

# Minutes

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

December 17, 2015

1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Low House Office Building – room 145

6 Bladen Street

Annapolis, MD

Meeting called to order: 1:03 p.m.

1. Welcome

- a. Chairman Chris Berry welcomed members to the second Commission meeting.

2. Review and Approval of November 17 minutes

- a. The November 17 minutes were approved as written.

3. Update on Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Charge 6)

- a. Richard Laine, Director of the Education Division of the National Governor's Association, presented *Consideration for How Maryland Can Use Assessments to Reinforce Good Teaching and Improve Student Learning*. (See attached PowerPoint)

- b. Commission members asked several clarifying questions.

- c. There is not necessarily alignment between K-12's definition of college and career ready and higher education's definition of college and career ready. This leads to many students who are entering college needing to take remedial courses. The question is, "What should the bridge look like between K-12 and higher education?"

It should be noted that the number of students taking remedial courses in college includes students who are returning to college after a break in their education. Not all entering students are enrolling immediately after graduating from high school. Many non-traditional students are returning after a break in their education. In addition, their high school experience may have occurred in places other than Maryland.

- d. Recently, the Maryland Community Colleges decided to accept PARCC scores of 4 & 5 to determine college and career ready.

- e. Some states (such as California) are starting to move ahead in coordinating K12 with higher education by overlapping exams. Massachusetts wants to merge PARCC and MCAS to build a stronger assessment.
  - f. ESSA provides for 7 states to pilot assessment programs. An example might include the work in New Hampshire where they are exploring competency exams.
4. Presentation and discussion about time students spend taking mandated assessments (Charge 1)
- a. The assessment matrices were updated to accurately reflect the amount of time students spend taking mandated assessments in each school system by grade level in the 2015-2016 school year. There is a summary chart followed by charts for each local school system. The last two rows display the time students spend taking federal and state mandated assessments.
  - b. On October 26, MSDE staff transferred information from MSDE's August report to a one page chart for each school system. On November 6, the charts were given to the school systems for verification. Comments were added to a right hand column to explain changes or to clarify responses. Strikeouts indicate changes from the August report. On December 8, the information was presented to the State Board of Education and was distributed to Commission members.
  - c. Commission member comments included the following:
    - i. There is much variation among school systems. This makes it hard to compare data.
    - ii. The differences are explained mostly through the definition of "mandated." In a more centralized approach, more assessments are determined to be "mandated." This does not necessarily mean, however, that students in these school systems take more tests.
    - iii. Looking at these charts, it is impossible to know what is duplicative. There may be instances where a mandated test is given and then the classroom teacher gives an additional test. Are there any trends in this data (e.g. among system size)? How does any of this relate to PARCC scores and student outcomes?
    - iv. Are common assessments used to evaluate both student and teacher performance? Are assessments used for multiple purposes? What is the nature of duplicative testing?
    - v. It is important to keep in mind that school systems are in a time of transition – to new standards and new assessments. School systems will be looking at PARCC results in relation to their assessment programs. They will be evaluating what is working well and what should be eliminated or modified. When embarking on a new direction, it is

important to benchmark aligned material and reflect on what was done and what should change.

- vi. How local school systems develop benchmark assessments varies greatly. Some develop their own and some use third party vendors. When using vendors, there may be some duplication among local and vendor assessments.
- vii. SLOs require that data be gathered. Some assessments may be administered just to collect data for SLOs. MSDE will ask school systems which assessments are administered for SLOs.
- viii. Some assessments that are given individually to students look like they do not take much time, but they take away from instruction because the teacher is occupied administering the assessment to each student.
- ix. The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment is used not only to assess where the student is, but also to assess early care options. This is very important.

5. State Board of Education response to MSDE's August report.

- a. The State Board of Education was required to review and respond to MSDE's August report and to compile local school system responses to the report. This will be submitted by December 31.
- b. The report highlighted Maryland's strong system of local control in education matters.
- c. 24 local school systems and 4 educational organizations submitted responses to MSDE's report. There are some commonalities among responses and some unique perspectives.
- d. The State has a constitutional obligation to ensure students are provided an education and this obligation is delegated to the local school systems. If there are good student results, but a range of testing times, is that natural or should something change?
- e. The State Board is looking at best practices and models of high performing districts.
- f. Does it make sense, when looking at a State accountability system, to update the chart displaying the time students spend taking assessments every 2-3 years?

6. Format and content of future Commission meetings

- a. Mr. Berry asked Commission members to let him know what topics they would like addressed in future meetings. Who else do we need to hear from to get a more complete picture?

- b. How can we look at the chart in relation to student performance? There are many variables, so it is not a direct correlation between testing time and student performance.
- c. We need to look at the purposes of testing.
- d. We should bring in an expert on testing to review the time chart and suggest ways to make meanings.
- e. The Commission also needs to consider how testing steals time from instruction and how it affects the school schedule. Is it possible to break longer tests into smaller chunks?
- f. The meetings will be scheduled for 3 hours beginning in January.
- g. In January, Mr. Berry will invite teachers and students to present.

Minutes Adopted: January 11, 2016