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TO: Members of the Maryland State Board of Education
FROM: Jack R. Smith, Ph.D. 
DATE: December 8, 2015
SUBJECT: Local, State and Federally Mandated Assessments

PURPOSE:

To provide a summary of the time students spend taking local, State and federally mandated assessments in each Maryland school system by grade level, to provide an update on actions taken thus far to meet the requirements of House Bill 452/Chapter 421 – Commission to Review Maryland’s Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools, and to discuss the State Board’s response to the MSDE survey of mandated assessments in each school system.

BACKGROUND:

The 2015 General Assembly passed House Bill 452, which prescribes a set of steps and actions between May 2015 and September 2016. (Attachment 1 – Commission on Assessments Timeline)

MSDE fulfilled the first two requirements of the law by submitting both the matrix and narrative reporting requirements on how much time students spend in each grade level and in each school system taking local, State and federally mandated assessments. The tool used to collect the information contained all of the components required by the legislation. While the law set two different deadlines for the submission of the matrix and narrative components of the report, MSDE submitted both in the August for two reasons: 1) it made sense to collect all of the information from school systems at the same time, and 2) the narrative gives valuable information to help the reader fully understand the meaning and context of the various matrices.

Gathering assessment information from 24 local school systems in a systematic and consistent manner given the variability and complexity of the assessment programs in each system required a multi-step process with extensive communication between MSDE and local school system staff. MSDE created four teams to conduct in-person visits with each school system. These teams prepared for the visits by establishing common understandings and conducting a test visit to Baltimore City. The process was refined before teams spread out across the state.

During the information gathering phase, MSDE provided a blank assessment matrix to each school system. Most school systems completed the matrices prior to MSDE’s visit with one matrix completed for each type of assessment. During the visit, MSDE reviewed the matrices, asked clarifying questions and asked the school system to make edits prior to submitting the final documents to MSDE. In some cases, there were multiple communications prior to the final draft being submitted.

All school systems verified the accuracy of the matrices prior to their inclusion in the mandated August 2015 report.

The August report was submitted, as required, to the State Board of Education, each county board of education, the Governor, the General Assembly, the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, the Maryland State Education Association, the Maryland PTA, and the Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland. Each county board of education and educational organization listed was notified of its obligation to review and consider the results of the survey and make comments and recommendations to the State Board by November 30, 2015. On or before December 31, 2015, the State Board of Education is required to review and consider the results of the survey, make comments and recommendations related to the results of the survey, and submit a compilation to the General Assembly.

Since August, MSDE has worked with local school systems to produce a one page chart summarizing the time spent on local, State and federally mandated assessments in each school system in each grade. (Attachment 2)

In addition, House Bill 452/Chapter 421 established a Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools. The Commission was appointed by Governor Larry Hogan, consists of 19 members (one seat vacant), and met for the first time on November 17, 2015. The Commission has defined tasks and must report its findings and recommendations to the State Board of Education and each county board of education by July 1, 2016. By October 1, 2016, the State Board is required to review, consider, and make comments and recommendations related to whether it accepts or rejects the Commission's findings and recommendations.

At its first meeting, the Commission discussed its charge, the timeline of work, and the MSDE August report. Members identified additional information they would like to receive. The Chair will identify areas of common interest and will plan future agendas accordingly. On December 17, the Commission's agenda will include an update on Congressional actions relating to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and will discuss the number of hours students spent taking mandated assessments in each grade in each school system.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

During the school system visits this past summer, the conversations between local school system and MSDE staff members were comprehensive and dynamic. A number of school systems indicated that they were thinking about or in the process of reviewing and making changes to their student assessment programs. Thus, it is important to note that the August report provides a snapshot of the locally mandated assessments as of that time. The assessment programs in some school systems have been adjusted for this school year, and some school systems have plans to change their mandated assessment programs for next school year; therefore the times in the chart in Attachment 4 do not necessarily match the times listed for locally mandated assessments in the August report.

Attachment 3 contains a summary of the comments submitted by 28 local boards of education and educational organizations. The comments are grouped under the three major topics that the Commission will be considering at its second meeting on December 17, 2015.

It is important to note that several school systems have different approaches to administering local assessments, with differences in the degree to which local assessments are centralized. An assessment was determined to be mandated if the local school system required that a common assessment be administered to a specific group of students. Just because a school system has a greater number of locally mandated assessments, however, does not mean that students in that school system take a greater number of tests. Thus, I caution readers of the August report and the attached table of time spent on assessments not to make comparisons between counties without more in-depth information.

The State Board of Education must compile a report, including comments and recommendations related to the results of the MSDE surveys, for submission to the General Assembly no later than December 31, 2015.

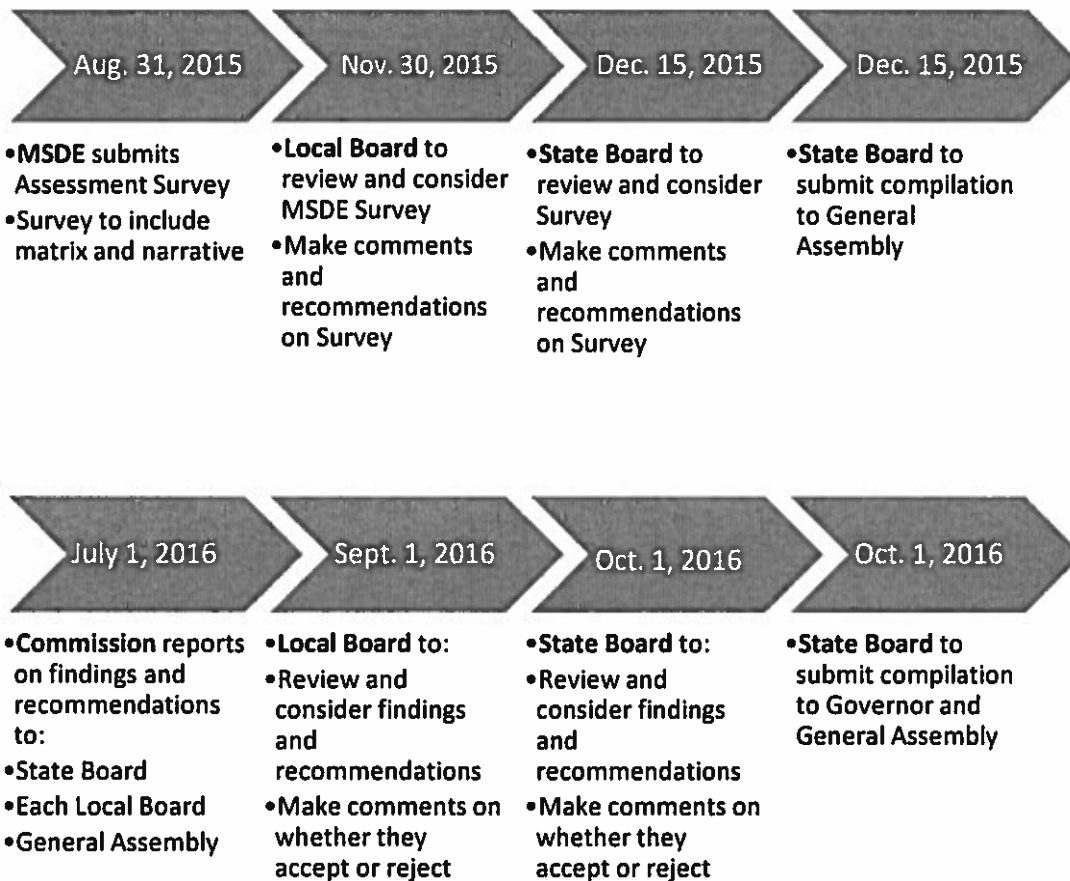
ACTION:

The State Board will review, consider, and make comments and recommendations related to the results of the MSDE surveys. The State Board will then submit a compilation of the comments and recommendations of the State Board, each county board of education, and each organization listed in the law.

JRS/gmhb

Attachments

Commission on Assessments Timeline



TIME SPENT ON LOCAL ASSESSMENTS IN EACH GRADE (HOURS) *exclusive of any State or Federal Assessments

	Prek	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Other HS Courses Not Included by Grade
Locally Mandated															
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**

* = Algebra I, English 10, Biology HSA

** = Government HSA

Comments and Recommendations made by local boards of education and other stakeholder groups in response to the MSDE assessment survey (House Bill 452)

28 local boards of education and stakeholder groups submitted responses

General Comments

Of the 28 local boards of education and educational organizations responding:

- 12 explicitly stated that the results of the survey accurately reflected the locally mandated assessments administered to students at the time of the survey
 - 1 said that MSDE did not meet its mandated charge to report how much time is spent in each grade level and in each local school system on administering mandated assessments.
- 3 stated that the results of the survey did not accurately reflect the locally mandates assessments administered to students at the time of the survey because of its interpretation of the instructions (especially in relation to the interpretation of the term “mandated”)
- 11 stated that school systems have already made changes to their assessment programs and/or policies and will continue to do so as deemed appropriate.
- 12 encouraged that Maryland continue to allow as much local control of assessment programs/policies as possible

The following points were made by at least 1 respondent:

- Teachers will continue to need instruction on how to conduct online testing and how to use online tools.
- The survey should be re-administered in three years to reflect how the landscape changes.
- There needs to be meaningful opportunities for two-way communication for local boards and other stakeholders to communicate with and give input to the State and/or Commission to Review Maryland’s Use of Assessments.
- The intent of MSDE regarding how testing will impact teacher evaluation and graduation requirements is still unclear.

Assessments – their impact on schools, the school day, and instruction

Of the 28 local boards of education and educational organizations responding:

- 10 noted that while assessments are important, there must be a balance between time needed for administration of assessments and optimizing instructional time. Assessments should be administered in a way that minimizes the disruption to the school schedule.
- 5 had concerns about technology. Concerns included the recommended student to computer ratio needed for assessment and instruction, the infrastructure in various communities, and the need for stability in assessment programs so the technology is relevant.
- 4 local boards of education noted that their assessment schedule represents less than 2.1% of instructional time; 1 noted that the results of the survey do not reflect the significant impact of testing on the school, teachers, students and families; and 1 noted that mandated assessments constitute a major portion of students' educational experiences

Duplicative testing

- When evaluating their assessment programs, several local boards of education are eliminating tests that provide information that duplicates information already provided by another assessment and recommend that this type analysis continue.

Types, Uses and Purposes of Assessments

Of the 28 local school boards of education and educational organizations responding:

- 18 stated that assessments serve a variety of purposes and play an important role informing classroom instruction, monitoring progress and measuring mastery.
- 2 ask that the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment be reexamined to reduce testing time and determine the usefulness of the results.
- 2 suggested that it is important to consider alternate assessment opportunities, such as performances and portfolios.
- 1 respondent said that the results from local and State assessments must be received in a timely manner to be meaningful.
- 2 said that the State should consider putting a cap on the percent of instructional time that can be spent on local assessments; another said that the cap should be put on the percent of State assessment time.

Maryland State Department of Education

Local, State and Federally Mandated Assessments

December 8, 2015

Dr. Henry Johnson, Chief Academic Officer

HB 452 sets out a prescribed set of steps and actions May 2015 - October 2016.

- MSDE surveyed local school systems in June and July 2015.
- The report was submitted August 2015.
- School systems and interested groups submitted comments on the report to the State Board by November 30, 2015.
- The State Board must respond to the report and compile comments by December 31, 2015

Requirements of HB 452 November 2015 – October 2016

- Commission to Review Assessments met for the first time in November 2015.
- Commission will report its findings by July 2016.
- Local Boards of Education will review and consider findings by September 2016.
- State Board will respond to the Commission findings by October 1, 2016.

Summary of the local board of education and organization comments

- Comments were received from 28 local boards of education and education organizations
- Comments were placed into the three major categories identified for study by the Commission
 - Assessments – their impact on schools, the school day, and instruction
 - Duplicative testing
 - Types, uses and purposes of assessments

What are the important issues that the State Board should address in December 2015 response?

- Local control versus state policy
- Duplicative testing
 - Frequency of assessments (such as benchmark and interim assessments)
 - Using one assessment for multiple purposes
- Finding a balance between teacher determined assessment practices, locally mandated assessments, and State mandated assessments.

Comments and recommendations

- Comments and recommendations related to the results of MSDE's surveys
- Format of the December 2015 submission to the General Assembly