

**Maryland Association of Boards of Education  
Presentation to the  
Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments in Public Schools  
February 8, 2016**

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all 24 local boards of education, appreciates this opportunity to present our positions regarding federal, state and local student assessment policies and practices.

Historically, MABE has played a leading role in advocating for a high quality academic performance accountability system in Maryland. Our students deserve nothing less. Therefore, MABE supports the work of the Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools to develop recommendations regarding "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" (House Bill 452, 2015). MABE also recognizes the Commission's charge to make recommendations regarding "the most efficient and effective methods to ensure that adequate time is allotted to both administering assessments and instruction." However, 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.

For the same reasons, MABE strongly opposes pending legislation before the General Assembly, which would require the State Board of Education to adopt regulations limiting the amount of time in the aggregate that may be devoted to federal, State, and locally mandated tests for each grade to 2% of the specified minimum required annual instructional hours (House Bill 141 and Senate Bill 407). MABE has adopted a Continuing Resolution and Legislative Position (attached) on which this bill position is grounded.

MABE supports local decision-making authority in developing curriculum and assessments, in conjunction with the State Board of Education, as these entities are charged with the responsibility to research, investigate, and evaluate curriculum and assessments, and are ultimately accountable for student performance. In Maryland, the General Assembly created the State Board and local boards of education and expressly delegated to these bodies the responsibility for developing curriculum and student assessments. With the exception of federally mandated assessments under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), student assessments in Maryland are governed largely by regulations adopted by the State Board, and local policies and practices adopted by 24 local school systems.

To assist the work of the Commission, MABE encouraged local boards to participate fully in the survey to identify local, state, and federally-mandated assessments within our state. The resulting "Report on Local, State, and Federally-Mandated Assessments in Maryland," includes a comprehensive history of student and school assessments in Maryland, and survey responses from each of the 24 local school systems. Following the compilation of the survey results, the Commission requested reviews and responses from local boards of education and other educational stakeholders.

MABE believes the report aptly describes the state's adoption of the Common Core State Standards in 2010, the subsequent development of Maryland specific College and Career Readiness Standards, and implementation of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments. Similarly, the report compiles responses from local school systems on the array of locally-adopted assessments. As the report states, "This variation reflects the strong tradition of local autonomy and decision-making that exists in Maryland. Local school boards are elected or appointed to make decisions that best reflect the values and desires of local communities."

As the Commission has seen, school systems are fully engaged in the thoughtful consideration of the role of both formative and summative assessments in educating students; measuring what students know and informing the appropriate instruction to benefit individual students. Common themes include: the use of data systems and interactive platforms to analyze student assessment data and immediately inform teachers in the classroom; the recent and ongoing transition to on-line state assessments; and the responsibility to provide professional development for teachers and principals.

MABE firmly believes that the coordination of these efforts by educational professionals within local school systems is essential to the continuous improvement of public education in Maryland, toward the goal of each student achieving his or her highest potential as a learner.

Thank you again for this opportunity to present MABE's perspectives and positions. On behalf of local boards, MABE urges this Commission, as we do the State Board and General Assembly, to continue to adhere to the principle of locally-governed education policies and practices regarding student assessments.

## **Curriculum and Assessments**

(Adopted 2013; amended 2014)

WHEREAS, in creating the State Board and local boards of education the General Assembly has delegated the responsibility for the development of curriculum and student assessments; and

WHEREAS, the State Board establishes state standards and graduation requirements; and local boards implement locally-developed curriculum to ensure that standards are met and students are prepared to meet graduation requirements; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly has considered and at times enacted legislation usurping State Board and local board authority by mandating public school curriculum and student assessments; and

WHEREAS, the State Board adopted the Visionary Panel for Better Schools report in 2002, including the development of a voluntary statewide curriculum, with which local curriculum must be aligned; and

WHEREAS, in 2009 the State Board amended its regulations to clarify that the requirement to align local curriculum with the state curriculum was no longer voluntary; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding established local board authority over curriculum and assessments, the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) mandated an array of new student assessments and curriculum reforms, requiring the investment of significant state and local government resources; and

WHEREAS, Maryland complied with NCLB by adopting the Maryland School Assessments (MSAs) in reading, mathematics, and science in grades 3 through 8, and grade 10; and

WHEREAS, the State Board adopted regulations in 2004 to tie graduation and receipt of the Maryland High School Diploma beginning in 2009 to passage of four High School Assessments (HSAs) in Algebra/Data Analysis, English II, Government, and Biology; and

WHEREAS, the HSAs in English II, Algebra, and Biology serve as the NCLB mandated tests at the high school level; and

WHEREAS, in 2008 the State Board approved the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation which allows students not passing one or more HSAs to complete projects for credit toward the minimum score required to receive a diploma; and

WHEREAS, in 2011 the Government HSA was abolished as a cost saving measure; and was restored by legislation enacted in 2012 which also mandates a middle school assessment in social studies; and

WHEREAS, Maryland and other states are developing, piloting, and implementing new state curriculum, student assessments, and teacher and principal evaluation systems based on the

Common Core State Standards; an unprecedented nationwide education reform initiative that will continue to test the boundaries of local, state, and federal decision-making in the education arena; and

WHEREAS, MSDE has adopted new Maryland College- and Career-Ready Standards, curricular framework, and uniform state assessments developed in conjunction with the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC); and

WHEREAS, the high school PARCC assessments in Mathematics and English/Language Arts will become the High School Assessments (HSAs) for federal accountability and Maryland high school graduation requirement purposes; and

WHEREAS, in 2014 legislation was enacted to require MSDE to develop a plan to transfer from the Maryland High School Assessments in English and Algebra/Data Analysis to the comparable PARCC assessments as a graduation requirement; and

WHEREAS, the high school PARCC assessments in algebra/data analysis and English 10, to be administered for the first time in the spring of 2015, are to be “high stakes” tests which combined with the assessments in Biology and Government determine whether a student receives a Maryland Diploma;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that MABE supports local decision-making authority in developing curriculum and assessments, in conjunction with the State Board of Education, as these entities are charged with the responsibility to research, investigate, and evaluate curriculum and assessments, and are ultimately accountable for student performance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MABE supports the administration of a set of high school assessments as graduation requirements, which includes the HSAs and new PARCC assessments, following at least two years of administration, and the development of cut scores, a composite score, and appropriate interventions and alternatives. This timeframe is consistent with the prohibition enacted in 2014 on using PARCC assessment results to evaluate teachers and principals until the 2016-2017 school year; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MABE opposes efforts by the General Assembly or federal government to usurp local board authority over public school curriculum or student assessments.

## TESTING AND CURRICULUM

### **BACKGROUND**

MABE believes that in creating the State Board and local boards of education the General Assembly has appropriately delegated the responsibility for the development of curriculum and student assessments. The State Board establishes state standards and graduation requirements; local boards implement locally-developed curriculum to ensure that state standards are met and students are prepared to meet graduation requirements. In this way, state and local boards and educators collaborate to ensure that all students, schools, and school systems are held accountable for their work.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 mandated an array of new student assessments and curricular reforms. NCLB mandated that each state define what constitutes adequate yearly progress (AYP) in increasing student achievement in reading and mathematics toward the goal of all students reaching proficient levels on uniform state assessments by 2014. NCLB required all states and local school systems to test all students on state learning objectives and adopt “research-based” curriculum. Maryland complied with NCLB by adopting the Maryland School Assessments (MSAs) in reading, mathematics, and science in grades 3 through 8, and grade 10. At the same time, the State Board approved a voluntary statewide curriculum, with which local curriculum must be aligned. In 2009, the State Board amended its regulations to clarify the state curriculum was no longer voluntary.

The State Board adopted regulations in 2004 to tie high school graduation beginning in 2009 to passage of four High School Assessments (HSAs) in Algebra/Data Analysis, English, Biology, and Government. The HSAs in English, Algebra, and Biology serve as the NCLB tests at the high school level. In 2008, the State Board approved the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation which allows students not passing one or more HSAs to complete projects for credit toward the minimum score required to graduate. The Government HSA was abolished in 2011, but restored in 2012 by legislation that also mandates a new middle school assessment in social studies.

Maryland is developing and implementing the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards (MCCRS) which involves developing a new state accountability system, curriculum and assessments, and educator evaluation systems, based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers developed the CCSS as higher academic expectations in English/language arts and mathematics based on the knowledge and skills students should master by the end of each grade level to be on track for success in college and careers. Maryland’s new assessments have been developed through the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). 2013 legislation mandates that all high school juniors are given CCSS assessments to demonstrate college readiness; and mandates new transitional courses for seniors. As a response to growing required assessments, in 2015 the legislature formed the Commission to Review Maryland’s Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools to assess the State’s use of and approach to mandated assessments and testing. In these ways, the CCSS and related initiatives represent unprecedented nationwide education reform that will continue to test the boundaries of local, state, and federal decision-making in the education arena.

For additional information, see [MABE’s Resolution on Curriculum and Assessments](#).

### **MABE POSITIONS**

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education, representing all local boards of education in Maryland:

- ✓ **Supports** local decision-making authority in developing curriculum and assessments, in conjunction with the State Board of Education.
- ✓ **Supports** adequate state funding to support any mandated assessment program, including the computer-based PARCC assessments and related technology costs.
- X **Opposes** any efforts by the General Assembly to legislate curriculum or testing matters inconsistent with MABE’s legislative positions.

