-2017 school year will be a transition year for implementation of ESSA, with full implementation expected in the 2017-2018 school year. Therefore, Maryland Public Schools are already aligning their curricula to be ready for the new Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (MISA).

However, COMAR 13.A.02.06 requires that Maryland students pass the Biology HSA. In addition, Maryland is still operating under the rules in place before the enactment of ESSA, as federal funds are still tied to NCLB at least through the 2016-2017 school year.

The Commission on Assessments' High School Subcommittee reviewed specific recommendations of stakeholders after learning that the Biology curriculum would no longer be aligned with the Biology HSA for 2016-2017 school year. Feedback included:

- The Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland (PSSAM) had consensus that curriculum, instruction and assessments be aligned.
- The Maryland State Education Association has provided survey data from educators and the public from across the state showing a common belief that there is too much testing negatively impacting instructional time.
- The Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU) recommended that tests should be tied to the curriculum and that large amounts of instructional time are lost due to testing.
- The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) stated that more time was needed for instruction.
- Maryland Parent Teacher Association (PTA)'s biggest concern was the loss of in class learning time and they recommended audits of assessments to reduce misaligned, unnecessary and redundant exams.
- On 12/17/15, Richard Laine's presentation to the Commission included that "assessments should have the purpose of reinforcing good teaching and should provide actionable feedback to students, educators and parents. He also included that, "as the assessments change, accountability cycle needs to be reset."

Despite the misalignment with the curriculum, the Biology HSA must still be administered and students must take the test in 2016-2017 for the state to be eligible for federal funding. It is recommended that COMAR regulations are amended to remove the Biology HSA as a



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graduation requirement during this transition year. This would increase the instructional time for students who do not pass the test since they would not need to participate in the Bridge program. Stress would be reduced for both teachers and students, as results would be reported but not impact teacher evaluations or student performance. In-class regular instruction time would be gained and more resources would be available in the following year.

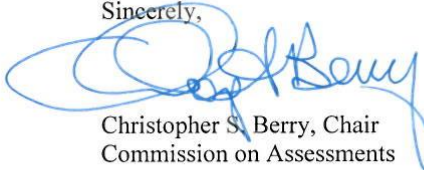
Therefore, the Commission on Assessments requests the Board's consideration to propose that the State Board change COMAR 13A.03.02.06 Graduation Requirements for Public High Schools in Maryland so that during the 2016-2017 school year the Biology HSA will be administered, but achieving a passing score will not be a graduation requirement. The Commission appeals to the State Board to promulgate emergency regulations to make change, specific to this one school year.

If the State Board decides to move forward with this request, the Commission suggests that districts communicate the change clearly to parents and students. The Commission also recommends that if there is a public comment period, the public should be made aware of the reason for the change (that the curriculum is no longer aligned with the assessment). Students and parents should be informed that passing the MISA science assessment may be required for graduation in the future. Students who failed the Biology HSA before the 2016-2017 school year could also be granted an exemption; no Biology Bridge program students for the 2017-2018 school year.

On behalf of the Commission, I would like to share their clear commitment to the need for content-aligned science assessments that are able to be administered as part of the school day. The Commission also supports MSDE's existing plan that the Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (MISA) 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 class periods).

We greatly appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this request to promulgate emergency regulations to make these needed adjustments to the science transition timeline.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Berry", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the left.

Christopher S. Berry, Chair  
Commission on Assessments

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS • ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND