

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

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

Final Report



Annapolis, Maryland
July 2016

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

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Preface

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. The Commission through this report 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 I.

The full scope of the work done prior to the seating of the Commission is summarized in Appendix II.

Commission's Charge

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.

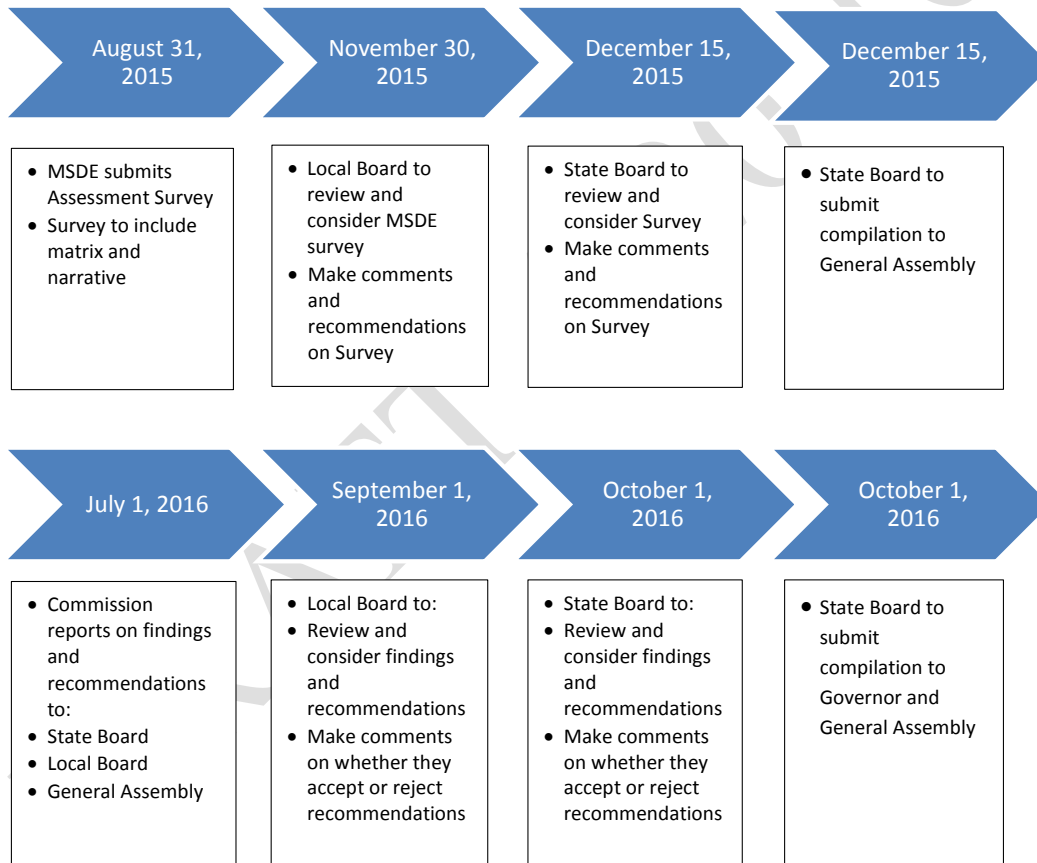
On or before September 1, 2016, each county board of education shall review and consider the Commission's findings and recommendations; and make comments and recommendations related to whether they accept or reject the Commission's findings and recommendations to the State Board; and make comments and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

Comment [GH1]: There may be a better heading than this.....

During the course of its work, the Commission studied MSDE's August 2015 Report, heard from a variety of stakeholders, and had vigorous discussions. It became apparent that Commission members agreed that student assessments serve a number of important purposes, including the measurement of student progress, the provision of data to allow educators to meet the individual and group needs of students, the means to hold schools accountable for student learning, and the means to ensure equity by shedding light on achievement gaps.

Members also agreed that time spent on taking and administering assessments must be balanced against the protection of classroom instructional time. Assessments should provide the most useful information possible while taking the least amount of time possible in preparation and administration.

During its deliberations, the Commission came to agreement with the following principles set forth by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) in October of 2014.

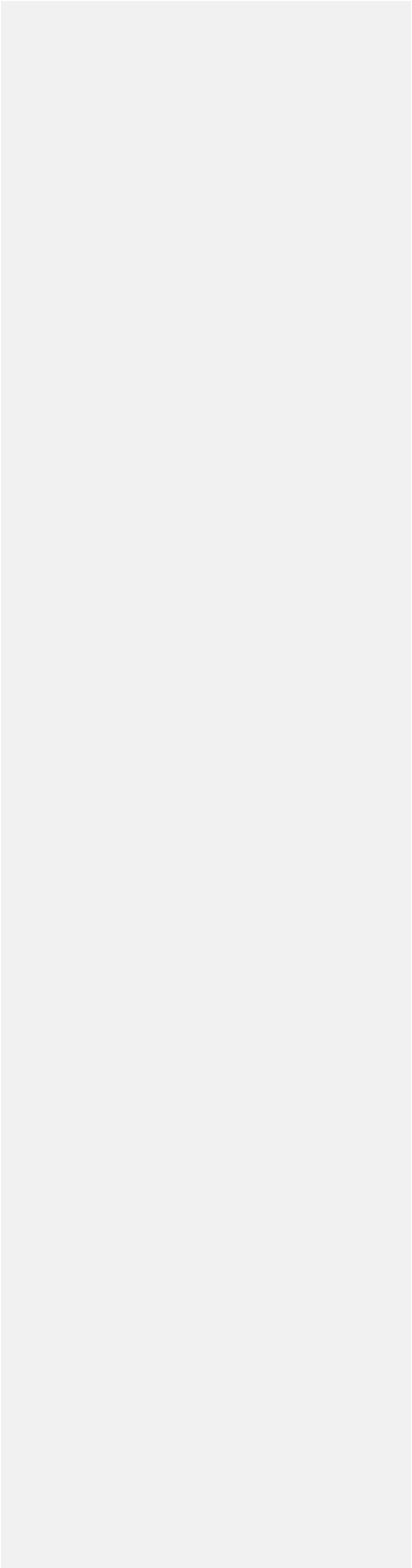
- ❖ **Assessments should be high-quality.** We cannot waste student or teacher time with low-quality tests. Assessments must be aligned with college- and career-ready standards. Assessments must measure students' abilities to think critically, synthesize material from multiple sources, analyze problems, and explain and justify responses.
- ❖ **Assessments should be part of a coherent system.** Assessments should complement each other and adhere to a system of connected metrics. Assessments should only be administered in necessary instances. Multiple assessments of the same students that measure similar outcomes should be minimized or eliminated.
- ❖ **Assessments should be meaningful.** Assessments are critical to improving instructional practice in the classroom and helping parents make decisions. Therefore, the results of assessments should be timely, transparent, disaggregated, and easily accessible to students, parents, teachers, and the public so they can interpret and analyze results, as needed.

Comment [GH2]: This may not be the correct wording, but these ideas have come up in discussion, but have not been agreed to by the Commission. There may be other understandings that should be included here as well. This is a placeholder for discussion.

The recommendations of the Commission are based on these common understandings and the findings of its work.

Findings

DRAFT 4-20-16



Recommendations

DRAFT 4-20-16

Summary of Commission's Work

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

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 issues 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 state-wide 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 development 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 12th 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. The two assessment subcommittees developed matrices that drew information from the assessment matrices completed by the local school systems during the summer of 2015.

As criteria for this analysis and evaluative work, members evaluated the type of mandated assessment according to the key principles for good assessments put forward by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) in an email dated February 2, 2016 from John B. King, Jr., Acting Secretary of Education. USDE states that these principles

"...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.”*

As a basis for this subcommittee work, the Commission on February 8 asked that MSDE prepare a definition of what constitutes a mandated versus non-mandated assessment and clarify the distinction between locally and state mandated assessments. In collaboration with summative and formative assessment colleagues and leadership, MSDE drafted the requested definitions. At the February 19, 2016, local assistant superintendents’ meeting, the definitions were shared for feedback, and the suggested edits were made. At the March 7, 2016, Commission meeting, the draft definitions were shared and approved for use by the Commission in its work. The definitions are located in Appendix III.

More will be added about subcommittee work as it is available.

Conclusion and Final Observations

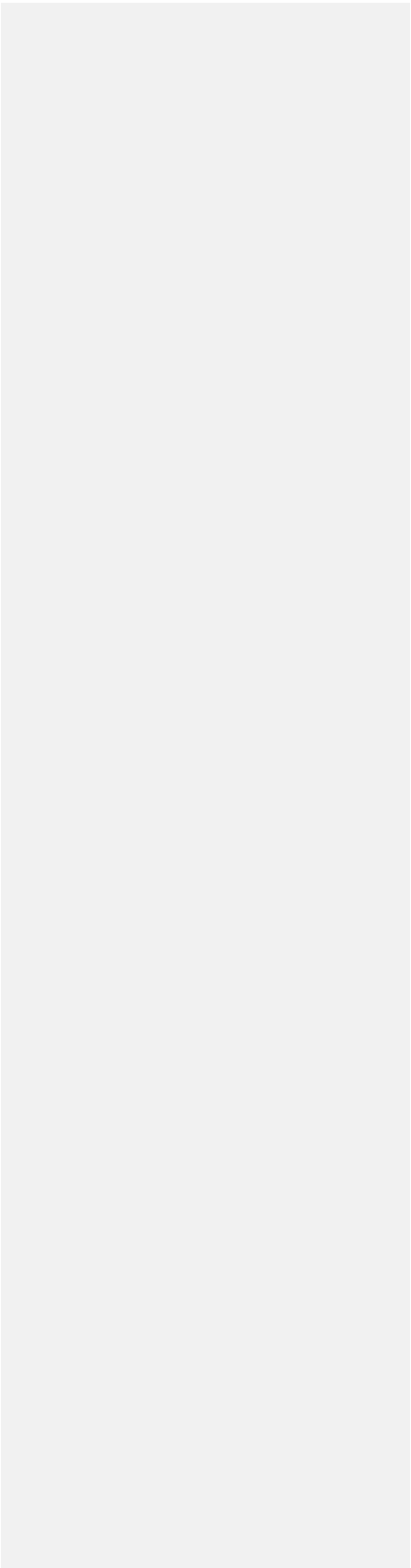
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Appendix I

House Bill 452/Chapter 421

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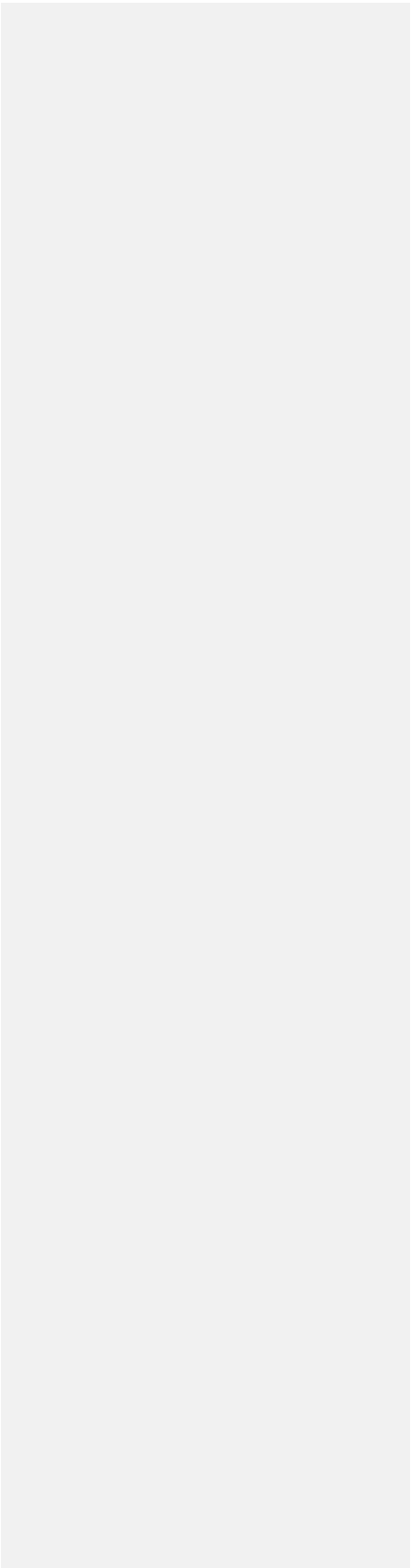
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Appendix II

Work done prior to the seating of the Commission

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Summary of MSDE's August 2015 Report

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 4th and 8th 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 4th 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 4th and 8th 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 1 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 11th 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.

<p>1970’s</p> <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>1980’s</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>1990’s</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>2000’s</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>2010’s</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). 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>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.</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	
Federally Mandated					8.15	8.30	10.30	7.00	7.00	9.00					11.95*
State Mandated		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

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, 2016, 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, 2016, 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, 2016. 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, 2016 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, 2016. 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, 2016 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.

DRAFT 4-20-16

Appendix III

Definitions Approved and Used by the Commission in Its Work

- **Mandated versus Non-Mandated**
- **Locally Mandated**
- **Federal/State Mandated**
- **Teacher-Developed Assessments**

Assessment Commission Requested Definitions

The survey described in the report only includes federal, state and local 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. The legislation specifically states that “assessment” does not include a teacher-developed quiz or test.

1. **What constitutes mandated vs. non-mandated assessment?**
 - a. **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.
 - b. **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.
2. **What is the distinction between locally and federal/state mandated assessments?**
 - a. **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.
 - b. **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.
 - c. **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 local mandated assessments.