

## Memorandum

To: Thomas S. Kingston, Interim Superintendent

From: Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent

Date: November 25, 2013

Re: PARCC Field Test

As you know, in Belmont three schools and four grades were selected to administer field tests of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). This chart summarizes information:

School	Grade	Number of classes selected	Subject	Online or paper/pencil test?	Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) or End-of-Year (EOY)?	Exempt option applies?
Butler	4	2	ELA	Online	PBA	Yes
Chenery Middle School	7	2	Math	Paper/pencil	EOY	No
Chenery Middle School	8	2	ELA	Paper/pencil	PBA	Yes
Belmont High School	9	3	ELA	Online	EOY	No

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has offered districts the option of exempting students who participate in the Performance-Based Assessment from taking the MCAS in the same subject. This would include classes in grades 4 and 8 in our district. DESE has provided the option to exempt only for the PBA because it includes the open response portions of the assessment, and is more rigorous and time-consuming than the machine-scored, multiple choice EOY assessment. Also, the testing window for the PBA overlaps with the MCAS testing window more significantly than for the EOY assessment.

After carefully considering the matter in consultation with district leaders, I recommend that we decline the option to exempt, and continue to have all students participate in the MCAS tests in 2014. While we have concerns about test fatigue, and also the increased burden that the field test puts on our IT staff, principals, and teachers, we are more concerned about the loss of data (for individual students, the school, and the district) that would result from exempting these students from the English Language Arts MCAS in March 2014. The data that we obtain about student learning from the MCAS results is very important, both to us in supporting students in their continued growth and development, and to their parents/guardians. Because the field test is comprised only of an aggregate of test items, and not a complete test, we will receive no data for individual students, schools, or the district. We feel that the negative results of the potential lack of data outweigh the challenge to students and staff of the additional testing.

We will carefully schedule the PARCC field test sessions to not interfere with the administration of the MCAS for English Language Arts and Mathematics; it is our plan to schedule the field test after the completion of the MCAS.

	<b>March/April</b>	<b>May/June</b>
<b>MCAS</b>	ELA—March 17-April 3	Math and Science—May 5-22 Science (high school)—June 2-6
<b>PARCC</b>	PBA—March 24-April 11	EOY—May 12-June 6

Next steps include selecting the classes to participate in the field test, determining the schedule for both MCAS and PARCC, and communicating the information with families of children taking the field test. In January we will receive materials from DESE that will provide further information and support for notifying families of the students taking the field test.

On November 19, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to approve the Commissioner’s recommended plan to transition to the PARCC. The transition plan includes analyzing data from the 2014 field test, as well as from the 2015 administration in grades 3-8. For 2015, districts will have to decide which assessment to administer, MCAS or PARCC; double-testing will not be an option. While they have not yet told us when we will have to make that decision, we have already begun discussing the implications and ramifications of each.