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TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.

DATE: August 25, 2015

SUBJECT: PARCC Update

PURPOSE:

To provide an update to the State Board on the status of PARCC assessments in Maryland after the 2014-2015 administration. This report will begin a series of monthly reports to the State Board to review the status of the state assessment program in preparation for the 2015-2016 administration and beyond.

BACKGROUND:

The PARCC assessments in English Language Arts and mathematics were administered for the first time to students in grades 3-8 and high school (algebra, English 10) during the 2014-2015 school year. In order to determine issues and concerns related to the first administration, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) worked with local school districts throughout the administration period and beyond to identify the concerns of district staff, school leaders, teachers, parents and students.

Other states within the consortium experienced some of the same problems as Maryland, which led to action to make changes to the assessments beginning in 2015-2016. The consortium made a decision to administer the performance-based assessment and the end of year assessment during one testing window. Students will be administered the assessments in English Language Arts and mathematics after they have completed 80% of the school year or the course (high school). The length of the test was also reduced by 90 minutes in both subject areas.

While this decision by consortium members alleviated some of the problems for school districts, other issues continued to concern many school districts. This summary offers a list of these continuing concerns and provides a plan for resolution as part of the assessment program during the 2015-2016 school year. MSDE will work with district staff, PARCC staff and Pearson, the testing vendor, to address these issues.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

While there were no major issues during the administration of the PARCC assessments in 2014-2015, there were still concerns among school districts in several areas, including test scheduling, access to technology, and disruption of the instructional program. To mitigate those issues, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) conducted a survey of local school district personnel to determine specific areas of concern and to gain knowledge around current issues that need to be addressed prior to test administration during the 2015-2016 school year. Twenty (out of twenty-four) local school districts responded to the survey. Each local school district was asked to address the following questions:

1. List the top 5 issues/problems your district experienced with the administration of the PARCC assessments during the 2014-2015 school year.
2. What issues still raise concern for your district in preparation for assessment administration during the 2015-2016 school year?
3. What specific technology challenges do you continue to have around the implementation of online assessments? Will these issues be resolved by the beginning of the school year 2016-2017? Will your district be fully prepared in the area of technology for online assessments and other related instructional programs?

The attached table contains a summary of the issues identified by the school districts and reports whether as of August 13 the issue is unresolved, ongoing/in process, or resolved.

Staff members will review responses to these questions with local school districts during the monthly local accountability coordinator (LAC) teleconferences and face-to-face meetings. The attached table will be updated as issues are resolved and as new issues are brought to the attention of the department. The goal is to continue to provide technical assistance to school districts as needed to ensure that the administration of the state assessment program continues with as few issues as possible.

ACTION:

For informational purposes only.

LML:hrj
Attachment

PARCC State Assessment Issues- LEA Feedback

Issue/ Concern	Resolution	MSDE Action	Local Action
UNRESOLVED	As of 8/13/2015		
Pearson customer service misinformation	Pearson is working on new training for call center representatives	MSDE will continue to work directly with Pearson Project Managers to resolve technical issues.	None
ONGOING /IN PROCESS	As of 8/13/2015		
Too much testing/two windows	One window- Tests will be administered after 80% completion of course/grade.	MSDE worked with the PARCC consortium on the test design.	None
Technology Device Deficiency	LAC test schedule design meeting during Winter, 2016	MSDE staff will provide various schedule plans for districts to consider during test administration training sessions. MSDE will also determine the use of the approximately \$8M appropriated to local districts to increase device inventory. (Race to the Top funding)	Sample schedules will be available for local districts to use.
Personal Needs Profile (PNP) Complexity	MSDE will communicate information through training modules, emails, blogs and webinars monthly beginning in Fall, 2015.	MSDE staff will work directly with Pearson to create training modules to meet the needs of LACs and school test coordinators (STC) to better understand reasons for and the use of the personal needs profile. (PNP)	Implementation of training by local districts as needed.
Test Nav 8 issues	MSDE will work directly with Pearson Project Managers to resolve technical issues through access to the Pearson Help Desk.	MSDE will test the quality assurance during the Fall, 2015 administration of the high school tests.	Continue to report issues to MSDE daily during Fall, 2015 test administration
Parent Opt-Out issues	MSDE's communication to LACs around regulation related to student assessment as part of the instructional day.	MSDE will continue to provide technical assistance to local districts by providing legal language related to regulation around this issue.	LACs and district staff will continue to work with MSDE as needed.
Internet Connectivity	MSDE is working with LACs to assess connectivity issues.	MSDE will assist local districts in troubleshooting connectivity issues during the Fall, 2015 administration.	Connectivity issues reported to MSDE by LACs regularly
Student mobility between schools and tests	MSDE is working with LACs to report and resolve student enrollment issues.	MSDE will provide enrollment updates to school districts as needed.	LACs will continue to communicate with MSDE as needed.
Student unfamiliarity with online testing	Utilizing Practice Tests	MSDE will provide PARCC information around the use of practice and sample tests as part of district training. MSDE will provide more training to teachers in the use of the technology associated with the assessment as part of daily instructional practice.	Communication by LACs to schools about the use of the practice/sample tests to prepare students for the assessments.
Insufficient Staffing	MSDE will schedule a design meeting to assist with the	LAC test schedule design meeting	School districts will need to review their testing models to

	creation of school schedules for state assessments. The new design of the assessment should resolve some issues.		determine efficient use of staff.
Test item complexity/ confusion	MSDE/ LAC /PARCC communication around test items	MSDE will provide more specific training to teachers around this issue by the state coordinators of English Language Arts and mathematics.	Local school districts will provide time, opportunity for teachers to participate in trainings offered by MSDE.
Test sessions too lengthy	Issue should be resolved with the new test design.		LACs will continue to report issues related to test session times for MSDE to report to PARCC.
Lack of training on PearsonAccess Next	New short training modules created by Pearson	MSDE communicating information through training modules, email, blog and webinars	LACs and other district staff participation in training
RESOLVED	As of 8/13/2015		
Java updates	TestNav App	MSDE will continue to monitor the JAVA App functionality.	LACs will continue to monitor the JAVA App functionality.
Test direction confusion	MSDE working with PARCC TASOWG to streamline manual	MSDE working with PARCC TASOWG to streamline manuals	Reported to MSDE
Test-to Speech malfunction	TestNav 3.0 fix	MSDE worked with Pearson to fix	LACs monitoring fix
Drag and Drop malfunction	TestNav 3.0 fix	MSDE worked with Pearson to fix	LACs monitoring fix
Highlighter malfunction	TestNav 3.0 fix	MSDE worked with Pearson to fix	LACs monitoring fix
Communications complexity and timeliness	MSDE is working with PARCC and Pearson to streamline communications process.	Regularly scheduled meetings between MSDE and Pearson to address all concerns regularly.	LACs monitoring communications