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**TO:** Members of the State Board of Education  
**FROM:** Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D. *Lillian M. Lowery*  
**DATE:** July 28, 2015  
**SUBJECT:** PARCC State Assessments- State Board Update

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**PURPOSE:**

To provide an update to the State Board on the status of PARCC assessments in Maryland after the 2014-2015 administration, design changes for the 2015-2016 school year, and Maryland's role as the fiscal agent for PARCC. The update also includes questions and answers related the status of state assessments in Maryland outside of the consortium.

**The 2014-2015 Administration of the PARCC State Assessments in Maryland**

During the administration of the PARCC state assessments in Maryland, 81.6% of students took the state assessments online. As a result, MSDE was able to save over \$2.5 million dollars compared to state assessments in the past. Because Maryland has had a successful relationship with Pearson as its assessment vendor for the past ten years, there were minimal issues around the administration of the assessments because of the familiarity with the testing platform by Maryland teachers and testing coordinators. As reported previously to the Board, many of the issues of concern were resolved during the field testing trials in 2013-2014.

Currently, Maryland and other Consortium states are involved in the performance level setting process scheduled to begin in July, 2015. Performance level setting for high school assessments (Algebra I, Algebra II and English 10) will occur during the week of July 27-31, 2015. The PARCC Governing Board will adopt the high school performance levels on August 14, 2015. Performance level setting for grades 7-8 (English Language Arts and mathematics) will occur during the week of August 17-21, 2015 and performance level setting for grades 3-6 (English Language Arts and mathematics) will occur during the week of August 25-28, 2015. The PARCC Governing Board will adopt both the elementary and middle school performance levels on September 11, 2015. Individual student home reports for high school assessments will be shipped to districts and schools beginning October 16, 2015 and individual student home reports for elementary and middle schools will be shipped beginning November 10, 2015. MSDE plans to present PARCC state assessment data to the State Board during the December, 2015 meeting.

As a result of feedback from teachers, students and parents within the Consortium, PARCC made design changes to the assessments for the 2015-2016 administration. Starting with the spring administration (2016), the assessments have been collapsed from two assessment windows (performance-based assessments administration in March and end of year assessments in May) to a single administration of the test after 162 days of instruction which may vary from district to district in Maryland. Leveraging efficiencies, on average, there will be a reduction of 90 minutes

in test administration times for each subject (English Language Arts and mathematics). Within these design changes, PARCC has been able to maintain quality while making smart enhancements that do not compromise the integrity of the assessment.

### **Maryland: PARCC Fiscal Agent**

In September, 2010, the United States Department of Education awarded a grant to the PARCC Consortium to develop a set of assessments that measure whether students are on track to be successful in college and their careers. The grant award to the Consortium was \$185.9 million and the original term of the award was from September 27, 2010 through September 26, 2014 with portions extended through July 31, 2015. In order to receive and spend the federal funds, the Consortium was required to select a State to serve as the fiscal agent. Florida was originally designated as the grant recipient but in September, 2013 Florida withdrew as the fiscal agent. Maryland assumed responsibility as the fiscal agent for the Consortium beginning on January 1, 2014. Of the original \$185.9 million, \$111.5 million was transferred from Florida to Maryland.

Maryland contracted with PARCC, Inc. to provide comprehensive project management services and a full-range of grant support activities for the "Race to the Top" Assessment program. These services included:

- Program administration;
- Contract management;
- Consortium governance;
- Communications;
- Quality control management;
- Policy and research management; and
- Procurement of goods and services.

Work under the federal grant must be completed by July 31, 2015. MSDE has through September 30, 2015 to liquidate all expenses and request reimbursement from the United States Department of Education. As of July 14, 2015, MSDE has paid PARCC, Inc. \$88 million for consortium work, resulting in a grant balance of \$23.5 million.

### **Maryland: Outside the Consortium**

With the recent withdrawal of Ohio and Arkansas from the Consortium, there have been questions around how the reduction in consortium states will impact Maryland and its state assessment program. As part of a communications plan around PARCC in Maryland, the following questions and answers have been prepared.

**How is Maryland protected from the cost implications as other states leave the PARCC Consortium?**

- Maryland wisely negotiated its own four-year contract with the assessment vendor, Pearson, which protects Maryland taxpayers from increases in certain costs through June 2018—even if other states leave the PARCC Consortium.
- Specifically, the price per student is not to exceed \$34.13 for the math and English Language Arts/Literacy assessments. Other optional services that Maryland may choose to purchase on the contract, such as summer retests and more digital storage are to be priced separately.

**Is PARCC costing Maryland more than prior assessments?**

- No. In fact, PARCC costs less per test than Maryland's former State assessment, the Maryland State Assessment (MSA).
- The PARCC test as a whole—in both the electronic and paper formats—costs less per test than the MSA.
  - Example: The electronic version of PARCC costs about \$24 per test, compared to nearly \$80 per test for Maryland's High School Assessment (a required state test unrelated to PARCC).

**Does the shrinking PARCC Consortium compromise the quality of the PARCC assessment?**

- No. The integrity of the assessment itself is not affected.
- Even a smaller consortium offers benefits from economies of scale, especially with respect to the complex technology platform needed to administer the test economically.
- PARCC is the best assessment tool Maryland has ever had for determining how well students are learning and meeting state standards for college and career readiness.

**If Maryland leaves the PARCC Consortium, will Maryland students still need to be assessed by the State?**

- Yes. Maryland students are required by Federal law to be assessed annually in reading/literacy and math in grades 3-8 and in one grade in high school.

### **Additional Background**

#### Standards & the PARCC Assessment

- Maryland's College and Career Ready Standards, built on the Common Core, have been in place since 2013.
  - They set a higher bar for preparing students for higher education or the job market upon graduation.
  - SB 740 in 2013 required that students be prepared for college or career.
- With PARCC, teachers are drilling down more deeply than ever before into how well students learn specific skills, such as applying mathematical reasoning, based on our rigorous standards.
  - This approach gives teachers valuable information to help guide and strengthen instruction in the classroom to meet students' needs.

#### PARCC Assessment—Year 1

- The first full administration of the assessments went smoothly this year, with 1.3 million tests completed in Maryland with few technical glitches.
- Over 80% of Maryland students successfully took the assessments online.

### **ACTION:**

For information only.

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