

Memorandum

To: Thomas S. Kingston, Interim Superintendent
From: Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent
Date: June 9, 2014
Re: State Assessment Recommendation for 2014-2015

As the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education considers the future of the state assessment system in Massachusetts, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has asked districts to select either the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) or the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) to administer to students in grades 3 through 8 in the 2014-2015 school year. The Board will use the data from this year's field test and next year's operational administration of PARCC to decide in the fall of 2015 whether to adopt PARCC for 2015-2016 or begin developing a new "next generation" MCAS.

The district Leadership Council has carefully reviewed the options, keeping the focus on what is best for students during this transition to a new assessment. We recommend selecting PARCC for students in grades 3-8. While there will be challenges for administrators and teachers to transition to a different assessment system, we strongly believe that students will benefit from the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on this new assessment, and we will have the advantage of analyzing the district, school, and individual student results in order to make adjustments to district level curriculum, instruction, and assessments to better prepare our students. One strong factor supporting this recommendation is the "hold harmless" provision for districts selecting PARCC next year. Our accountability determination will not be adversely affected if our students' performance is lower on PARCC. This gives us the benefit of learning from the experience without the risk, and the time to make adjustments. For all of these reasons, we feel that we should take advantage of this opportunity to evaluate our curriculum and instruction against the new assessment.

We do not recommend participating in the optional PARCC for grades 9 and 11. (This decision is separate from the PARCC/MCAS decision for grades 3-8.) Students in next year's 9th grade, the class of 2018, will still be required to pass MCAS in ELA, math, and science in order to receive a Belmont High School diploma. Adding PARCC in addition to MCAS would be a significant burden, and there are limited benefits to students whose requirements will not include PARCC. MCAS will be administered in March, May, and June. Adding PARCC in March and May, in addition to the numerous Advanced Placement exams administered in May, would significantly strain the resources of the high school. There are still many questions to be

answered regarding PARCC for high school students, including the number of tests they will take (potentially at the end of each year, grades 9, 10, and 11) and which tests will they be required to pass in order to graduate. Given the unknowns and the continuing requirement to administer MCAS in 2014-2015, we recommend not selecting PARCC for grades 9 and 11.

If the School Committee votes to select PARCC, we will need to determine by October if we are able to administer the computer-based test in any of our schools. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has stated that there will be a paper version of the test for 2014-2015 and probably for 3-4 more years after that. We will need to develop a plan for increasing the number of devices available at each school in order to administer a test on computers, and, even more important, to increase the number of Information Technology professionals to support the infrastructure, devices, and test administration. Our participation in the field test, in which students in grades 4 and 9 took the test online, demonstrated the intense level of preparation needed. Computers or iPads were used for these administrations, and they required significant time to configure them properly for the tests. Having the IT professionals in the testing space during the administration was also necessary to respond to the inevitable problems that arose in the moment. We will need more IT professionals to administer this type of assessment in every school.

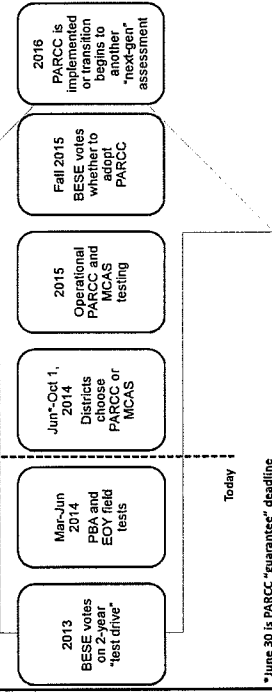
MCAS or PARCC for 2014-2015

Presentation to School Committee
June 10, 2014

What are we being asked to select?

- Grades 3-8, ELA and mathematics
 - MCAS or PARCC
 - Same assessment for ELA and math for all schools of these grades
- If PARCC for grades 3-8
 - Paper or computer test
 - Can differ from school to school
 - Decision by October
 - Can elect to also assess in grades 9 and/or 11, ELA and/or mathematics

DESE Transition Plan



*June 30 is PARCC "guarantee" deadline

The PARCC/MCAS Choice:

Why PARCC in 2015?

- So why should a district elect to administer PARCC instead of MCAS in spring 2015?
 - Students participating in PARCC will have a head start on experiencing a next generation assessment – the type of assessment that all schools must administer beginning with the 2015/2016 SY
 - Districts that choose to administer PARCC in spring 2015 will be able to do so at "NO RISK" – they will have their 2015 accountability levels "held harmless"

Why PARCC? Focus on Standards

The PARCC summative assessments:

1. Focus on *grade-level or course-specific standards* leading to college & career readiness.
2. Include performance-based assessments (PBAs) that provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their mastery of skills and abilities where current assessments fall short.
 - a) ELA: literary analysis, narrative writing, research simulations.
 - b) Math: real-life modeling and applications.

Strategic Plan

- To prepare all students for college, career, and life-long learning through
 - A balanced and healthy school experience,
 - Continuity of curricula aligned with Commonwealth and community standards,
 - Support for educators to experiment and innovate, and
 - Clear articulation of instructional models.

Recommendation

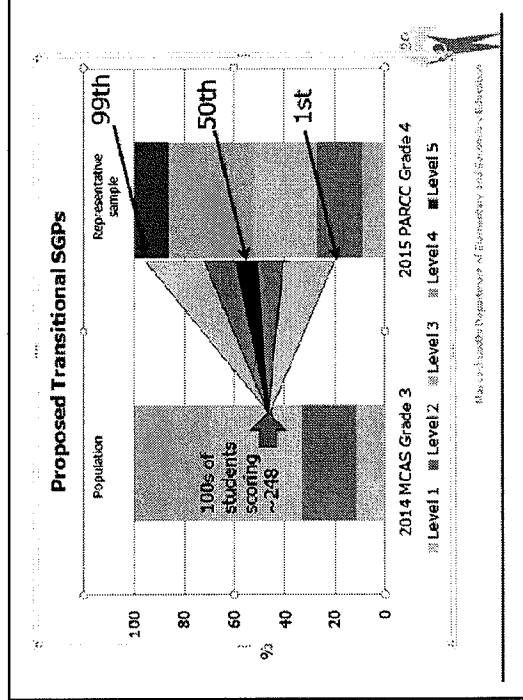
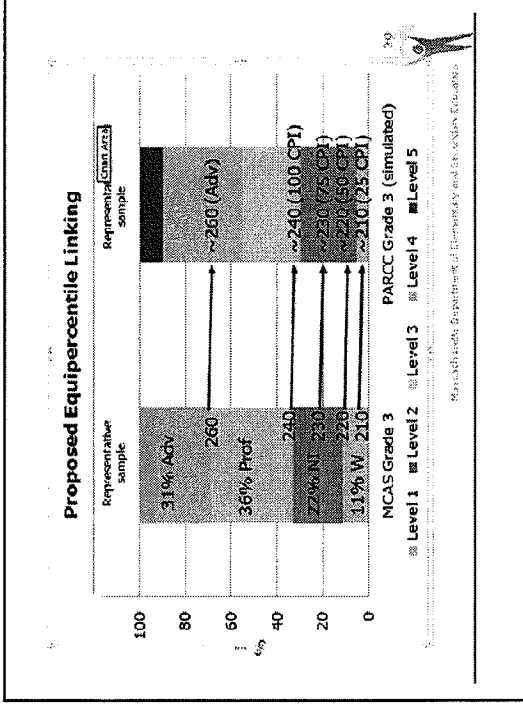
- PARCC for students in grades 3 through 8
- MCAS only for high school for 2014-15
 - Next year's 9th graders (YOG 2018) will still have to take MCAS to receive diploma
 - PARCC high school tests will be end-of-course tests, but competency determination for diploma has not yet been decided by BESE (grade 9 + 10 test?)
 - 9th graders in 2015-16 (YOG 2019) will be the first grade to take new assessment as graduation requirement; PARCC for them in 2014-15 as 8th graders, and continuing, if adopted, in 2015-16

Recommendation

- Students will have the opportunity to experience this type of assessment
 - Especially important for next year's 8th grade students—required for YOG 2019 class
- We will learn what areas we need to improve (curriculum, instruction, assessment)
- With PARCC, grade 8 students will take the test that corresponds to the course they're taking (standard math or compacted/Algebra I)
- We will receive full results (district, school, grade level, individual student) and will use that data to make improvements, adjustments

“Hold Harmless” Approach for Schools Administering PARCC

- Will data be reported for a school that chooses PARCC?
 - Yes, ESE will report assessment and accountability data for all schools, whether they administer MCAS or PARCC
 - Using a representative sample, ESE will use “equipercentile linking” to compare and publish achievement levels and CPI scores based upon 2015 MCAS and PARCC results for each school
 - ESE will calculate reliable student growth percentiles (SGPs) for schools that administer PARCC



2015 Accountability Determination for a School Participating in PARCC Sample School

| 2014 | 2015 | | | |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------|------------|----------------------------|
| | Cumulative PPI | School Percentile | High Needs | Cumulative PPI |
| All Students | 78 | 76 | 76 | 76 |
| High Needs | 76 | 45 | Level 1 | Level 2 (declines) |
| All Students | 76 | 43 | 70 | Level 1 (remains the same) |

Level - Effect without "Hold Harmless"

Level - Effect with "Hold Harmless"

Level 1 (remains the same)

Level 2 (declines)

Level 1 (remains the same)

Challenges

- Computer vs. paper-based test
 - Next year?
 - Future, when paper tests are no longer available
 - More devices
 - More Information Technology Professionals
- New test administration procedures and scheduling
 - Timed test, more sessions
 - Both ELA and math in March and May
 - Science MCAS continues in May and June for grades 5, 8, and 9

What is the recommended number of devices to purchase?

| School Type | Minimum number of devices | Recommended number of devices |
|--|---|---|
| For a school with three tested grades (e.g., a school with grades 3–5, 6–8, or 9–12) | One device for every two students in the largest tested grade | One device per student for the largest tested grade |
| For a school with six tested grades (e.g., a K–8 school) | One device per student for the largest tested grade | One device per student for the <u>two</u> largest tested grades |

Belmont Public Schools

| School Type – 2-3 tested grades | Minimum-one device for every two students in largest tested grade | Recommend-one device per student in largest tested grade |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Burbank | 36 | 71 |
| Butler | 36 | 71 |
| Wellington | 59 | 118 |
| Winn Brook | 46 | 91 |
| Belmont High School | 164 | 327 |

Belmont Public Schools

| School Type – 4-6 tested grades | Minimum-one device for every student in largest tested grade | Recommend-one device per student in the two largest tested grades |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Chenery Middle School | 347 | 672 |

PARCC Test Sessions

- Performance Based Assessment
 - 3 sessions for ELA
 - 2 sessions for mathematics
- End of Year Assessment
 - 2 sessions for ELA
 - 2 sessions for mathematics
- Test sessions include testing time plus 50% extra time for all students
 - Range: 75-130 minutes (average is 90 minutes)
 - Can probably administer more than one session per day

Spring 2015 Testing Windows for PARCC in Massachusetts

- Performance-based assessment (PBA)
 - March 16–April 10 for computer-based testing
 - March 23–April 3 for paper-based testing
- End-of-year assessment (EOY)
 - May 4–29 for computer-based testing
 - May 11–22 for paper-based testing

Conclusion

- We want our students to have the opportunity to experience these new assessments before they are “high stakes” for them and for the district.
- We want to know if our district curricula, instructional models, and common assessments prepare students for college and career (as measured by these assessments).
- We need to work toward building the capacity to administer the tests online for all students.