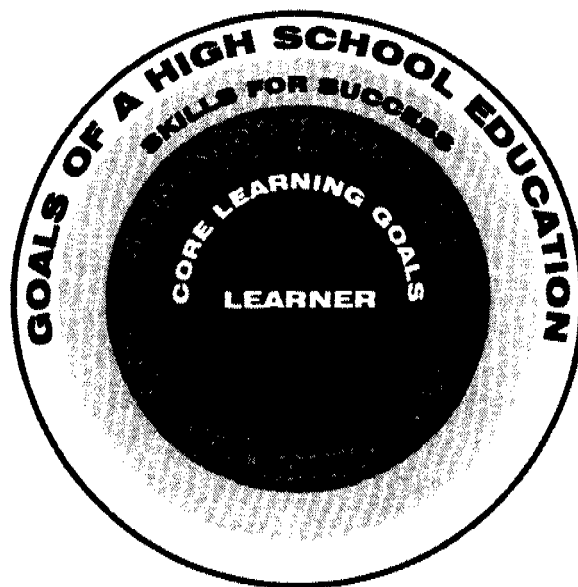


**Report of the
High School Assessment Task Force
to the
Maryland State Board of Education**



July 25, 1995

**REPORT OF THE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENT TASK FORCE
TO THE
MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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I. PURPOSE OF THE HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

The Task Force believes that the high school assessment should be considered as both an accountability and a school improvement component of the current graduation requirements which take effect with students who were in the ninth grade during the 1993-94 school year. Those graduation requirements indicate that the purpose of high school is defined in the context of preparation for the world of work and/or postsecondary education and for becoming a productive citizen.

In this context, no State test can be viewed as a single indicator of success; rather, the test itself must be one of multiple indicators that contribute to the goals of the graduation requirements. Hence, a partnership, rather than adversarial relationships between local school systems and the State, is essential if the State intends to be successful. It is also crucial that local school systems and individual schools have local assessment systems in place that are complementary to and expand the State assessments. It is unreasonable to expect that a large-scale State assessment can, or even should, measure all that is considered important. The State tests should be viewed as establishing a strong foundation for each student. That foundation, however, cannot be viewed as the only purpose of high school. It must serve as the basis for the real preparation of students for postsecondary education or the world of work. That preparation must of necessity be tailored to individual student career plans and calls for the coordination of all resources by the school to be effective. Hence, it is important that the testing program be supportive of, rather than distracting from, the real purposes of high school as outlined in the graduation requirements. Local school systems and individual schools must have assessment systems that measure the purposes of high school beyond the content of individual courses, whether that measurement be at the process or application level. Care must be taken in the development of the high school assessment to nurture that purpose and to finance it in a major way through both State and local funds in order not to communicate that tests are the focal point of high school.

II. HISTORY OF THE HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENT DELIBERATIONS

In 1989, when the Governor's Commission on School Performance reported on the issues related to high-quality assessment, the called-for instrumentation was expected to cover grades 3, 5, 8, and 11. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in cooperation with local school systems, developed a set of Learning Outcomes for those grade levels which were adopted in May 1990.

Test development proceeded in a major way on the grades 3, 5, and 8 assessments as a result of Requests for Proposals being released without the high school component. Staff and fiscal limitations were the major reasons for that decision, although some efforts on high school assessment continued as time and resources permitted. Pilot tasks were developed and implemented with the cooperation of several school districts in 1991-92. At its July 31, 1991, meeting the State Board of Education received a report on progress at the grade 11 level. The State Board established the Outcome-Based Graduation Requirements Task Force, which later became the Performance-Based Graduation Requirements Task Force and had as part of its charge making recommendations regarding the high school assessment. A September 29, 1992, Report on High School Assessment Directions called for reconciliation of the discrepant views of the earlier assessment efforts and the Graduation Requirements Task Force. The resulting recommendations of the Performance-Based High School Graduation Requirements Task Force were presented to the State Board in September 1993. These recommendations called for assessments that would be linked to graduation requirements, that would not occur at grade 11, and that a High School Assessment Task Force under the direction of Dr. Noel Farmer be appointed to design a plan for the implementation of the Performance-Based Graduation Requirements Task Force recommendations regarding high school assessment.

MSDE prepared a set of assumptions related to the high school assessment that would govern the development effort. These assumptions resulted in an organizational structure for the high school assessment that would have:

1. A Task Force to function in a general oversight capacity;
2. Five Content Teams to develop Core Learning Goals in English, mathematics, science, social studies, and Skills for Success; and
3. A Coordinating Team to review assessment materials available from other States, private testing companies, nonprofit organizations such as Educational Testing Service, consortia such as the New Standards Project, and other countries such as Germany's *Abitur* examination.

This report of the High School Assessment Task Force is the result of the combined efforts of individuals in each of those structures and involved many administrators, teachers, supervisors, higher education personnel, and education-related organizations. The work would not have been possible without their efforts. Complete membership lists for each of those groups are contained in Attachment 1.

III. MEMBERSHIP OF HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENT GROUPS

The High School Assessment Task Force was structured to allow for oversight and deliberation by stakeholder groups in a partnership arrangement. Hence, the following associations were represented:

- Baltimore Teachers' Union
- Center for Educational Research and Development, University of Maryland
Baltimore County
- Center for Learning and Competitiveness, University of Maryland
- Local Government
- Local Assistant Superintendents for Instruction
- Maryland Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Maryland Association of Boards of Education
- Maryland Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
- Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals
- Maryland Business Roundtable for Education
- Maryland Congress of Parents and Teachers, Inc.
- Maryland Education Coalition
- Maryland Higher Education Commission
- Maryland Legislature
- Maryland State Board of Education
- Maryland State Department of Education
- Maryland State Teachers' Association
- Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland
- Statewide Advocacy Committee, Arts Education in Maryland Schools
- University of Maryland System

Each member of the Task Force was appointed to represent his/her organization during deliberations, rather than his/her own views. Hence, it was important that Task Force

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representatives share the information from meetings with their colleagues and their organizations' deliberative bodies.

The High School Assessment Coordinating Team was charged with providing information regarding high school assessment instrument options to the Task Force and others. Attachment 2 contains the Team's review and descriptions of tests by commercial vendors, other states, nonprofit groups, and consortia. Since this was a highly labor-intensive data-gathering group, it was viewed as an appropriate function for MSDE staff to provide the information base. The following areas were represented on the Coordinating Team:

- Division of Career Technology and Adult Learning
- Division of Compensatory Education and Support Services
- Division of Instruction
- Division of Library Development and Services
- Division of Planning, Results, and Information Management
- Division of Special Education
- Research and Development Office

Additionally, staff have analyzed hundreds of responses to feedback forms distributed with the draft Core Learning Goals to classroom teachers and other educators. A summary of that information is contained in Attachment 3.

The Core Learning Goals Content Teams were viewed as crucial to identifying the substance of the goals to be assessed. To this end teachers, supervisors, and higher education faculty were directly involved. The following represents the breakdown of constituent groups:

<u>English Content Team</u>		<u>Mathematics Content Team</u>	
Teachers	8	Students	1
Administrators	1	Teachers	7
LEA Supervisors	6	LEA Supervisors	7
MSDE	3	MSDE	2
Higher Education	3	Higher Education	2
		National Groups	1
<u>Science Content Team</u>		<u>Social Studies Content Team</u>	
Teachers	17	Teachers	11
Administrators	2	Resource Teachers	1
LEA Supervisors	5	Administrators	1
MSDE	1	LEA Supervisors	8
Higher Education	3	MSDE	1
		Higher Education	5
		Business Community	1
		National Groups	1

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<u>Skills for Success Content Team</u>		<u>Summary</u>	
Students	1	Students	2
Teachers	2	Teachers	45
Administrators	1	Resource Teachers	1
LEA Supervisors	7	Administrators	5
MSDE	2	LEA Supervisors	33
Other State Agencies	4	MSDE	9
Higher Education	6	Other State Agencies	4
Business Community	17	Higher Education	19
General Public	1	Business Community	18
		National Groups	2
		General Public	1

The Core Learning Goals drafted by these groups are included in this report as Attachments 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 (English, mathematics, science, social studies, and Skills for Success, respectively).

IV. CONCEPT OF PARTNERSHIP

Early in the Task Force deliberations, it was apparent that adversarial relationships between and among constituent groups would be counterproductive. The tone of Task Force deliberations focused on recognizing the work required of classroom teachers to implement change and trying to ensure that support systems were in place for those teachers, their schools, and school systems. There was no intent to approach the high school assessment as a corrective action plan, but rather as an establishment of high-level, uniform standards which would improve learning for students by building new structures focused on learning. Since teachers would be the primary agents for delivering those standards, their input and support were essential. The assumption was that the education enterprise needs to coalesce around improved learning and provide the infrastructure of support needed to carry out agreed-upon reforms. It should also be noted that four years of practical experience with the grades 3, 5, and 8 assessments and related efforts at staff development and support systems also served to inform the work of the Task Force.

V. INPUTS RECEIVED

Several milestones were achieved in the deliberations of the Task Force which included, but were not limited to, the following:

1. A linkage was developed with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) staff development and issues area. Information on criteria for high-quality standards established by this organization was shared with the membership by AFT staff.
2. An intensive 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Task Force retreat was held (see agenda, Attachment 9). In-depth interactions were provided for the participants with:

William Spady, High Success Network
Ruth Mitchell, American Association for Higher Education
Matthew Gandall, American Federation of Teachers
Cheryl Tibbals, New Standards Project
Christopher Lambert, Students First
Steven Hess, Frederick County Public Schools
3. The State Board of Education held a hearing, which resulted in a call to delay action on selecting instruments, but which also clearly provided a direction in terms of a consensus model for the high school assessment.
4. Three models of a high school assessment were developed. These models caused many groups to begin to deliberate on alternatives and characteristics of a quality high school assessment system. This effort was catalytic in the development of additional models for consideration.
5. Focus groups were established in volunteer high schools representative of rural, suburban, and urban settings. The groups were asked to react to the realism of the Core Learning Goals.
6. A public forum for parents and advocates for high school students, sponsored by the Maryland Education Coalition, was held to disseminate information and receive feedback on the high school assessment.
7. A relationship with Andy Plattner of the New Standards Project was created as a means of developing a sophisticated public engagement program. This relationship is part of a larger effort at public engagement related to Schools for Success, which is important because the high school assessment is a component of that program.

8. Substantive monthly briefings were held for the Assistant Superintendents for Instruction, the local Superintendents of Schools, and the State Board of Education.

A chronology of the high school assessment activities can be found in Attachment 10.

VI. CONTEXT OF TASK FORCE DELIBERATIONS

Since the inception of the Task Force, the State Board of Education had been forceful about its interest in the development of a high school component of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) that:

1. Emphasized the importance of content,
2. Focused on accountability,
3. Emphasized the individual student,
4. Established a high level of uniform standards for all high school students,
5. Occurred proximate to instruction, and
6. Had a reasonable turnaround time in producing and reporting results.

While there was a clear interest in maintaining a direct linkage between the high school assessment and the already-developed elementary/middle school program, several stakeholders spoke to genuine differences. The elementary/middle school program was designed with the primary purpose of school improvement. It was known from the beginning that the content and standards being established were beyond the existing school instructional programs. In fact, it was clear that the initial years of test data were to be viewed as baseline information, and accountability expectations to come some five or more years later as support systems to improve instruction were developed. Hence, scores were returned in a timely manner for such a purpose, and individual student reports were secondary to the school report. The focus at the school level also allowed for a highly innovative test design with no selected response items, a series of integrated tasks across six content score areas, and a highly labor-intensive scoring structure. Scoring the assessment served a major staff development purpose with teachers, so much so that scoring sites are now highly sought after.

The High School Assessment Task Force was committed to close linkages between the high school and elementary/middle school assessment structures but also recognized that different purposes impact the reality of the assessment. There was a genuine concern that the State, in its attempt to formulate an accountability assessment system, should not prescribe instruction. Instruction was felt to be a strong local control issue that relates directly to meeting the needs of each student as an individual. Hence, assessment structures must provide maximum flexibility to local school systems in terms of what content is assessed and at what time, within the limits of good measurement. It was hoped that the assessment might be modularized and that local school systems might be allowed to determine readiness for the assessment based upon the student's instructional program, rather than lock-stepping all students through a prescribed course of study at the same time.

VII. STRUCTURE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Issues that arose during the Task Force deliberations are reported in the format of a question and discussion about the high school assessment, followed by a recommendation. This format was chosen because of its ability to communicate directly with the reader in terms of the most frequently asked questions about the assessment during the time of the Task Force deliberations. Recommendations are reported in five areas:

1. Core Learning Goals,
2. The assessment system,
3. Staff development,
4. Costs, and
5. Next steps.

Recommendations are numbered consecutively across the five areas.

VIII. CONTEXT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

All recommendations assume that the following aspects of the charge from the State Board of Education to the Task Force are still in force, either through the original charge letter from the State Superintendent of Schools or through the State Board Consensus items determined at the State Board Retreat on the high school assessment held in May.

1. The assessment must represent a high level of uniform standards.

2. The assessment must primarily serve an accountability purpose and secondarily be used for school improvement.
3. Accountability must be for the individual student as a part of graduation requirements.
4. The Core Learning Goals must have taken into account national and international standards.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO CORE LEARNING GOALS

Question 1: How should the draft Core Learning Goals be distributed by the State Board of Education for public engagement prior to adoption?

Discussion: It is crucial that practicing teachers in the content fields, as well as the public, endorse the outcomes upon which the high school assessment will be based. Too often, discussions of assessment instruments are held independent of the outcomes and result in methodological decisions that are in conflict with the intent of the Core Learning Goals. The experience of MSPAP at grades 3, 5, and 8 indicates that just distributing the proposed outcomes or holding traditional hearings will not produce the support system necessary. Nor will it produce an ownership of the final goals by those who are essential to successful implementation—the classroom teachers. New modes of seeking input and of making adjustments to the goals must be established. Perhaps the services of a professional group should be considered for this effort prior to State Board adoption.

Recommendation 1

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that the draft Core Learning Goals be distributed in the context of a major stakeholder public engagement program. This program should allow all stakeholder groups to see the proposed goals and help determine a common interpretation of them prior to adoption.

Question 2: How should local schools be involved in the adoption process of the Core Learning Goals?

Discussion: Our experience with MSPAP grades 3, 5, and 8 indicates that the classroom teacher does not receive adequate information to implement the learning goals. Given the individual graduation requirement use of the high school assessment, the classroom teacher must be knowledgeable of and committed to the Core Learning Goals. It is important to note that since the high school assessment is part of the student and school accountability program, MSPP, it is crucial that local school systems be partners in the design.

Recommendation 2

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that:

- ***The Core Learning Goals be distributed to each of the 200 high schools in sufficient quantity for distribution to all teachers.***
- ***Prior to local school districts adjusting curriculum, if necessary, appropriate content departments be asked to review the Core Learning Goals and provide information on the content area department's plans for implementing the Core Learning Goals.***
- ***The appropriate content team provide clarification of intent of the Core Learning Goals, as necessary.***
- ***By the end of November 1995, an outside vendor independent of MSDE should conduct a review of Core Learning Goals to identify areas of confusion of definitions among stakeholders.***
- ***Local school systems begin the process of curriculum and instruction alignment.***
- ***A universal interpretation of the Core Learning Goals occur before State Board adoption.***

Question 3: Do the Core Learning Goals reflect national and international standards?

Discussion: All content teams used the appropriate national content standards in their deliberations. The commitment, ownership, and belief that the Core Learning Goals will result in the attainment of the intent of the graduation requirements (preparation for postsecondary education, the world of work, and productive citizenry) is crucial to the success of the program. Experience with the Maryland Test of Citizenship Skills clearly supports the importance of gaining this kind of support prior to the design, development, and implementation of a State testing program.

Recommendation 3

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that the Core Learning Goals documents be recognized as reflecting state-of-the-art, high-level expectations. The Core Learning Goals should be sent to appropriate national groups developing national standards for review beyond the State of Maryland, and a report should be provided to the State Board of Education on the reactions of these groups.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO THE ASSESSMENT

Question 4: How should the State of Maryland assess individual student competence in the Core Learning Goals?

Discussion: The High School Assessment Task Force's recommendations for assessment are based on the following assumptions:

- The Core Learning Goals represent high standards, and all students must attain them.
- The best estimates of student competence in these learning goals will come from multiple measures and formats.
- To succeed in the ambitious educational reform these goals represent, the State Board of Education and local school systems will have to join together in an active partnership, including a shared responsibility for assessing student competence.

Maryland's experience with the Functional Testing Program indicates that single, State-mandated tests tend to reduce instructional programs to the dimensions of the test, to the detriment of local curricula and higher level content.

Recommendation 4

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that individual student competence in the Core Learning Goals be assessed by State-mandated, end-of-course assessments and local assessments.

Question 5: What are the similarities and differences between this proposal and other models presented to the State Board of Education over the last six months?

Discussion: *Similarities.* This proposal is most like Paradigm 1 (see Attachment 11). They share the following features:

- A partnership between the State and LEAs in assessing student competence.
- The use of multiple measures to provide better estimates of student competence.
- The use of both State and local assessments in decision making.
- Administration of State assessments at the end of courses—close to instruction—with the expectation of rapid turnaround of test results.
- State and local assessments contribute to evidence of student competence and partially determine course grades.

In the State Board of Education's hearing on assessment models held on February 21, 1995, Paradigm 1 was the most acceptable. Focus group meetings with teachers, parents, and educational advocates around the State produced the same preference.

Differences. There are few State-mandated courses in Maryland. Producing end-of-course tests, therefore, is problematic. To avoid causing locals to rewrite their curricula—to produce, in effect, a State curriculum—the Task Force proposes the use of modules as tests. These test modules could be assembled in

several configurations to match the content and sequence of characteristic courses. (See Attachment 12 for a definition of modules and a sample.) The individual test modules, the building bricks of the different end-of-course assessments, remain the same in content and difficulty level wherever they appear in end-of-course assessments, assuring uniformity of standards across LEAs while providing adjustments for local curricula. A panel of psychometric experts believed that modularization of assessments is compatible with an individual student accountability program (Attachment 13).

Recommendation 5

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that State-mandated, end-of course assessments be constructed of State test modules that can be assembled in various configurations to adapt to local curricula while simultaneously assuring uniform standards.

Question 6: Why not avoid variations in courses altogether by testing at the end of a program of study rather than at the end of courses?

Discussion: End-of-course-of-program of study proposals typically occur at about age 16 (end of tenth or middle of eleventh grade), following two or more years of study in a discipline. In this sense, they are not dissimilar from some European exams (e.g., Germany's *Abitur*, described in Attachment 2). Paradigm 3 (Attachment 11) was discussed with the State Board of Education as an end-of-program test model. The advantages of this proposal are fewer tests to develop, administer, and score and a broader picture of student competence in a discipline. The amount of content that can be assessed, however, is necessarily less than that of an end-of-course assessment, thus violating the State Board of Education's criterion of content-rich exams. End-of-program assessments are not "proximate to instruction" either, violating another State Board of Education criterion. The greater the distance between instruction and assessment, the more the test measures retention, generalization, and transfer rather than the learning goals. End-of-program assessments also provide students with fewer opportunities to demonstrate competence in the Core Learning Goals.

Recommendation 6

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that the State tests be administered at the end of courses, proximate to instruction, rather than at the end of a program of study.

Question 7: Why not give locals even more flexibility than modules in adapting State tests to local courses by developing pools of State test items for locals to use in constructing their own "State tests"?

Discussion: Two proposals for State test item banks came before the State Board of Education, one from local Assistant Superintendents for Instruction and one from Charles County (see Attachment 11). These proposals were reviewed by a nationally recognized group of psychometricians in June 1995. They concluded that it would not be possible to conduct a high-stakes, individual student accountability program using tests assembled locally from a State test item bank. MSDE staff with measurement expertise concurred. (See Attachment 13.)

Recommendation 7

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that State-mandated tests be administered and scored in accordance with State guidelines.

Question 8: Will students have to take State tests to graduate from high school?

Discussion: State tests can play only a very limited role in educational reform if all students are not required to take them. State tests can play no role in individual student accountability unless students are required to take them.

Recommendation 8

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that all students seeking a regular high school diploma be required to take State tests on the Core Learning Goals.

Question 9: How many State tests will students have to take as a part of high school graduation requirements?

Discussion: State-mandated learning goals and assessments are not intended to crowd out electives and local initiatives in curricula. Instead, they are intended to establish the core or foundation on which local curricula and individual student learning are built. Therefore, State testing should be limited to the amount necessary to accomplish its purpose.

Recommendation 9

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that the State tests be limited to one test less than the number of units required for graduation (except in the area of social studies). Hence, two tests in mathematics, three tests in English, two tests in science, and three tests in social studies are recommended.

Question 10: Will students have to pass all State tests to graduate from high school?

Discussion: Since the State tests will measure Core Learning Goals which are considered the foundation for success in postsecondary learning, workplace environments, and responsible social life, students should be required to pass all State tests to graduate. If the tests are in modular format, students should attain passing scores for each module.

Recommendation 10

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that the State Board of Education require meeting proficiency levels on each State test or the State Board-approved equivalent as a condition for graduation.

Question 11: Will the State proficiency levels represent minimal competency?

Discussion: Maryland already has minimal competency tests in its Functional Testing Program. Minimal competency scores on the new State tests would defeat the State Board of Education's intention of raising academic standards to nationally competitive levels. At the same time, the new standards are intended for all students, not just the academically gifted. The new standards must be higher than minimal competency. They must be high enough to motivate students to stretch their capacities, but not so high as to be unattainable. The standards must also be nationally competitive and credible in postsecondary education, workplaces, and social life.

Recommendation 11

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends establishing passing scores on State tests high enough to achieve the State Board of Education's purpose of preparing students for postsecondary education, workplace environments, and productive citizenship.

Question 12: Should the State Board of Education establish only passing scores on the State tests?

Discussion: Pass/fail scores provide little information to users, including teachers and students. Failed by how much? Does a failing score mean a student learned nothing? Does it entail reviewing part of a course or retaking all of it? Multiple scores reflecting multiple proficiency levels provide more useful information to users than simple pass/fail scores. Multiple scores could be built around proficiency scales used in MSPAP and other national measures (e.g., the National Assessment of Educational Progress). One proficiency level on a four-point scale could still represent pass/fail, but other proficiency levels on the scale would reveal the extent of that higher/lower performance. This scoring system should be aligned with MSPAP at grades 3, 5, and 8.

Recommendation 12

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that the State Board of Education use proficiency-level descriptions on the State tests to make scores more meaningful for users and to relate performance to other measures in Maryland and the nation.

Question 13: Should students be required to retake State tests until they pass them?

Discussion: The experience of Maryland with the Functional Testing Program is that students who are required to retake tests tend to have instructional programs that focus only on the content of the test. Hence, while it appears that the student is being provided with direct assistance, the test-based nature of that assistance severely constrains instruction and learning opportunities for the individual student. Experts testifying at the Task Force Retreat (see Agenda, Attachment 9) clearly agreed that high school must be about more than passing State tests. In fact, the danger with many remediation programs is that in a well-intentioned way they reduce the student's educational opportunities to minimal levels. If that is all there is, the student is still being denied access to high-quality education.

Students, with the support of the local school system, should be able to retake a State test if that is advantageous to them (e.g., they were ill that day or would like to try to attain a higher proficiency-level score). In other cases, the proposed high school assessment system recommended by the Task Force would provide several options for redressing a failing proficiency level on a State test. The intent of the assessment system is to offer students multiple opportunities to demonstrate competence on the Core Learning Goals. State tests represent one kind of opportunity. Local assessments represent another. In their roles as partners with the State in gathering and interpreting evidence of student competence in the learning goals, LEAs must develop and use local assessments that are parallel in content but different in format than State tests. All students must take these assessments as part of their course work. Results of these assessments and other course work may, with State Board approval, be weighed against State test results in determining whether or not individual students have attained satisfactory levels of performance in the learning goals.

Recommendation 13

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that students who fail State tests should not have to retake those tests until they pass them. However, they must achieve the Core Learning Goals. Therefore, the State should develop guidelines for the use of local assessments for providing evidence of student competence in the learning goals. Decisions about pass/fail should be based on evidence from a variety of State Board of Education-approved sources.

Question 14: How will the State maintain uniform standards using local alternatives for students who fail the State test?

Discussion: All local assessments used in this equation must be approved by the State Board of Education. In the case of an alternative assessment format like portfolio assessments, which would be appropriate for many of the complex, extended responses required by the learning goals, the State would have to provide guidelines for use as well as funds for development and training. Statewide standards for development, administration, and interpretation of results would meet the State Board of Education's need for uniformity of standards. Some of these needs for instruments or guidelines might be met by a contractor or a collaborator (e.g., the New Standards Project or other consortia).

Recommendation 14

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that the State Board of Education approve all local alternative assessments and audit their use and results to ensure uniform standards.

Question 15: If the evidence from State and local assessments indicates that a student should not receive a diploma from a Maryland public high school, will that student have the right to appeal the decision?

Discussion: Fairness and equity demand procedures to protect the rights of the student.

Recommendation 15

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that the State Board of Education develop procedures for reviewing student graduation appeals to include assessments, interpretation of evidence, and decision making.

Question 16: Will Skills for Success be measured?

Discussion: Not directly. State tests that are administered in a relatively short period of time do not lend themselves to assessment through the state test. However, it is possible to include these Skills for Success as features of the assessment, in much the same manner as Dimensions of Thinking is included within the MSPAP at grades 3, 5, and 8.

Recommendation 16

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that student performance in the Skills for Success should be used by test developers in the test design for the four content areas of English, mathematics, social studies, and science.

Question 17: How should Skills for Success be assessed, and how should information on them be reported?

Discussion: Instruction and assessment in the Skills for Success should be the responsibility of every high school teacher. Every content team should be expected to demonstrate how the Skills for Success are incorporated into the instructional program and local assessments so that high performance in the content area

would require high proficiency in the Skills for Success. Such instructional responsibility would not be limited to the areas tested by the State, but all programs of study in high school. Matrices should be included in each of the Core Learning Goal documents showing the relationship of the Skills For Success to the specific content area.

Portfolio assessments as developed by such groups as New Standards should be reviewed as assessment systems to help teachers monitor student growth in the Skills for Success. Teachers will also need staff development programs to help them use those kinds of resources.

Recommendation 17

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that the Skills for Success be embedded within each of the State content area tests, and a report provided each year on how this was accomplished. Local schools should also be responsible for showing how those skills are incorporated in the instructional program across all content areas, not only those covered by the state tests.

Question 18: How will the assessment system provide opportunities for special needs and limited-English-proficient (LEP) students to demonstrate competence in the Core Learning Goals?

Discussion: Current State guidelines on modification of State tests and exemptions from testing for special needs students will apply to the high school assessments.

Recommendation 18

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that the design and development of the high school assessments adhere to current State guidelines for assessing special-needs students which govern MSPAP, the functional tests, and norm-referenced testing in Maryland.

Question 19: How should the development of the comprehensive assessment system begin?

Discussion: Like a builder of houses uses architectural plans to guide construction, test developers must identify test design options and make decisions before commencing development. A comprehensive assessment system should be designed and approved in advance of development or purchase of any measures. This master plan should address how the technical standards for test construction and evaluation and professional standards for test use (*Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, 1985) will be or are built into the assessment. This should include validity, reliability and errors of measurement, test development, pilot testing and revision, scaling, score comparability, interpretation and equating, test production such as technical manuals and user's guides, impact on special populations, test administration and test security, scoring, reporting results, and protecting the rights of test takers.

Recommendation 19

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that the State Board of Education contract for the design of the comprehensive high school assessment system. The proposed design should be brought to the State Board of Education for approval not later than six months from the awarding of the contract. The guidelines for the contractor should be the recommendations of this Task Force Report, if approved by the State Board of Education.

Question 20: Will instruction and assessment prototypes for at least one module in each content area be available for review prior to full-scale development?

Discussion: Prototypes will show stakeholders the Core Learning Goals and measures designed to assess competence in them. The process of prototype development will also raise issues about future development that will need to be addressed and revised in the comprehensive assessment system design, a self-correcting process.

Recommendation 20

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends the development of prototypes involving curriculum, instruction, and assessment in each content area for critical review by stakeholders before proceeding with development of the entire assessment system.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Question 21: Should the State assessment be implemented in the same manner as grades 3, 5, and 8 whereby the State test is implemented, its results used as baseline information, and test data used for accountability after a five-year period of implementation?

Discussion: The high school assessment cannot be implemented with high standards as a graduation requirement for the individual student unless curricular and instructional adjustments have been made and are successful. If such a strategy is not employed, it is likely that the standards for performance would have to be lowered in order to accommodate all students. Additionally, legal issues raised in the State of Florida landmark lawsuit referred to as "Debra P" delineated that students could not be held responsible for graduation requirements until instruction had occurred. If teachers are unable to deliver the high-standard content expectations set forth in the Core Learning Goals, it will be necessary to develop support systems for them prior to accountability implementation. Since the Core Learning Goals clearly call for content and processes for which many teachers were not trained in their preservice programs, it would not be necessary to implement a testing program to determine that students could not accomplish what teachers are not trained to teach.

Recommendation 21

Staff development for teachers and principals related to the Core Learning Goals and the format of the assessment should occur concurrently with test development. State tests should not be given if staff development activities are not implemented successfully.

Question 22: How will training occur for teachers?

Discussion: The alignment of Core Learning Goals and teacher training should be a direct responsibility of the institutions of higher education with state-approved teacher education and certification programs. The accountability for ensuring that all future teachers trained in Maryland higher education institutions can deliver those Core Learning Goals rests with the State Department of Education in its teacher licensure process. The Professional Standards for Teacher Education Board (PSTEB) also shares this responsibility and should be review its procedures to ensure licensure of only qualified individuals, including those entering Maryland public schools from out-of-State teacher training institutions or employment settings.

Recommendation 22

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that a collaborative relationship among the state department of education, the academic deans and vice presidents of higher education institutions, and community college deans be established so that the content requirements for new teachers entering the profession or transferring to Maryland are aligned with State Board-adopted Learning Outcomes and Core Learning Goals.

Question 23: When should staff development begin in relation to test development?

Discussion: Staff development is a long-term, sustained effort. It cannot be expected to “catch up” to test development in short order. Staff development for employed teachers and administrators should be grounded in building level needs to deliver the Core Learning Goals. As such, School Improvement Teams should be the accountable group for the design, development, implementation, and monitoring of staff development plans that result in changes in classroom practice and increased student learning.

Recommendation 23

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that systems design, test development, field testing, and staff development occur simultaneously so that these activities can inform each other and teachers, schools, and students will be better prepared for implementation of the high school assessment system.

XII. RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING COST

Question 24: What is the expected cost for the development of the program?

Discussion: Using MSPAP as a benchmark for costs, it is expected that test design and development would be approximately \$60,000 per test. Given the Task Force recommendation for a total of ten State tests, one can assume approximately \$600,000 for test construction and another \$200,000 for development and scoring costs.

Additionally, an amount not to exceed \$10,000 per high school for each of three years is anticipated for staff development activities specific to individual schools. This would provide opportunities for schools to make adjustments for the development necessary to provide successful instruction to the students served in the building. Funds would be allocated based on submission to MSDE and approval of a staff development plan submitted by the School Improvement Team.

If Maryland were to link with consortia such as The New Standards Project \$250,000 for each of two years would be needed. That Project could offer a support system for schools to develop local assessment systems, particularly through portfolio development, in order to gather more data on student performance related to the Core Learning Goals and to provide management infrastructures to principals and school improvement teams for data management. Another potential linkage might be with the Chief State School Officers and its state collaboratives. That effort would cost an estimated \$60,000 per content area which might correspond to our test areas. A review should occur regarding the feasibility and desirability of participation in such consortia.

Dorchester County Public Schools' calculation, based upon the implementation of MSPAP at grades 3, 5, and 8, would indicate that each course being reconfigured would cost approximately \$38,000 for curricular and instructional practices redesign. That cost reflects a per-pupil cost for implementing curricular and instructional changes for MSPAP at grades 3, 5, and 8. Charles County Public Schools has also developed preliminary cost projections for staff development, estimating \$50,000 annually for its five high schools. (See Attachment 14 for details.) Additionally, the State of Minnesota, which hired an external consulting firm to estimate the total cost of implementation of reform at the high school level estimates approximately \$15 per student per year for the initial phase of their high school reform. Maryland's own MSPAP operates at a cost of approximately \$21 per student.

Recommendation 24

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that the design of the assessment include a thorough and complete cost analysis, identify who is expected to be responsible for various aspects of the costs, project potential funding sources to avoid the unfunded mandate situation, and include a projected per-pupil cost.

XIII. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO NEXT STEPS

Question 25: What are the next steps for the Core Learning Goals?

Discussion: Next steps for the Core Learning Goals should complete them for adoption, begin curriculum alignments in the LEAs, collaborate with local boards of education and the Maryland Education Coalition on gaining input and informing stakeholders, develop a comprehensive public engagement program, and address issues related to special needs and LEP students.

Recommendation 25

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that:

- *An RFP be released by August 15, 1995, to gather information from teachers in each of the State's high schools on the next level of specificity of the Core Learning Goals. The results of that survey, to be completed no later than the end of November 1995, should be used to develop the next level of definitional detail for the Core Learning Goals. That version should then be submitted for adoption by the State Board of Education.*
- *MSDE, in conjunction with the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, should conduct programs for local boards of education so they will understand the nature of the high school assessment and contribute to a partnership with the State for the improvement of educational performance at the high school level.*
- *Programs sponsored through the Maryland Education Coalition should be continued in order to acquaint parents of secondary school learners (grades 5-12) with the purpose of the high school assessment, to gain input from them, and to solicit their support for the design.*
- *The state's comprehensive public engagement program being developed through contract should include the high school assessment and serve as a major means of garnering public support for the program.*
- *The MSDE divisions responsible for Special Education and Limited English Proficiency Programs should convene a representative group of the variety of intensity-level special education teachers and inclusion-class teachers to study the implications of the proposed Core Learning Goals and their impact on special populations.*

*Identifying infrastructure
resource needs of LEA
rec/req. to enable H.S.
students to meet C.L.G.
+ power & funding*

Question 26: What next steps should be taken regarding the assessment?

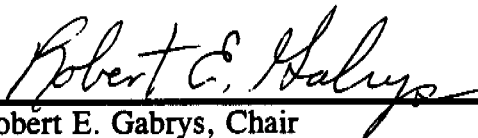
Discussion: The Task Force deliberated on next steps which would move the high school assessment components forward without delay. To that end the recommendation speaks to a number of steps that would allow both State and local component development to proceed.

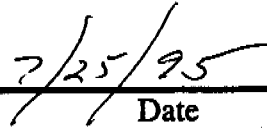
Recommendation 26

The High School Assessment Task Force recommends that:

- ***A RFP should be released for a vendor to assist in Assessment Systems Design and Development of the High School Assessment in accordance with the recommendations of the Task Force.***
- ***A nationally representative technical advisory committee should be established to advise MSDE on test development issues to ensure validity and reliability of State instruments.***
- ***Plans for the assessment system design should be developed for submission to the State Board of Education no later than the January 1996 meeting.***
- ***MSDE should begin discussions immediately with local school systems regarding the construction of local support systems by a State representative group, including the appropriateness of participation in state collaboratives such as The New Standards Project and the Chief State School Officers as a vehicle.***
- ***The role of existing instruments in the high school assessment program should be determined by conducting a match of the instruments with Core Learning Goals. The results of this match should be presented to the State Board of Education for information purposes.***

Submitted on behalf of the High School Assessment Task Force by:


Robert E. Gabrys, Chair


Date