

Minutes

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

March 7, 2016

1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Howard County Public Schools, Board Room B

10910 Clarksville Pike, Ellicott City, MD

The meeting was called to order at 1:10 p.m.

1. Welcome
2. Review and approve February 8 minutes
 - a. The February minutes were adopted as written.
3. Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)
 - a. Scott Pfeifer, Executive Director of MASSP, introduced Dwayne Jones, President and principal of Laurel High School in Prince George's County, and Charles Hagan, President Elect and principal of Harford Technical High School in Harford County. They focused their comments specifically to Charge #5 regarding whether testing windows implemented by local school systems have any negative ancillary effects on instruction, materials and equipment use, and school calendars. Mr. Hagan said that it is important to note that Harford County administered 100% of the PARCC assessments via paper and pencil.
 - b. On the day of the tests, daily schedules must be changed, revised or altered in some way. Teachers who are required to give tests cannot teach their normal classes. Either a school administrator or the test coordinator spends the day only on testing, and is unable to perform their other job duties. Tracking absent students is a big issue. Substitute teachers cannot provide the same level of instruction as the regular classroom teacher.
 - c. There are a large number of standardized tests given in high schools, including HSA, PARCC, PSAT, Achievement Series, and Alt-MSA.
 - d. The impact on staff time includes the number of days test coordinators spend on testing. Testing incidents must be reported, and this adds stress to the testing environment.
 - e. When technology is used for testing, it is not available for instruction.
 - f. The following questions were asked of the panel:

- i. Can you give more detail about reducing the number and length of tests?
Answer: Is it possible to test multiple things on one test? For example, instead of having English, math and science tests, can we make one test that is cross-curricular? Perhaps it is possible to shorten some of the tests. Also, is it necessary to test students every year in middle school?
- ii. What is the first thing you would focus on if you could only change one thing?
Answer: Reduce the amount of time and number of days spent testing. Loss of instructional time is a major problem.
- iii. Can you look at high school tests given across the state and provide recommendations as to what is redundant and how you would change them? Include what can be consolidated and what can be removed, what was meant to be formative but isn't. Answer: We will do that.
- iv. I don't think it is the Commission's task to determine which tests should be given. But, what State test is useful for each grade and what time would be reasonable for that test? What content areas should be included?
- v. Do you agree with a 2% cap on testing? Answer: How is that defined? Is that a 2% cap per student? It is a movement in the right direction, but the decision should be made at the local level. We get troubled when there is legislation in an area like this.
- vi. Of the tests you talked about, what is voluntary vs. what is required? Are there equity issues? Answer: Some are voluntary and are useful and efficient. For example, in Harford County, we administer the PSAT and the Accuplacer. There are no equity issues.
- vii. Please survey your members for redundancy with local and State assessments. There can be a 4-6 week turnaround.

4. Legislative Update

- a. Senator Pinsky gave an update on the status of pending legislation.
 - i. SB787 – The federal Every Student Succeeds Act allows for innovations in alternative assessments. This bill directs Maryland to apply for the pilot, but we understand that USDE has not yet written the regulations. This has a good chance in the Senate and is getting a positive response in the House.
 - ii. SB 533 – This is a transparency bill. Assessments must be posted on school system websites and included in the Master Plans. There is a good chance of passage, but may have some amendments.
 - iii. SB794 – KRA would shift to a sampling instead of census administration. The bill has some momentum. There may be an amendment to allow school systems

to test all students, if it is done prior to the start of school and results are received within a shorter period of time.

- iv. SB786 – This bill lists criteria of good assessments and talks about an assessment audit. The Commission might like to look at these criteria.
- v. SB407 – This bill limits testing to 2%. MABE is opposed. The Senate committee has not taken this up yet. If it is not passed, there will be an expectation that the amount of testing will be reduced and will be more efficient and effective. There is some effort to move this legislation now and not wait for the Commission report.
- vi. HB1233 – This is a parental notice bill.
- vii. HB633 – Standardized testing cannot be used as a part of educator evaluations. Repeals a State Board regulation.
- viii. Although some legislative members thought that letters from the Commission on pending legislation would be helpful, Mr. Berry is reticent about sending letters because the Commission as a whole has not had a discussion and reached consensus on positions.

5. Draft Definitions, USDE 6 Principles, templates for subcommittee work, Commission timeline

- a. The Commission in February asked MSDE to develop draft definitions for “mandated” and “non-mandated” assessments to use in its work moving forward. The draft definitions presented today were vetted by local school system assistant superintendents. The following comments/questions were made by members:
 - i. Formative assessments are often mandated to help students prepare for the summative assessments.
 - ii. What type of test – mandated or non-mandated - are AP/IB/SAT tests considered? It depends on whether the school system mandates that students take them or not. If it does, they are considered mandated assessments. If not, they are non-mandated. This makes a difference when defining and determining a 2% cap.
 - iii. Results of mandated assessments help school systems reflect on the materials of instruction every year, making curricular changes where needed.
 - iv. It is not necessarily part of the discussion, but we need to account for school-based assessments. School-level mandates were not consider locally mandated in the original MSDE survey because it is not a system wide mandate. Whether it is considered mandated or not, the student still spends that time testing. There needs to be a balance between school-based and all other testing.

- v. The draft definitions are attached. The Commission accepted the definitions as drafted. The Commission will use these definitions moving forward.
- b. The Commission report is due to the Department of Budget and Management by June 1. The Commission will ask for a short extension making the report due after the June 8 meeting
- c. The Commission agreed to schedule a second meeting in May. MSDE will survey members to find a date and time after May 10.
- d. MSDE and Janet Wilson developed templates for the three subcommittees to use during discussions. This will help formulate information to support Commission recommendations. Each subcommittee will give recommendations for consideration by the group as a whole. The subcommittees should bring substantive recommendations with rationale and possible impacts on the local school systems and students.
- e. MSDE will begin drafting parts of the report for which information is available now.

6. Subcommittee Work

- a. The three subcommittees met for the remainder of the time.

Elementary/Middle	High	General/Infrastructure
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
As needed: Chris Berry Henry Johnson Nancy King		

Minutes Adopted: April 14, 2016