



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

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AN EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVE

JANUARY 11, 2016



### Who is the Maryland State Education Association?

71,000 educators statewide

- 23 of 24 school districts
- 40 local associations
- Members include:
  - **Certificated employees:** teachers, administrators, reading and math specialists, school counselors, school psychologists, audiologists, speech-language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists
  - **Education support professionals:** secretaries, paraeducators, technology staff, bus drivers, custodial staff, food service workers, etc.
  - **Student educators**
  - **Retired members**



## Find the right balance of testing

### WHAT MAKES A **GOOD** TEST?

- ✓ Aligned with content and curriculum
- ✓ Designed to inform instruction
- ✓ Timely feedback
- ✓ High quality and teacher-developed
- ✓ Validated to effectively measure critical thinking, complex skills, and subject mastery

### WHAT MAKES A **BAD** TEST?

- ✗ Testing in excess, that takes valuable time and resources from teaching and learning
- ✗ Without clear purpose
- ✗ Created solely to fulfill a SLO or for teacher/principal evaluations
- ✗ Fails to promote level playing field for English language learners or students who receive special education accommodations

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## What Maryland educators report re: testing

- **Time to Learn Committees created in 21 school districts**
  - Review data provided by MSDE
  - Identify missing data or information from the MSDE report
  - 131 members serving on Time to Learn Committees
- **Time on testing reports**
  - Incomplete and inaccurate information provided to the Commission from MSDE
  - Reported data for 336 grade/district combinations (14 grades x 24 school districts)
  - Time to Learn Committees identify more than 2% of instruction time on mandated testing in 171 of 336 (51%) grades.

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## What Maryland educators report re: testing

Key findings from 5,451 survey responses:

- **Teachers are frustrated that mandated tests are more summative than formative.**

Q: Identify the purpose of each mandated test you administer:

- Mastery of Skills (20%)
- Summative (18%)
- Academic Achievement (18%)
- Application of Concepts (11%)
- Formative (10%)
- Critical Thinking (9%)
- Diagnostic (7%)
- Placement (6%)
- Other (3.2%)

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## Educator survey findings (continued)

- **SLOs are driving layers of mandated testing, especially in districts where they are formed in a more centralized, top-down process rather than truly teacher-developed and mutually agreed upon by the teacher and principal.**

- Overall, 44% of tests play a role in a teacher's SLO.

*Varies by district...*

- In Charles County, 64% of tests play a role in a teacher's SLO.

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## Educator survey findings (continued)

- **There are significant opportunity costs that come with mandated testing that go beyond just the loss of instructional time.**

*Q: Does the test use resources that would otherwise be used for learning?*

- **OVERALL**
  - YES (70%)
  - NO (30%)

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## Educator survey findings (continued)

- **Practice tests are adding layers of testing, especially for tests that are high stakes for school reputation, teacher/principal evaluation, or as a graduation requirement for students.**
  - At least one practice test precedes 40% of mandated tests.
  - When practice tests are given before a mandated test, 30% of the time there are four or more practice tests.

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## Educator survey findings (continued)

### ➤ Teachers report that mandated tests are not typically informing their instruction.

*Q: Rate the instructional value on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) for each test you administer:*

- 1 – Very Low (43%)
- 2 – Low (22%)
- 3 – Moderate (22%)
- 4 – High (9%)
- 5 – Very High (4%)

*Q: Does the mandated test you administer inform your instruction?*

- Yes (33%)
- No (67%)

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## Educator survey findings (continued)

### ➤ IEP accommodations not allowed by PARCC

- Individual Education Plans identify accommodations necessary for students to learn; and while PARCC may not allow them, the students must still take the test.
- Open-ended questions in the survey had special educators identifying the inability to meet accommodations of an IEP with the PARCC test as a major concern.
- Some of the IEP accommodations allowed in Maryland but not by PARCC include:
  - Human reader or audio recording for verbatim reading test questions
  - Human reader/text to speech to record answers
  - Grammar devices
  - Graphic organizers or individualized math reference sheets

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## Kindergarten teacher survey findings

*Key findings from two surveys of Kindergarten teachers.*

- **KRA is disruptive to learning at the start of the year and provides little value to teachers in how they tailor instruction to individual students.**

### 2014-2015 Survey

- 80%+ of educators said the test took an hour or more to give to each individual student.
- 90%+ of surveyed teachers said the test would not be useful for improving instruction for individual students, largely because the test does not provide timely results with actionable data.

### 2015-2016 Survey

- The test was shortened. 34% of educators said the test took more than an hour to give to each individual student, with 57% reporting it took 30-59 minutes per student.
- 13% of educators said they expected to receive meaningful data from the KRA.
- 9% of educators surveyed said the KRA helps them improve instruction.

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## In Review: Key findings from survey data

- The majority of tests mandated by school districts, the state, and the federal government are summative in nature—they test whether a student has learned skills and knowledge.
- Educators report that two-thirds of mandated tests produce results that are not useful to improving instruction.
- In many cases, the tests are mandated in order to help satisfy teacher and principal SLOs instead of having the SLOs be teacher-developed.
- The cost of mandated testing, in both time and resources, is compounded by interference with learning resources and the need for practice tests.
- Special educators are frustrated and helpless in meeting certain IEP accommodations of their students taking the PARCC test.
- While the KRA is slightly shorter, it does not help teachers improve instruction of individual students and is still quite disruptive to the first few months of learning for many kindergarten students.

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## Opportunities and best practices

### ➤ Guiding principles and actions from the federal government

- U.S. Department of Education guidance on testing includes:
  - 2% cap of instruction time on mandated testing
  - Testing transparency and notification to parents
- Financial resources and expertise offered by the Obama Administration

### ➤ Every Student Succeeds Act

- Seven states to pilot innovative assessments (models: New Hampshire and New York)
- Option to replace standardized test in high school grades with a nationally recognized assessment

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## Opportunities and best practices

### ➤ Legislative and administrative actions from other states

- 2% cap of instruction time for mandated testing (New York)
- Establish State and Local Assessment Task Forces (Delaware, North Carolina, Washington, DC)
- Parent notification of the purpose and use of mandated tests (New Jersey)
- Replacing high school assessments (Delaware, Montana, and Colorado)

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## MSEA's recommendations



1. Create teams at the state and local level that include MSEA 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.

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## MSEA's recommendations



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. Eliminate 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 an approved-IEP accommodation is not allowed.
8. Change the KRA to a sampling test.

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## MSEA stands ready to help

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