

Minutes

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

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

June 14, 2016

1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

House Office Building, Room 180 (Baltimore County Delegation Room)
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD

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

1. Welcome
2. Review and approve June 8 minutes
 - a. The June 8 minutes were adopted as with an edit from Alohaa Chin.
3. Discuss final report

Recommendation 2.1A (p. 13)

- Middle school assessment should not go forward – Letter #1 is a draft of the letter to the State Board recommending that.
- Recommendation 2.1B is addressed in the second part of the social studies letter
- Comment: Should a similar letter go to the General Assembly?
- Comment: Yes – it should be addressed to the President and the Speaker.
- Comment: At the end of the day, it is in statute and the legislators will have to change the law.
- Comment: The high school does not require a change in law.

Recommendation 6.1 (p. 26)

- Comment: This deals with biology assessment and Letter #2 is a draft regarding that request.
- Comment: Please add the bullet that is missing to the letter.
 - The Maryland State Education Association has provided survey data from educators and the public from across the state showing a common belief that there is too much testing negatively impacting instructional time.

Recommendation 5.2 (p. 20)

- Comment: Provide “to inform instruction” rather than “to guide instruction”

Recommendation 5.3 (p. 21)

- Comment: Create a letter and put these ideas as a request in a letter form for the Adequacy Study.

Recommendation 2.2A (p. 15)

- Comment: Change “should not” to “may not”

Elementary Subcommittee

Recommendation 7.1:

Publicize information assuring comparability between the 2015 and 2016 PARCC assessment results. Employ appropriate messaging strategies focused on the information needs of a variety of stakeholders: students, teachers, parents, community at the district level and to the Maryland General Assembly and the Department of Legislative Services.

Establish a Local Assessment Committee in each school district for the purpose of monitoring, evaluating, and communicating the district’s assessment program. The goal of the committee is to ensure that assessment programs and practices within each LEA meet the highest quality standards for measuring students’ academic progress, learning progression or skill acquisition through timely and relevant feedback at the district and school level. The evaluation should include a measure of time invested in assessments, preparation for assessments (including technology) and the staffing resources devoted to various types of assessments.

Charge 1: Establish the Local Assessment Committee by December 2017 which reflects the size of the LEA and diversity of its schools. The committee should be inclusive of administrators, teachers, community and business partners, and parents. The administrators and the teachers should be inclusive of elementary, middle, and high school with an emphasis on representation of the various student sub-groups. The local education association should be represented by the association president or designee. The LEA may choose to assign the assessment review task to an existing stakeholder advisory group representing those stakeholders.

Charge 2: The Local Assessment Committee should develop and complete a customized rubric designed to evaluate local assessments based on best practices in assessments. Forms of assessments, timelines, and use vary by district. Particular attention should be paid to the investment of time to administer each assessment, redundancy, purpose, meaningful use, and timeliness of results. To provide for a comprehensive evaluation of the district’s assessment program, the rubric should evaluate district mandated assessments and school-based assessments required by someone other than the teacher. Examples of assessments include, but are not limited to, benchmarks, unit and midterm/final tests, district or school-wide vendor programs serving a variety of purposes.

Charge 3: The Local Assessment committee should develop a means by which to seek input from general educators, content specialists, and teachers working with specific subgroup populations who are not represented on the committee when establishing the baseline information. Examples include a school-based focus group, public comment session, or survey.

Charge 4: The local assessment committee shall submit a baseline report, along with any recommended adjustments and the timeline for the implementation of those adjustments, to the Local Board of Education by October of the year in which the Local Assessment Committee completes its

assessment. After Board of Education review and approval, the information should be submitted to MSDE in December of that year.

Charge 5: MSDE will compile a summary of the information from districts' Local Board approval and submit the report to the Maryland General Assembly as verification that districts are evaluating local assessment systems against best practices.

Charge 6: The local assessment committee should publish on their website a yearly calendar of assessments, expected feedback dates, the value of the assessment and how it is contributing to improved classroom instruction, curriculum, and student outcomes.

Introductory Comments from Janet Wilson:

- When MSDE came out initially to have conversation about the survey, the discussions were more at the central office level. We believe there is value in having discussions about assessments at that level.
- Page 28 - Our committee talked about creating a local assessment committee. This section discusses that idea.
- We might want to change the terminology because "LAC" is generally used as "local accountability coordinator."
- Some districts have already done this work in their systems. Not all superintendents were at the last PSSAM meeting to get feedback.
- The subcommittee looked at this and discussed and vetted the choices.

Question: How might the tests be used for advancement? Could this be added to Charge 6? Suggested name: "Local Committee on Assessment"

Comment: I would like "district" - "District Committee on Assessment"

Question: Charge 4 – what is the process for review and approval? Does the Board approve them?

Comment: This would be a decision specific to a district. We are not dictating specific assessments. Perhaps "Board review" would be fine.

Comment: In the original language of the legislation, we said that local boards and state boards must review and approve. I think that theme must be carried on with this approach. My view is that this DCA makes recommendations that are forwarded to the Board and the Board be required to respond to what they approve/reject and why. We need to increase accountability and consider having more explicit language on responsiveness.

New last sentence of Charge 4:

Each district Board of Education shall adopt or reject the DCA's findings and recommendations and make comments and recommendations related to whether they adopt or reject the DCA's findings and recommendations.

Comment: We could suggest a template/rubric that can be used by DCA's to evaluate the local assessments based on best practices.

Comment: There should be existing templates that can be used. We already have a great deal of information.

Comment: It would be nice to have a guideline rubric that suggests where people should go to gather this. The more guidance and access we can give, the better.

Question: Do we add something to Charge 1 that we provide resources?

Comment: The School Improvement Team already requires this information to be submitted. Most templates are available on district websites. The information is there. It needs to come into a clearinghouse. The resources that might be necessary are when we are asking teachers to participate after hours. It depends on when the stakeholder group is able to come together.

Question: Is this information publicly available? Should we add that the superintendents should furnish the DCAs with some specified data?

Comment: The information was readily accessible when MSDE went out to have visits last summer. Districts are probably in the mode that this is something they will need to share every year.

Comment: One of our other recommendations is about annual reporting.

Charge 1: The superintendent shall establish and appoint the District Committee on Assessment by December 2017 which reflects the size of the LEA and diversity of its schools. The committee shall include administrators, teachers, and parents, along with community and business partners. The administrators and the teachers shall be inclusive of elementary, middle, and high school with an emphasis on representation of the various student service groups, such as Special Education and English Learners. The local education association should be represented by the association president or designee. The LEA may choose to assign the assessment review task to an existing stakeholder advisory group representing those stakeholders.

Comment: I suggest adding Special Education and English Learners.

Question: It seems to me that Charge 3 addresses diversity of the representatives. If there are 7/8 people, do we really want to specify English Learners and Special Education? Doesn't that tie our hands?

Charge 3: The Local Assessment committee should develop a means by which to seek input from general educators, content specialists, and teachers working with specific service groups, such as Special Education and English Learners and populations who are not represented on the committee when establishing the baseline information. Examples include a school-based focus group, public comment session, or survey.

Charge 6: The local assessment committee should publish on the district website a yearly calendar of assessments, expected feedback dates, the value of the assessment and how it is contributing to improved classroom instruction, curriculum, and student outcomes.

p. 14-15 Finding & Recommendation 3.1 Proctoring

Finding 3.1:

The limitation that only certified teaching staff can proctor some tests leads to disruption of classes not involved in the testing. Teachers are pulled from their regular instruction to proctor; and media specialists, staff development teachers, school counselors, special educators are pulled from their work with students and main job responsibilities. For teachers, the classes are typically covered by a substitute teacher/paraeducator or the classes are combined with other classes. In all situations, instruction and services to students are limited and/or disrupted. Students who testified to the commission, when asked what school days were like when there was testing, but they were not the ones being tested responded that these were “free days,” indicating a complete absence of instruction. This problem can be partially ameliorated with the following recommendation.

Recommendation 3.1:

Loosen the restrictions on who can administer state and local mandated assessments. Any staff member at a school whom the principal deems capable, by integrity, skill, and work time, is allowed to fully proctor a state and local standardized test. It should be noted that if the structure of mandated testing is reduced in the amount of time necessary to administer and is changed to fit into class periods, teachers for those individual classes being tested would be easily available for test administration and proctoring without the disruption that currently exists. However, in that scenario, there is potential to use these teachers for other types of instruction (such as in teams or in professional development) during the testing time, while using other available staff for proctoring.

Comment: Technically the proctor is not supposed to leave the room.

Comment: Proctor vs. Administer – which requirements need loosening? Who are we asking to loosen? It is COMAR in the test administration manual. It is specific to Maryland.

Question: What about instructional assistants? If you are certified, you should be able to give the test.

Comment: This will reduce stress. We may mention the training component to solidify it further.

Comment: We need to add that these people can be test administrators, proctors, and accommodators.

Recommendation 3.1:

Loosen the restrictions on who can administer, proctor and accommodate state and local mandated assessments. Any staff member at a school whom the principal deems capable, by integrity, skill, work time, and appropriate training is allowed to fully proctor a state and local standardized test. Training as currently in existence will remain an element of the administrator, proctor, and accommodator readiness, and additional training as the school administration sees necessary will be supported. It should be noted that if the structure of mandated testing is reduced in the amount of time necessary to administer and is changed to fit into class periods, teachers for those individual classes being tested would be easily available for test administration and proctoring without the disruption that currently exists. However, in that scenario, there is potential to use these teachers for other types of instruction (such as in teams or in professional development) during the testing time, while using other available staff for proctoring.

Comment: The time piece is an issue all around. Making it a period length is a good recommendation.

Comment: We want to move away from it being an event. It happens a great deal in middle and high schools. If we can make it units that are 45 minutes long, that would allow me to administer without needing a substitute.

Requested p. 32 third bullet edit below:

Recommendation 7.3:

MSDE should develop a clear process for gathering, reporting, and responding to concerns concerning the impact of the newly revised single administration and the developmental appropriateness of the PARCC assessment from school-based educators and test coordinators. MSDE should form a representative statewide practitioners' stakeholder advisory group to include school-based classroom teachers and test coordinators who will share concerns directly with the dedicated project manager PARCC assigns to Maryland.

This representative statewide practitioner's stakeholder advisory group, along with MSDE and PARCC representatives, should work together to discuss how changes to the PARCC assessments would impact the data collection, assessment of standards and integrity of the test. MSDE should then communicate to all appropriate stakeholder groups, the consequences of further streamlining the testing process. Further streamlining of PARCC assessments should consist of one or more of the following:

- Reducing the total length of the test
- Reducing the number of units of the test
- Making the units shorter so as to be administered **during an instructional period**

Comment: We need to mention the history – previously there were two windows and since we formed the time has been shortened quite a bit. We need to be clear that things have improved considerably. Should it be in Finding 7.3? Should we add the number of minutes it has been reduced?

Finding 7.3:

The structure, timeframe, and schedule of the PARCC assessments are notable concerns among stakeholder groups representing all levels. It is important to recognize that the administration of the new single administration PARCC assessments came after the majority of the stakeholder testimony about the structure, timeframe, and schedule of the PARCC assessments.

Question: Can we add elementary and middle school to the number of minutes chart?

Comment: Appendix III should address this.

Comment: The second graph on p. 32 – I would like clarity on this from those who wrote this.

From ***Recommendation 7.3:*** After the representative statewide practitioner's stakeholder advisory group shares their findings, the advisory group will determine and communicate what adjustments **will be made** to reduce the impact of the PARCC testing on instruction.

Comment: The agenda of the PARCC Leads meeting is occurring right now in Denver. His charge is to discuss reduction in time.

Edits to Recommendation 7.3:

MSDE should develop a clear process for gathering, reporting, and responding to concerns concerning the impact of the newly revised single administration and the developmental appropriateness of the PARCC assessment from school-based educators and test coordinators. MSDE should form a representative statewide practitioners' stakeholder advisory group to include school-based classroom teachers and test coordinators who will share concerns directly with the dedicated project manager PARCC assigns to Maryland.

This representative statewide practitioner's stakeholder advisory group, along with MSDE and PARCC representatives, should work together to discuss how changes to the PARCC assessments would impact the data collection, assessment of standards and integrity of the test. MSDE should then communicate to all appropriate stakeholder groups, the consequences of further streamlining the testing process. Further streamlining of PARCC assessments should consist of one or more of the following:

- Reducing the total length of the test
- Reducing the number of units of the test
- Making the units shorter so as to be administered during an instructional period

After the representative statewide practitioner's stakeholder advisory group shares their findings, the advisory group will determine and communicate what adjustments **should** be made to reduce the impact of the PARCC testing on instruction, **and a representative from MSDE will advocate for those recommendations.**

When individual students have completed the assessments, districts shall allow students to read or write regardless of whether other students are still testing.

Passed – Andy Smarick abstained from the vote

Comment: The test is too long. We could cut down the stories.

Question: Do we need to add this language somewhere? “maintain acceptable levels of validity and reliability” – we want to make sure of this.

Question: Who can judge if this is “valid and reliable”?

Question: Can we change this to “We urge LEAs to all students to read/write upon completion of the PARCC assessment”?

Comment: p. 13 Finding 2.1: fix “social students” typo

Comment: We need to look at SLOs and the number of them.

Question: I don't disagree, but is this a part of our charge to limit the number of SLOs?

Comment: This is part of the work of the District Committee on Assessments.

p. 29 Charge 2: The District Committee on Assessment should develop and complete a customized rubric designed to evaluate local assessments based on best practices in assessments. Forms of assessments, timelines, and use vary by district. Particular attention should be paid to the investment of time to administer each assessment, redundancy, purpose, meaningful use, and timeliness of results. To provide for a comprehensive evaluation of the district's assessment program, the rubric should evaluate district mandated assessments and school-based assessments required by someone other than the teacher. Examples of assessments include, but are not limited to, benchmarks, unit and midterm/final tests, district or school-wide vendor programs serving a variety of purposes, **and those used to validate a student learning objective.**

Comment: We need to encourage alternative assessments.

Recommendation 2.1B:

MSDE should utilize an assessment in social studies at the high school level that ensures knowledge in civics. Innovative approaches to measuring student progress should be considered, and the assessment should be designed in a way that is least disruptive to classroom instruction. This means that the assessment can be administered in class, by the classroom teacher on one or multiple days without needing to alter the normal school day for students or overly impacting instructional time for students.

p. 35 Recommendation 7.6:

Question: Did we vote on this?

Comment: Yes, we discussed and changed to we will "explore" - MSDE should explore the option of applying for the Innovative Assessment System option which will be afforded to seven (7) states

P. 12/13 ADD: "for each recommendation, we agreed based on a super majority ruling"

Chris Berry reviewed his plans for the Conclusion & Final Observations.

Comment: Thank you for all of the work you have done. It has been wonderful working with everyone. It is important that we have started a dialogue.

Comment: We should acknowledge some steps of what has already been done.

Comment: We may want to have a First Appendix that is just the Recommendations.

Chris Berry's closing remarks: I want to thank you all for representing such varied stakeholders. Thank you for jumping in and allowing your voice to be heard. There has been honest discussion and our recommendations reflect the wide variety of ways testing impacts instruction. If they are adopted, our recommendations will make a tremendous difference for the teachers and students of Maryland. Many thanks to all of the subcommittee chairs for their work and leadership.

Chris Berry will send out the revised and compiled draft in the coming week for review and comment.

Minutes approved: June 16, 2016