

**Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards and  
Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for  
College and Careers (PARCC)  
Implementation Review Workgroup**

**Final Report**



**Annapolis, Maryland  
March 2015**



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**Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards and Partnership for  
Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)  
Implementation Review Workgroup  
Membership Roster**

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## Background

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On April 14, 2014, Governor Martin O'Malley signed legislation, Chapter 246, establishing the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards (MCCRS) and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Implementation Review Workgroup. The Workgroup members were appointed on June 12, 2014.

The workgroup consists of the following:

- Two members of the Senate of Maryland
- Two members of the House of Delegates
- The State Superintendent of Schools, or designee
- The Secretary of Higher Education, or designee
- One representative of the State Board of Education
- Two representatives of the Maryland State Education Association
- One representative of the Baltimore Teachers Union
- One representative of the Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland
- One representative of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education
- Two representatives of the Maryland Parent Teacher Association who are parents of students enrolled in a Maryland public school
- One representative of the Maryland Association of Student Councils who is a student enrolled in a Maryland public school
- One academic expert whose area of expertise is educational measurement
- One academic expert whose area of expertise is curriculum and instruction
- One representative of the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education
- One representative from the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals
- One representative from the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals

The workgroup met on the following dates:

- July 10, 2014
- July 25, 2014
- August 12, 2014
- September 17, 2014
- October 21, 2014
- November 12, 2014
- January 30, 2015
- February 9, 2015

All meeting materials are posted at <http://marylandpublicschools.org/parccworkgroup/>.

## Workgroup Charge

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According to House Bill 1164/Chapter 246 from the 2014 General Assembly Legislative session, the Workgroup shall:

- (1) identify and analyze the best practices of local education agencies in the State and in other jurisdictions that are successfully implementing the Common Core State Standards and the PARCC assessments;
- (2) assess how the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards and the PARCC assessments will affect the students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals;
- (3) determine what, if any, new curriculum resources will be needed in order to fully implement the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards;
- (4) identify how the State Department of Education plans to assist local education agencies in preparing parents and students for the PARCC assessments;
- (5) assess the needs of teachers and principals in the area of professional development related to the implementation of the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards, including determining:
  - i. what, if any, State and federal funding is available to supplement the funding that local governments provide toward the professional development of teachers and principals; and
  - ii. what, if any, professional development and ongoing support from local education agencies is available to expand the use of technology as an instructional tool in the classroom;
- (6) assess the technological readiness and needs of the public schools for the implementation of the PARCC assessments, including what resources will be needed to teach students the necessary computer skills to take the PARCC assessments;
- (7) begin recommending a professional development plan for the State Department of Education to implement during the 2014-2015 school year to assist local education agencies in implementing the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards;
- (8) recommend a plan to meet the technological infrastructure needs of public schools related to the implementation of the PARCC assessments;
- (9) assess how the PARCC assessments testing window will affect the normal school calendar and school schedule;
- (10) assess how local education agencies are including teachers in the discussion to improve the implementation of the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards;

- (11) analyze the guidance local education agencies have received from the State Department of Education in regards to measuring student growth in light of the new teacher evaluation system and student learning objectives;
- (12) assess how the new teacher evaluation system is impacting local education agencies' ability to implement the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards; and
- (13) develop a plan to transfer from the Maryland High School Assessments in English and Algebra/Data Analysis to the comparable PARCC assessments as a graduation requirement.

On or before August 15, 2014, the Workgroup shall submit a preliminary report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor, the State Board of Education, and, in accordance with §2-1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

On or before December 31, 2014, the Workgroup shall submit a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor, the State Board of Education, and, in accordance with §2-1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

Appendix I contains the full legislation.

On December 1, 2014, the Workgroup requested and was subsequently granted an extension until March 31, 2015, so that the Workgroup could have adequate time to review and agree upon the required recommendations. (Appendix XII)

## History

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Schools in the United States have changed dramatically since their inception, and the changes, as with all change, have come with a certain amount of tension. Public education in Maryland, and in fact across the nation, has evolved into the complex, highly regulated, dynamic set of structures that exist today.

In May 2014, Maryland passed a law creating a workgroup to examine the implementation of current education reforms. These reforms are historically based on a study commissioned by the federal government entitled *A Nation at Risk* released in 1983.

When *A Nation at Risk* was released, it had the attention of the media and the general population. The report contended that education had not kept up with the changes that had and were taking place in the country and that all students must have a rigorous program of study to prepare them for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The standards-based educational systems in place today are, at least in part, a result of the 1983 report on the effectiveness of public education. *A Nation at Risk* demanded that schools set higher expectations for student achievement and higher standards for what was studied and mastered by students. (Ravitch 2007, Graham 2005)

By the mid-1990s, many states, including Maryland, had implemented standards and were moving to a system of accountability that involved grading schools based on the school's progress toward meeting the standards. Certainly these accountability systems place no small amount of internal pressure on schools and educators to meet mandated requirements. In 2001, the Congress, with the Bush Administration, reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and introduced the first comprehensive federal answer to the questions of student achievement and school accountability; this law is commonly referred to as *No Child Left Behind* or NCLB.

One of the primary goals of NCLB was to raise achievement for all students, including those student populations who persistently experience gaps in achievement and opportunity in public education, namely minority and economically disadvantaged students. The responses to NCLB and the 19 initiatives and compliance efforts that have flowed from the mandate are forces with which schools, school systems, and states must contend. As Theobald and Mills (1995) identified:

The question of educational accountability, in and of itself, is hardly controversial. Everyone would like public schools to be accountable to the public. But because the question of how we exhibit educational accountability hinges on beliefs about what constitutes knowledge and how it can be demonstrated, an issue that is noncontroversial in theory becomes extraordinarily divisive in practice. (p. 462)

These internal pressures and divisive issues are manifested in a number of ways when reforms are mandated for the purpose of raising the achievement of all students. Such is the case in Maryland in 2015.

Maryland schools have been in the process of shifting to several newly adopted reforms which are the result of the Maryland Education Reform Act of 2010, the adoption of the Common Core State

Standards by the State Board of Education, the Federal Race to the Top (RTTT) grant, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver. Changing education law, applying for and receiving 250 million dollars in Race to the Top funds, and applying for and being granted an ESEA Flexibility Waiver all in 2012 and a one year extension in 2014 further committed the State to the reforms and more fully embedded the reforms in Maryland's 24 school systems. These major changes include the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards (MCCRS), the transition to the new required statewide test called the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment, and the new Teacher and Principal Evaluation plans.

A document published by the Maryland State Department of Education in September 2014, *Reaching World-Class: Maryland's Race to the Top Accomplishments 2010-2014*, displays information about the many ways RTTT funding has supported this work at the State level. <http://msde.state.md.us/w/RWCRTTT2014.pdf>. References and resources developed with Race to the Top funds are included in this document (Appendix XI), are posted on the Maryland State Department of Education website at [http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/race\\_to\\_the\\_top/](http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/race_to_the_top/), and will be available through the Learn MD portal, which will be available to the public in the spring of 2015.

While many surveys and questionnaires, as well as a great deal of anecdotal information about the reforms, are available in the State, it is important to keep in mind that the information is self-reported and difficult, if not impossible, to generalize across Maryland. The Workgroup heard from a variety of individuals and groups about the work that is being done, but no empirical evidence is available at this time that speaks to the collective experience of Maryland educators with the reforms. Add to that the fact that there are 24 Maryland school systems - ranging from approximately 2000 to over 150,000 students - and over 1400 hundred schools in the State, and it becomes clear as to why so many different viewpoints emerge around the implementation of the curricular changes, the transition to new assessments, and the transition to new local educator evaluation systems based on student growth.

And while individuals view these reforms through the lens of personal experience, one can say the same about individual schools and school systems. School systems in Maryland operate with a significant degree of autonomy and have a variety of unique circumstances and contexts. Per pupil allocations, geographic size, community wealth, population demographics and many other factors create context and require actions that benefit all students no matter the location of the school they attend.

## Introduction

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In the Spring of 2014, the Maryland General Assembly passed House Bill 1164 (Chapter 246), which was signed into law by Governor Martin O'Malley on April 14, 2014. (Appendix I) This legislation establishes a workgroup to address 13 charges. In summary, the Workgroup was asked to provide:

- An assessment of Maryland's progress toward the full implementation of the new curricular standards and the work being done by local school systems to develop curricular materials and resources,
- Information on the work being done to support the administration and student preparation for the new state assessments that are being provided through Maryland's work with the PARCC Consortium,
- Assessments and recommendations related to technology readiness, the impact on identified student populations, and any effects on school calendars and schedules,
- Assessments of the effects of the new teacher evaluation systems, and
- Recommendations regarding professional learning for teachers.

As the Workforce encountered the charges and questions that emerged through the many hours of presentations and discussions, central ideas and challenges surfaced that are inherent in all of the topics that are addressed in both the charge to the Workgroup and the corresponding findings and recommendations. First, continued and expanded communication is paramount to the successful implementation of this work. Communication within school systems, across school systems and with the Maryland State Department of Education are all critical to ensuring that effective practices are identified and adopted throughout the State. Furthermore, it is critical that both the local school systems and the State communicate clearly and consistently with the residents of Maryland, as well as provide targeted information to the various stakeholders.

A second theme central to the discussions of the Workgroup revolved around the many competing issues identified and experienced by the members; both Workgroup members and presenters who spoke to the group acknowledged this challenge. Issues related to the best interests of school board members, system leaders, parents, other stakeholders such as businesses, and students were all discussed. For example, during one meeting, the speed of the reforms and the challenges of that speed for adults were contrasted with the need to provide students the most effective and rigorous program as quickly as possible, especially those students who are experiencing challenges in learning and gaps in achievement.

How to prioritize and address the many needs in school systems and communities was discussed at length by the Workgroup. Chiefly among them was the need for even more time for collaboration for teachers and other building-based educators so they can work together to construct individual and collective meaning and understanding of the new standards and locally

designed curricula. Time for the creation of new instructional resources and time to review and examine resources supplied by the Maryland State Department of Education was an area of concern. Time to thoughtfully develop and implement Student Learning Objectives, a central feature of the new Teacher and Principal Evaluation plans, was also discussed at length.

A third theme throughout the discussions was the need for additional funding to support more teacher planning time, the development and provision quality professional development, and the acquisition and support of technology for assessments and instruction. It is important to note that Race to the Top (RTTT) funding has supported much of the work on the new standards, assessments, and evaluation systems thus far in Maryland. The 250 million dollars awarded to Maryland was divided between the 22 school systems that signed on to the grant (Montgomery and Frederick county public schools did not) and the Maryland State Department of Education.

As a result of the complexities inherent in this work, as well as the tight timeline for the Workgroup, the recommendations agreed to and contained in this report identify areas where more information and analysis are required. Obstacles to success and needed resources must be identified to move student achievement forward.

Finally, it is important to note that these efforts have been put into place over the past five years by the Maryland General Assembly, the Maryland State Board of Education, the Maryland State Department of Education, and local school systems and communities for the purpose of increasing student learning, accelerating growth in learning and providing opportunities for student populations that experience performance disparities, and to prepare all students for life beyond high school, whether it be in higher education, a living wage career, or some combination of the two.

## Summary of Recommendations

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***This summary of the Workgroup’s recommendations is organized according to the following six major thematic areas:***

- Overarching recommendations as the Maryland College and Career-ready Standards and PARCC assessments are fully implemented
- Curricular resources and school operations
- Students, parents and communities
- Staff preparation and support
- Use of student growth data in teacher and principal evaluations
- Technology needs and issues

Because there is overlap among the charge areas contained in the legislation, some of the recommendations appeared repetitive when organized by charge area. The Workgroup thus decided to use this format in summarizing the recommendations. ***To ensure clarity, however, the recommendations are also delineated by charge area in the Summary of Work section of this report.***

It is important to note that the recommendations in this report are often contingent on and/or must be considered in relation to other factors such as the varied needs of local school systems by virtue of their geographic location and demographics, local negotiated employment agreements, local and state education financing, federal and state law, local autonomy and flexibility, and the realities of the change process.

The Summary of Work section of this report contains more complete explanations of the presentations and information provided the Workgroup and the findings leading to these recommendations.

### **Overarching Recommendations**

***The Workgroup recommends:***

1. The Maryland State Department of Education work with local school districts, representatives from the business community, and other educational stakeholders to provide further clarification regarding what it means operationally to be college and career-ready, to define readiness, and to specify what data are available to assess whether students are college and career-ready. Extended time is needed for more meaningful and deeper discussion with all stakeholders, not only about what it means to be college and career-ready, but also what our students need to be successful in our ever-changing world.

2. The Maryland State Department of Education continue to identify and analyze more detailed examples of how local school systems and individual schools successfully implemented the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards, as well as identify lessons learned during the implementation process. It will share best practices and lessons learned in the areas of curricular resources, professional development, communication and outreach strategies, and alternative scheduling models for professional learning through an electronic platform that is regularly updated and easily accessible to relevant stakeholders. The goal is to accelerate implementation and increase efficiency, so resources can be focused in other areas of need. (Charge 1)
3. Local boards of education be afforded the opportunity to provide feedback and inform implementation of the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards and PARCC assessments moving forward and provide direct input on a regular basis to the State Board of Education and State Superintendent. (Charge 1)
4. The Maryland State Department of Education and relevant stakeholders work together to make thoughtful decisions around the use of state assessment data from the administration of PARCC assessments. This should be done in the manner that decisions have been made around teacher and principal evaluation and graduation and dropout rates. (Charge 2)
5. The Maryland State Department of Education, working with local school systems, monitor issues including test comparability and technological and digital issues encountered during assessment administrations. (Charge 2)
6. The Maryland State Department of Education make available a report of the Fall Block and March PARCC administrations to relevant stakeholders regarding successes and challenges in preparation for the May administration. (Charge 2)

### **Curricular Resources and School Operations**

#### ***The Workgroup recommends:***

1. The Maryland State Department of Education work with local school systems to determine what additional funding and other resources are needed to sustain current initiatives to meet the curricular development and resource needs of each school. (Charge 3)
2. The Maryland State Department of Education provide a structure and technical assistance for sharing curricular resources through a web-based resource center or other appropriate portals. (Charge 3)
3. The Maryland State Department of Education incorporate in statewide technology standards the appropriate readiness skills students, especially elementary students, will need in order to complete online assessments so they assess each student's content knowledge, not computer skills. (Charge 4)

4. After the first full administration of the PARCC assessments, the Maryland State Department of Education work with local school districts to determine how the assessment windows affected school calendars, specifically on the ability to provide effective instruction, including remediation and enrichment learning experiences. As appropriate, MSDE will work with the PARCC Consortium and local school systems to identify and/or recommend adjustments that will benefit students and schools. (Charge 9)
5. The Maryland State Department of Education describe the calendar issues which are known, such as the assessment scheduling windows, including a description of the school scheduling issues relating to instructional responses to PARCC assessment scores and timeliness for school administrators to make further course or remediation scheduling decisions before, during, and after assessment administrations. (Charge 9)
6. After the first administration of the PARCC assessments, the Maryland State Department of Education assess how PARCC affected the school calendar and school schedules and make recommendations for adjustment, as appropriate. MSDE should assess the amount of time in each school system students are taking both local and state assessments, report on any duplication it finds, and make recommendations to reduce the amount of testing for students. (Charge 9)
7. The Maryland State Department of Education prepare a survey for principals and teachers on how the PARCC testing window impacted the daily school calendar in both traditional and block schedule schools. It will present the results of the survey back to relevant stakeholders, including successes and challenges, as well as recommendations from those staff directly responsible for test administration. (Charge 9)

### **Students, Parents and Communities**

#### ***The Workgroup recommends:***

1. The Maryland State Department of Education continue to work with local school systems to assess the impact of the new standards and assessments on students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals. Important data points in this assessment include carefully monitoring the number of students failing courses, state assessments and other high stakes assessments; in need of remediation; progressing toward graduation; and converting from diploma to certificate bound; as well as monitoring drop-out rates and rates of students not graduating on time. (Charge 2)
2. The Maryland State Department of Education identify from local school systems needed resources in order to provide extra support to at-risk students in these special populations in both the short- and long-term to help close the achievement gaps for all students, with the information reported back to the General Assembly. (Charge 2)

3. The Maryland Department of Education continue to evaluate, based on data available from the PARCC administrations, whether:
  - Assessment results are constructed in a manner that informs relevant stakeholders of appropriate actions needed to improve student achievement, and
  - The cut scores are set correctly, the assessments are reliable, and other psychometric attributes are established. (Charge 2)
4. The Maryland State Department of Education determine whether the student performing satisfactory or above on the PARCC assessments is indeed college and career-ready. This will help MSDE and local school systems better identify students who are at-risk. (Charge 2)
5. The Maryland State Department of Education continue to engage in work to assess equity issues among and within school systems relating to student and educator access to computer-based learning and assessment technologies both in school and in the home and propose solutions to these issues that contribute to the digital divide. (Charge 2)
6. The Maryland State Department of Education engage in coordinated outreach programs with local school systems and other stakeholders, such as the Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland PTA, Maryland Business Round Table, Maryland Association of Boards of Education, and other organizations. Communications should provide clear, accurate, consistent and timely information during the transition to PARCC assessments to explain and prepare students for the PARCC assessments. Information should be up-to-date, include the status of technology preparation of local school systems, as well as updated findings from Education Superhighway as it relates to the data collection of school districts' technical readiness to administer PARCC. Communications should be disseminated through multiple platforms and in community venues. (Charge 4)
7. The Maryland State Department of Education work with school districts to ensure administrators and those administering the PARCC assessments to students with disabilities and English language learners are fully aware of proper accommodations, and that they are appropriately written in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Parents should be notified that proper accommodations are in place. (Charge 4)
8. The Maryland State Department of Education carefully monitor and continue to recommend any adjustments deemed necessary to the high school assessment transition plan adopted by the State Board of Education. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring students have options for completing graduation requirements and that cut scores are appropriately set. (Charge 13)
9. The Maryland State Department of Education work with local school systems to anticipate what supports will be needed for special student populations as the transition moves forward. (Charge 13)

## **Staff Preparation and Support**

### ***The Workgroup recommends:***

1. The Maryland State Department of Education continue to convene meetings with representatives from local school systems and state and local education associations to discuss and share alternative scheduling ideas that provide additional time for professional development and protect individual teacher planning time, while also providing for collaborative planning. (Charge 1)
2. The Maryland State Department of Education determine if resources and specific funds are available to help local school systems implement alternative scheduling to allow for more job-embedded professional development. MSDE should contact the U.S. Department of Education, PARCC Inc., and other groups such as the Southern Regional Education Board to provide assistance to local school systems, with the findings reported back to the General Assembly. (Charges 1, 5 & 7)
3. The Maryland State Department of Education survey local K-12 school systems to ascertain resources currently invested in professional development, the amount and type of professional development still needed and determine what additional resources are needed to ensure high quality, consistent professional development, with the findings reported back to the General Assembly. (Charge 1)
4. State and local governments be encouraged to allocate additional, targeted funds to support professional development and collaborative planning opportunities for teachers and school administrators as the State transitions to the new standards and PARCC assessments. (Charges 5 & 7)
5. The Maryland State Department of Education share with local school districts the results of the Professional Learning Survey distributed by this Workgroup to focus professional learning in the areas identified by school-based and central office-based educators. In addition, MSDE should offer quality professional learning opportunities in a variety of ways, including in-person and virtual, and include information on how to effectively use technology as a vital part of classroom instruction. (Charges 5 & 7)
6. Appropriate State agencies and other relevant stakeholders work collaboratively with institutes of higher education, alternative certification providers, and other affected stakeholders to ensure that Maryland's educator preparation programs provide the most current and relevant information, instruction, and exposure to highly effective and innovative practice. This work should be informed by the other task forces, work groups, and efforts across the State to ensure comprehensive and aligned systems of educator preparation. (Charges 5 & 7)
7. The Maryland State Department of Education survey school systems to ascertain resources currently invested in professional development and the additional resources still needed to

ensure high quality, consistent professional development. The professional development plan should include special outreach to educators who are new to Maryland as well as to classroom-based paraprofessionals, with findings reported to the General Assembly prior to the January 2016 session. (Charges 5 & 7)

8. The Maryland State Department of Education, along with local school districts and stakeholder groups, continue to monitor progress through additional data gathering through the Center for Application and Innovation Research in Education (CAIRE) and/or other surveys. (Charges 5 & 7)
9. The Maryland State Department of Education evaluate the effectiveness of the trainer-of-trainer model as it is currently implemented and, if effective, work with local school systems to consider the creation of professional development teams, which would deliver direct instruction to teachers and principals on the new standards and PARCC assessments. Furthermore, MSDE and local school systems should consider ways to include classroom-based paraprofessionals in this work as appropriate and feasible. (Charges 5 & 7)
10. The Maryland State Department of Education seek input from teachers, principals, and local education associations through future surveys on their involvement in the implementation of Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards. Best practices should be shared through the website portal Learn MD. (Charge 10)

### **Use of Student Growth Data in Teacher and Principal Evaluations**

#### ***The Workgroup recommends:***

1. The Maryland State Department of Education continue to intensely monitor, analyze, assess, and adjust the guidance local school districts receive regarding measuring student growth in light of new teacher and principal evaluation systems. The evaluation systems will continue to depend on rigorous classroom observations and reliable and valid Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). (In June 2014, major stakeholders signed a memorandum of understanding to coordinate resources and strategies in developing these SLOs. Groups will work together to ensure consistent messaging and training on SLOs. ) (Charges 11 & 12)
2. The Maryland State Department of Education work with local school systems to ensure Student Learning Objectives are collaboratively developed by teachers and administrators working together to develop objectives that are the most relevant for each individual teacher's student population and content area, and that provide a clear, measurable connection to instruction. (Charges 11 & 12)
3. The Maryland State Department of Education provide further resource materials on key aspects of the teacher observation process. (Charges 11 & 12)

## Technology Needs and Issues

### ***The Workgroup recommends:***

1. The Maryland State Department of Education continue to engage in work to assess equity issues among and within school systems relating to student and educator access to computer-based learning and assessment technologies both in school and in the home, and propose solutions to these issues that contribute to the digital divide. (Charge 2, 6 & 8)
2. The Maryland State Department of Education work with local school systems as they acquire technology to bring equitable opportunities to students and educators who need to develop the computer skills necessary to take or administer the online PARCC assessments. (Charges 6 & 8)
3. The Maryland State Department of Education work with local school systems to identify remaining unmet technology needs and to develop realistic plans regarding the percentage of paper and pencil PARCC assessments the system will administer as it transitions to 100% computer-based assessments. MSDE should allow each school within a local school system to determine which students will use paper and pencil vs. the online PARCC assessment. It is recognized that a small percentage of students will take paper and pencil versions of the assessment each year because of individual learning needs. (Charges 6 & 8)
4. The Maryland Department of Education develop a statewide plan, assessing and prioritizing additional funding needed by county to properly administer the PARCC. The plan should reference other related procurement and planning initiatives, the assessment of broadband capacity which is being conducted under a separate legislative mandate, and the investments already made by local school systems, identifying remaining unmet needs, with the findings reported to the General Assembly. (Charges 6 & 8)

## Summary of Work

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### ***Process***

From the beginning, it was apparent that the task with which the Workgroup was charged was large and the time frame tight. In order to consider each charge area and fully discuss its recommendations, the Workgroup requested and was granted an extension, with the new deadline of March 31, 2015, as the submission date for the final report. (Appendix XII) To focus the work, meetings were organized around the areas of the Workgroup's charge. Each meeting started with a presentation from a local school system about a best practice it uses to successfully implement the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS) and/or the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments or with a panel addressing a specific charge area. Much of the work presented was funded through Race to the Top grants awarded to either the State or a local school system.

For most agenda items, there was a brief presentation followed by questions and comments. If additional information was requested by the Workgroup, follow-up information was presented at a subsequent meeting. Questions and comments were recorded and were rolled into Workgroup recommendations when appropriate. All presentations and follow-up information appear in the Appendixes.

All meetings were held in compliance with Maryland's Open Meetings Act, Title 10, Subtitle 5 of the State Government Article, Annotated Code of Maryland.

As members discussed the charge areas, themes surrounding the implementation of the MCCRS and PARCC emerged. And, although there were overarching themes, members were sensitive to the fact that Maryland local school systems, by virtue of local governance, have different per pupil funding levels, different student and community demographics, and varied needs and experiences regarding the implementation of the new standards and assessments. Consequently, the information presented to the Workgroup was richly diverse, with occasional opposing views.

This section of the report includes each charge in the legislation followed by a summary of presentations and information provided to the Workgroup, findings associated with the charge, follow-up steps for consideration (if any), and Workgroup recommendations relating to the charge.

**1. Identify and analyze the best practices of local education agencies in the State and in other jurisdictions that are successfully implementing the Common Core State Standards and the PARCC assessments**

Presentations and Information

The Workgroup started the July through October meetings with a local school system presentation about a best practice it has used to support the successful implementation of the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards (MCCRS) and/or PARCC assessments. In addition, each local school system was asked to submit a one page white paper describing one of the best practices it uses in implementing MCCRS and PARCC. (Appendix II, Exhibit VI)

The Workgroup heard from the following districts:

· *Anne Arundel County Public Schools, July 10, 2014*

Presenter: Dr. Kathryn Kubic, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction

Topic: A model that visually presents how the Common Core State Standards and PARCC Claims are aligned in a purposeful way. Using this visual model as a starting point, the school system is unpacking the components for teachers. (Appendix II, Exhibit I)

· *Prince George's County Public Schools, July 25, 2014*

Presenters: Dr. Shawn Joseph, Deputy Superintendent; W. Wesley Watts, Jr., Chief Information Officer; Yakoubou Ousmanou, Director of Testing; Pauline Carey, Testing Administration Specialist

Topic: The collaboration between the departments of instruction and informational technology to ensure a successful online PARCC administration. The school system is ramping up the number of devices available for both instruction and testing while developing a plan for technology support. (Appendix II, Exhibit II)

· *Carroll County Public Schools, August 12, 2014*

Presenters: Dr. Margaret Pfaff, Director of Instruction and Curricular Resources; Mary Swack, Supervisor of Secondary Mathematics; and Janetta Jayman, Supervisor of English and World Languages,

Topic: Best Practices in the areas of curriculum development, writing and implementation, including professional development and communications (Appendix II, Exhibit III)

· *Queen Anne's County Public Schools, September 17, 2014*

Presenters: Dr. Carol Williamson, Superintendent; Ms. Roberta Leaverton,

Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services

Topic: Clear and consistent messaging to staff during the implementation of the MCCRS. Queen Anne's County was an early adopter of the standards, so this is its 4<sup>th</sup> year of implementation. (Appendix II, Exhibit IV)

· *Baltimore City and Washington county public schools, October 21, 2014*

Presenters: Dr. Nicole Gavin, Staff Developer, Baltimore City Public Schools; Ms. Elizabeth Brandenburg, Elementary Math Lead Teacher, Washington County Public Schools

Topic: Exploring PARCC assessment items and thinking about how the assessments inform instruction (Appendix II, Exhibit V)

On January 30, 2015, the Maryland State Department of Education presented updates to the Learn MD online portal, which will house resources in a variety of areas, including best practices. (Appendix IV, Exhibit VI)

### Findings

The Workgroup found that the process for successfully implementing the MCCRS and the PARCC assessments at the local level has varied throughout the state. The multiple reforms have been challenging for educators to implement in the tight timeframe. Some presenters reported that developing the type of curriculum shifts required of MCCRS and PARCC while simultaneously obtaining resources, materials, and professional development aligned to the new curriculum has been overwhelming for their local school systems. However, it is clear that the local school systems that started early and created detailed, system-wide implementation plans clearly had an advantage during the 2013-2014 school year.

For example, Queen Anne's County Public Schools (QACPS), an early adopter of the new MCCRS, reported that it began developing its plan in 2010. In 2010, it created a committee with representatives from each school to ensure communication, training and consistency was in place across the system. During the 2011-2012 school year, QACPS moved the new standards into the early grades and moved it into other grades only after conducting an extensive gap analysis - both vertically and horizontally. Gap lessons were used during the transitions. QACPS purchased curriculum and resources, and engaged in professional development. Despite a four year effort to plan for implementation, QACPS teachers say they have a good knowledge of the new MCCRS, but they still need more time for collaborative planning, more time to implement the curriculum with fidelity, more time to get students accustomed to using technology in instruction, and time to align benchmarks with MCCRS and PARCC.

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) reported on a robust model it is using to visually present how the MCCRS and PARCC claims are aligned in a purposeful way. This model is used in professional development, unpacking all of the components for teachers.

AACPS provides curricular documents and information through continuous communication and professional development. AACPS shares this model with other school systems when it is requested.

Prince George's County Public Schools reported on the importance of collaboration and communication between the departments of instruction and technology to ensure achievement for all students and a smooth transition to online assessments. Presenters identified the need for technology that is available for instruction in addition to assessments. Differentiated training is needed for staff and students. With the addition of hardware, more technology support staff will be needed. Other identified challenges were infrastructure support for Charter Schools, the scheduling of online assessments, and online test security.

Carroll County Public Schools (CCPS) reported that teachers play a pivotal role in developing and designing curriculum, which is viewed as a living document. One of CCPS's best practices is recognizing the work teachers do in writing and implementing the curriculum. The curriculum is posted on its intranet, and parent resources are posted on its website. Identified challenges include integrating the curriculum at the elementary level and funding the reforms now that RTTT grants are coming to an end.

Two educators from Washington County and Baltimore City public schools discussed how they use PARCC assessment items to inform instruction. They integrate assessment items, strategies and tools into instruction because it promotes thinking-based learning. Enough technology must be available so students can use it during instruction on a regular basis. These experiences help students master more rigorous expectations. Ms. Brandenburg and Dr. Gavin have presented at the summer educator academies as well as to their own district staffs.

While best practices exist, it is important to widely share them through easily accessible platforms

#### Follow-up Actions for Consideration

Workgroup members identified the need to find a process for defining what a best practice is. Is there data to show that the practice improves student performance and/or classroom instruction? Positive anecdotal information does not necessarily ensure that a practice makes a positive difference.

## Recommendations

### *Under charge area 1, the Workgroup recommends:*

- 1.1 The Maryland State Department of Education continue to identify and analyze more detailed examples of how local school systems and individual schools successfully implemented the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards, as well as identify lessons learned during the implementation process. It will share best practices and lessons learned in the areas of curricular resources, professional development, communication and outreach strategies, and alternative scheduling models for professional learning through an electronic platform that is regularly updated and easily accessible to relevant stakeholders. The goal is to accelerate implementation and increase efficiency, so resources can be focused in other areas of need.
- 1.2 The Maryland State Department of Education continue to convene meetings with representatives from local school systems and state and local education associations to discuss and share alternative scheduling ideas that provide additional time for professional development and protect individual teacher planning time, while also providing for collaborative planning.
- 1.3 The Maryland State Department of Education determine if resources and specific funds are available to help local school systems implement alternative scheduling to allow for more job-embedded professional development. MSDE should contact the U.S. Department of Education, PARCC, Inc., and other groups such as the Southern Regional Education Board to provide assistance to local school systems, with the findings reported back to the General Assembly.
- 1.4 The Maryland State Department of Education survey local K-12 school systems to ascertain resources currently invested in professional development, the amount and type of professional development still needed and determine what additional resources are needed to ensure high quality, consistent professional development, with the findings reported back to the General Assembly.
- 1.5 Local boards of education be afforded the opportunity to provide feedback and inform implementation of the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards and PARCC assessments moving forward and provide direct input on a regular basis to the State Board of Education and State Superintendent.

**2. Assess how the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards and the PARCC assessments will affect the students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals**

Presentations and Information

On July 10, Henry Johnson, Assistant State Superintendent for the Division of Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability, Marcella Franczkowski, Assistant State Superintendent for the Division of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, and Kristina Kyles, Assistant State Superintendent for the Division of Student, Family, and School Support – all from the Maryland State Department of Education - presented data regarding the achievement of English language learners, students who qualify for free and reduced meals, and students who receive special education services. Discussion revolved around the achievement gaps between these student groups and students as a whole. These gaps have persisted for decades. (Appendix III, Exhibit I)

On October 21, Ms. Franczkowski and Trinell Bowman, Program Manager in the Division of Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability, presented information on the National Center for State Collaborative (NCSC), which is developing an alternative assessment based on alternative achievement standards. Approximately 1% of Maryland students will take this assessment. The NCSC will first be administered in the 2015-16 school year. (Appendix III, Exhibit II)

Additional data were provided as a follow-up to questions posed by members. In elementary grades, 71% of students taking Maryland School Assessments (MSA) are proficient or advanced in reading and 68% are proficient or advanced in math. This drops to 29% of high school students proficient or advanced on the English II MSA and 51% on the Algebra I MSA. Over the past 5 years, there is a consistent trend of differences in performance of English Language Learners (ELLs) and non-ELLs. The percentage of Maryland students qualifying for free and reduced meals has increased from 33% in 2008 to 44.3% in 2013; the percentage in 2013 varied greatly among school districts – from 19% to 85%. The percentage of students meeting high school graduation requirements through Bridge Projects plateaued after the third year of high school assessment administrations. More detailed data were provided and is available in Appendix III, Exhibit III.

Findings

The group had many questions about how these students would be impacted by the new curriculum and assessments given the fact that it is reported to be more rigorous. The Workgroup discussed the fact that the achievement gaps have persisted for decades between these special student populations and students as a whole, but it is imperative that these gaps be closed.

The Maryland State Department of Education shared that over the 4-year PARCC contract, up to 75 percent of the test administration will be paper in the first year with

25 percent in the fourth year. This will give school districts time to transition to online testing. While the eventual goal is 100 percent of students taking online tests, it is recognized that there will be some students who will have paper assessments stipulated in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Some members of the Workgroup believe that the new PARCC assessments will likely reduce the number of students in these special student populations passing.

The Maryland State Department of Education shared that curricular resources were developed in various content areas for all grade levels, and they were shared on Blackboard, an online tool. MSDE also shared that these resources have been provided through Race to the Top funds. The intent of these resources is to include the needed shifts to address the needs of different student populations; they embed Universal Design for Learning principles. MSDE also identified that it is now creating a portal – Learn MD - through Race to the Top funds that will allow all educators in Maryland to find resources in one place and that the site will have a search function to allow easy access and identification of resources.

The Workgroup spent time during meetings reviewing both the content and structure of a survey that was distributed to educators across the state. MSDE provided the link to over 9000 Maryland educators and asked principals in virtually every school to distribute the survey to staff members; the Maryland State Education Association sent the survey to almost 40,000 individuals who are on its list serve. Educators who participated in the Workgroup’s Professional Learning Survey (Appendix VIII) indicated that one area where more professional learning is needed is addressing the needs of underperforming student populations. Educators also overwhelmingly agreed that they need assistance addressing student gaps in knowledge and making the transition to PARCC. The following shows the top responses in each subject area.

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**Top three responses in each content area to the question “In what area(s) do you feel that you or your school is in greatest need of additional professional learning?”**

<b>Content Area</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
English/Language Arts Total # responses: 5384	Addressing student gaps in knowledge (692)*	Transition to PARCC (692)	Addressing needs of underperforming populations (647)
Mathematics Total # responses: 4962	Addressing student gaps in knowledge (688)	Transition to PARCC (610)	Addressing needs of underperforming populations (554)
Science Total # responses: 3473	Addressing student gaps in knowledge (410)	Transition to PARCC (385)	Deeper content knowledge (352)
Social Studies	Addressing student	Transition to PARCC	Addressing needs of

Total # responses: 3327	gaps in knowledge (409)	(377)	underperforming populations (341)
The Arts Total # responses: 1864	Transition to PARCC (232)	Addressing student gaps in knowledge (184)	Addressing needs of underperforming populations (179)
Special Education Total # responses: 3484	Addressing student gaps in knowledge (451)	Addressing needs of underperforming populations (401)	Transition to PARCC (369)
English Language Learners Total # responses: 2470	Addressing student gaps in knowledge (350)	Transition to PARCC (271)	Scaffolding/ Differentiating (255)
Gifted and Talented Total # responses: 1655	Transition to PARCC (210)	Scaffolding/ Differentiating (2)	Finding teacher/ student resources (169)

\*number of responses in ()

Most respondents felt that the either the school (32.9%) or the local school system (40.3%) would most appropriately provide the professional development needed.

The Workgroup heard a presentation on the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) which is a project to design an alternative assessment based on alternative standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Maryland is participating in NCSC and will have access to curricular instructional supports and professional development.

#### Follow-up Actions for Consideration

The Maryland State Department of Education should provide stakeholders with a timeline for the transition to the NCSC assessments, provide details of the type of professional development educators will receive, and describe how many students are expected to take the NCSC assessment. During the 2014-2015 school year, professional development will be provided to teachers on the NCSC assessment. The assessment will be rolled out during the spring of 2015.

## Recommendations

### *Under charge area 2 the Workgroup recommends:*

- 2.1 The Maryland State Department of Education continue to work with local school systems to assess the impact of the new standards and assessments on students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals. Important data points in this assessment include carefully monitoring the number of students failing courses, state assessments and other high stakes assessments; in need of remediation; progressing toward graduation; and converting from diploma to certificate bound; as well as monitoring drop-out rates and rates of students not graduating on time.
- 2.2 The Maryland State Department of Education identify from local school systems needed resources in order to provide extra support to at-risk students in these special populations in both the short- and long-term to help close the achievement gaps for all students, with the information reported back to the General Assembly.
- 2.3 The Maryland Department of Education continue to evaluate, based on data available from the PARCC administrations, whether:
  - Assessment results are constructed in a manner that informs relevant stakeholders of appropriate actions needed to improve student achievement, and
  - The cut scores are set correctly, the assessments are reliable, and other psychometric attributes are established.
- 2.4 The Maryland State Department of Education determine whether the student performing satisfactory or above on the PARCC assessments is indeed college and career-ready. This will help MSDE and local school systems better identify students who are at-risk.
- 2.5 The Maryland State Department of Education continue to engage in work to assess equity issues among and within school systems relating to student and educator access to computer-based learning and assessment technologies both in school and in the home, and propose solutions to these issues that contribute to the digital divide.
- 2.6 The Maryland State Department of Education make available a report of the Fall Block and March PARCC administrations to relevant stakeholders regarding successes and challenges in preparation for the May administration.
- 2.7 The Maryland State Department of Education and relevant stakeholders work together to make thoughtful decisions around the use of state assessment data from the administration of PARCC assessments. This should be done in the manner that decisions have been made around teacher and principal evaluation and graduation and dropout rates.
- 2.8 The Maryland State Department of Education, working with local school systems, monitor issues including test comparability and technological and digital issues encountered during assessment administrations.

**3. Determine what, if any, new curriculum resources will be needed in order to fully implement the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards**

Presentations and Information

On July 25, Judy Jenkins, Director, Division of Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability at the Maryland State Department of Education, discussed some of the curricular resources that have been developed so far, what is in the development pipeline, and how these are being shared with teachers, parents and students. Using Race to the Top funds, curricular resources in all content areas and across grade levels were developed by curriculum specialists in collaboration with educators across the State; some of this work took place during summer curriculum writing academies. Model units have been and continue to be developed and shared on Maryland's online learning and curriculum management system – Blackboard Learn. Work on this initiative is continuing through the Race to the Top no cost extension of grant funding. Additional resources are shared through organizations (e.g. PTA, Maryland Association of Student Councils), at conferences, during school system visits, and online. As the MCCRS approach full implementation, more teachers and parents are accessing these resources.

The Workgroup heard presentations from several local school systems that included information about the gap analyses they did comparing their previous curriculums and new curriculums based on the new standards. The Workgroup learned that each local school system is developing local curriculum and resources, as has been the long-standing practice in Maryland.

On January 30, 2015, the Maryland State Department of Education presented updates to the Learn MD online portal, which will house resources in a variety of areas, including curricular resources. (Appendix IV, Exhibit VI)

Findings

While many resources have been created primarily through Race to the Top funds over the past four years, the process of continuing to create and refine resources will need to continue for the foreseeable future. In order to sustain and expand the impact of the new standards and the accompanying curricular changes, school systems, assisted by the State, will need to take full advantage of the resources provided through Race to the Top and build on that foundation in order to benefit student learning and enhance teacher effectiveness.

Follow-up Actions for Consideration

The Maryland State Department of Education should continue to collaborate with local school systems on the development of curricular resources and model lessons based on the new standards, continue to collect resources that local school systems are willing to share, and make these resources readily accessible to school systems and teachers through searchable, online portals.

## Recommendations

### *Under charge area 3 the Workgroup recommends:*

- 3.1 The Maryland State Department of Education work with local school systems to determine what additional funding and other resources are needed to sustain current initiatives to meet the curricular development and resource needs of each school.
- 3.2 The Maryland State Department of Education provide a structure and technical assistance for sharing curricular resources through a web-based resource center or other appropriate portals.

#### **4. *Identify how the State Department of Education plans to assist local education agencies in preparing parents and students for the PARCC assessments***

##### Presentations and Information

On July 25, Laura Motel, Communication Specialist at the Maryland State Department of Education, said that communication strategies include producing print resources, posting online information, organizing in-person presentations and demonstrations, inviting the media to visit schools, and using social media to push out information. A flash drive containing resource documents was mailed to each school system so it could print materials for distribution to parents, staff and/or students. For 2014-15, communications will focus on the PARCC transition and the new graduation assessment requirements. Information about the MCCRS and PARCC will be merged, since they operate in tandem. (Appendix IV, Exhibits I & II)

Dr. Douglas Strader, Interim Chief, Planning and Assessment Branches, said that the Maryland State Department of Education is also sharing information from the PARCC online website, which has a wealth of information - [www.parcconline.org](http://www.parcconline.org)

Workgroup questions and comments addressed the following: how to engage hard to reach parents, the possible development of an app, engaging students by asking them how they would like to receive information, and giving parents information that is actionable.

##### Findings

In addition to what is produced at the State level, local school systems have also produced information and resources for parents, and much of it is available online.

The Maryland State Department of Education has been conducting trainings on the PARCC assessment and providing educators with information on specific tools and technology skills that students will need to know to complete the online PARCC tests,

such as drag-and-drop, and how to navigate a drop down menu. However, some teachers report that these trainings are only reaching a small portion of educators.

Some educators are stating that given the lack of an analysis of the PARCC field test, local school systems have concerns about the full implementation of PARCC. Maryland serves on the governing board of PARCC; MSDE reports that teachers who gave the PARCC field tests did complete surveys; results were collected by PARCC. The results are available to and analyzed by states. These results are not shared with schools, but they will be used to shape future PARCC administrations. After the Workgroup meeting on November 12, 2014, the *Report on the PARCC Field Tests and LEA Technology Readiness for PARCC Assessments* was submitted to the Legislative Budget Committee and was shared electronically with Workgroup members. (Appendix IV, Exhibit V)

The Maryland State Department of Education shared that development of an app to help parents and students prepare for the PARCC assessment could be considered.

#### Follow-up Actions for Consideration

The Maryland State Department of Education should work with school systems, including countywide Special Education Advisory Councils, Citizen Advisory Councils, and Parent Teacher Associations, as well as their state-level counterparts, to coordinate communication and ensure that the communication is consistent and accurate, with consideration given to diverse communities.

## Recommendations

### *Under charge area 4 the Workgroup recommends:*

- 4.1 The Maryland State Department of Education engage in coordinated outreach programs with local school systems and other stakeholders, such as the Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland PTA, Maryland Business Round Table, Maryland Association of Boards of Education, and other organizations. Communications should provide clear, accurate, consistent and timely information during the transition to PARCC assessments to explain and prepare students for the PARCC assessments. Information should be up-to-date, include the status of the technological preparation of local school systems, as well as updated findings from Education Superhighway as it relates to the data collection of school districts' technical readiness to administer PARCC. Communications should be disseminated through multiple platforms and in community venues.
- 4.2 The Maryland State Department of Education incorporate in statewide technology standards the appropriate readiness skills students, especially elementary students, will need in order to complete online assessments so they assess each student's content knowledge, not computer skills.
- 4.3 The Maryland State Department of Education work with school districts to ensure administrators and those administering the PARCC assessments to students with disabilities and English language learners are fully aware of proper accommodations, and that they are appropriately written in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Parents should be notified that proper accommodations are in place.

5. The Workgroup combined charges 5 and 7 for the purpose of making recommendations since the two are closely aligned.

***Assess the needs of teachers and principals in the area of professional development related to the implementation of the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards, including determining:***

- (1) ***what, if any, State and federal funding is available to supplement the funding that local governments provide toward the professional development of teachers and principals; and***
- (2) ***what, if any, professional development and ongoing support from local education agencies is available to expand the use of technology as an instructional tool in the classroom***

***Begin recommending a professional development plan for the State Department of Education to implement during the 2014-2015 school year to assist local education***

## ***agencies in implementing the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards***

### Presentations and Information

The Workgroup developed, administered, and analyzed a statewide survey on the professional learning needs of school-based and central office-based educators.

The draft Professional Learning Survey was discussed on August 12, was revised based on Workgroup recommendations on September 17, and was distributed to school-based and central office-based educators.

The results of the 3308 survey responses were discussed on October 21. (Appendix VIII)

The Maryland State Department of Education will use the results of this survey to plan and develop future professional learning opportunities.

The Maryland State Department of Education is asking grant personnel to explore funding options that can be shared with school systems in a highly accessible manner.

Professional Learning was discussed at virtually every meeting because it is critical to all aspects of the implementation of the new standards and assessments, as well as to ensuring students are learning, achievement gaps are closing, the needs of all students are being met, and technology is integrated into instruction. Race to the Top funds have been critical to professional learning opportunities, including the summer educator academies and the development of online opportunities. On January 30, 2015, the Maryland State Department of Education presented updates to the Learn MD online portal, which will house resources in a variety of areas, including professional development. (Appendix IV, Exhibit V)

On July 10, MSDE provided a summary of the successes and challenges of the spring PARCC field testing. This information is expanded on in the November 2014 report to the Legislative Budget Committee, which was provided to the Workgroup after the November 12 meeting. (Appendix IV, Exhibit V)

The Maryland State Department of Education recommends that teachers use PARCC practice test items during instruction so students become familiar with the tasks. It also encourages teachers to use technology regularly during instruction so students learn to use the device (e.g. iPad, laptop, desktop) in the same way they use it during testing. This use includes skills such as “drag-and-drop” and calculators.

Local school systems are being encouraged to increase each year the percentage of students participating in the online PARCC assessments. The goal is to have 100% online testing in Maryland by 2016-2017, even though the deadline for PARCC to be fully online is the 2017-2018 school year.

Workgroup members discussed the length of the PARCC assessments. On July 29, 2014, PARCC Inc. recommended to the Governing Board changes in the assessment in English Language Arts to reduce testing times. The Governing Board approved the

following changes:

- Grade 3 – reduce reading passages from 4 to 2, which will reduce the testing time by 72 minutes
- Grade 4 & 5 – reduce reading passages from 4 to 2, which will reduce the testing time by 40 minutes
- Middle school and high school – reduce reading passages from 5 to 4, which will reduce testing time by 20 minutes

The need for devices, infrastructure, support and professional development was a consistent theme throughout the meetings. Members and presenters stressed the importance of using technology consistently and effectively during regular instruction so students develop computer skills prior to taking online assessments. Teachers stated the need for more professional learning focused on the use of PARCC-like items in classroom assessments. Additionally, educators stated that some students lack the computer and keyboarding skills necessary to successfully navigate the new assessments.

The Workgroup preliminarily discussed the budgetary impact of technology infrastructure and support.

Professional development and professional learning were consistent topics of conversation through all Workgroup meetings. Individual school systems offer multiple professional development opportunities in a variety of ways. The Maryland State Department of Education also offers a myriad of opportunities – in-person and online - some of which were funded with Race to the Top Funds.

The Workgroup developed, distributed and analyzed a survey which was distributed to educators (Appendix VIII) A portion of the results were reported under Charge and Recommendations #2 and will not be repeated in this section.

The Maryland State Department of Education will use the results of the survey to continue offering professional development on MCCRS and the use of PARCC assessment items to inform instruction. These opportunities are continuing through the 2014-2015 school year.

### Findings

The Professional Learning Survey developed by the Workgroup indicates that more professional development is needed. In fact, when asked, “If additional time was available to you, what would be the most valuable use of that time?” the most common responses were: lesson planning – 2514; collaboration with content area educators – 1671; research of available resources/strategies/best practices – 1642; collaboration with grade level educators – 1603; and data analysis/data dialogue – 1080.

Additionally, the survey indicated that the largest challenge educators faced regarding formative assessments was the creation of the assessments themselves. The most common responses to the question “What do you feel is your largest challenge, if any, with formative assessments?” were: creation – 1019; no challenges – 667; use/application – 533; interpretation – 448; and background knowledge – 249. When given an opportunity to answer an open-ended question of professional learning concerns, survey respondents indicated their top concerns were time for collaboration and lesson planning, technology, concerns for special student populations, gaps in student achievement due to transition, and parent and teacher resources.

The Maryland State Department of Education presented information about the summer Educator Effectiveness Academies offered in the summers of 2011, 2012, and 2013, which were designed to provide a continuum of information prior to the full implementation of the new standards. In 2014, educators statewide were invited to participate in two-day regional convenings that were designed to provide additional support. All of these summer opportunities were funded through the Race to the Top grant. The five teachers who participated on the panel on November 12 said that the information provided through these trainings did not always trickle down in a consistent manner to the building level.

The Professional Learning Survey developed by the Workgroup affirmed that more professional development is needed. Respondents indicated that the top three ways that they would like the Maryland State Department of Education to deliver professional development to them, their schools or their school districts were MSDE presentations during school district professional learning days (1830), through online courses (1345) and through webinars (1298). The scheduling of school-year regional conferences (1260) came in fourth as an avenue for delivering professional learning.

#### Follow-up Actions for Consideration

The Maryland State Department of Education should consider conducting a similar professional learning survey in spring 2015 to assess trend data regarding success and continued areas of need and share this data with local school systems.

The Maryland State Department of Education should convene a meeting with representatives from local school systems and state and local education associations to discuss and share alternative scheduling ideas that provide additional time for professional development and protect individual teacher planning time while also providing for collaborative planning. The sharing of best practices will benefit all schools and should include best practices for teachers who work with the most varied student population. In addition, MSDE should determine if resources and specific funds are available to help local school systems implement alternative scheduling to allow for more job-embedded professional development. MSDE should contact the U. S. Department of Education, PARCC, and other groups such as the Southern Regional Education Board to provide assistance to local school systems.

## Recommendations

### *Under charge areas 5 and 7, the Workgroup recommends:*

- 5.1 State and local governments be encouraged to allocate additional, targeted funds to support professional development and collaborative planning opportunities for teachers and school administrators as the State transitions to the new standards and PARCC assessments.
- 5.2 The Maryland State Department of Education share with local school districts the results of the Professional Learning Survey distributed by this Workgroup to focus professional learning in the areas identified by school-based and central office-based educators. In addition, MSDE should offer quality professional learning opportunities in a variety of ways, including in-person and virtual, and include information on how to effectively use technology as a vital part of classroom instruction.
- 5.3 Appropriate State agencies and other relevant stakeholders work collaboratively with institutes of higher education, alternative certification providers, and other affected stakeholders to ensure that Maryland's educator preparation programs provide the most current and relevant information, instruction and exposure to highly effective and innovative practice. This work should be informed by the other task forces, workgroups, and efforts across the State to ensure comprehensive and aligned systems of educator preparation.
- 5.4 The Maryland State Department of Education determine if resources and specific funds are available to help local school systems implement alternative scheduling to allow for more job-embedded professional development. MSDE should contact the U.S. Department of Education, PARCC Inc., and other groups such as the Southern Regional Education Board to provide assistance to local school systems, with the findings reported back to the General Assembly.
- 5.5 The Maryland State Department of Education survey school systems to ascertain resources currently invested in professional development and the additional resources still needed to ensure high quality, consistent professional development. The professional development plan should include special outreach to educators who are new to Maryland as well as to classroom-based paraprofessionals, with findings reported to the General Assembly prior to the January 2016 session.
- 5.6 The Maryland State Department of Education, along with local school systems and stakeholder groups, continue to monitor progress through additional data gathering through the Center for Application and Innovation Research in Education (CAIRE) and/or other surveys.

5.7 The Maryland State Department of Education evaluate the effectiveness of the trainer-of-trainer model as it is currently implemented and, if effective, work with local school systems to consider the creation of professional development teams, which would deliver direct instruction to teachers and principals on the new standards and PARCC assessments. Furthermore, MSDE and local school systems should consider ways to include classroom-based paraprofessionals in this work as appropriate and feasible.

**6. The Workgroup combined charges 6 and 8 for the purpose of making recommendations since the two are closely aligned.**

***Assess the technological readiness and needs of the public schools for the implementation of the PARCC assessments, including what resources will be needed to teach students the necessary computer skills to take the PARCC assessments***

***Recommend a plan to meet the technological infrastructure needs of public schools related to the implementation of the PARCC assessments***

Presentations and Information

On July 10, 2014, the Maryland State Department of Education provided a summary of the results of the PARCC online field test. (See Appendix IV, Exhibit IV.)

On July 25, 2014, Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) discussed the importance of collaboration between the departments of instruction and technology to build systems that promote student achievement and literacy. Over four years, PGCPS has evaluated the bandwidth needed for instruction and testing. Wireless was added to all buildings, and the district evaluated which devices best support the dual purpose of learning and assessment. As devices are added, additional technology support will be needed. The school system is developing a comprehensive technology plan during the 2014-15 school year.

Findings

The PARCC field tests provided the opportunity to identify technology needs and issues. All 24 school systems, and all but seven (7) Maryland public schools, participated in the field test; 65,122 online and 33,154 paper PARCC field tests were administered in Maryland. The phasing-in of the percentage of assessments taken online (from 25% in 2015 to 100% in 2017) gives school systems the opportunity to acquire technology over time.

There are a variety of resource needs for local school systems concerning requirements that the PARCC assessments be taken online. Currently, some local school districts do

not have an adequate number of computers to integrate new technology into the classroom and fully administer the PARCC assessment.

According to the Maryland State Department of Education presentation on July 10, 2014, the number of issues reported by school systems related to the PARCC field test decreased between the administration of the Performance-Based Assessment in March and the End-of-Year assessment in May decreased from 19 reporting issues to 7. “In addition to technology challenges, some of the online test items and related tools were confusing to students because they were either new, or, in some cases, flawed and not working as planned.” (Appendix IV, p. 28)

Multiple presenters and Workgroup members are concerned that school systems do not currently have sufficient technology in classrooms to both support learning and assessment. This is one reason that school systems will be phasing-in the percentage of students taking online assessments through school year 2016-2017. Each year, the percentage of students taking the assessment through paper and pencil will decrease. The Maryland State Department of Education will work with school systems to set their yearly goals for the percentage of students taking the assessments online; percentage goals will differ from district to district.

The PARCC field tests in 2013-2014 gave districts the opportunity to see how well their technology performed and to identify where technology improvements are needed. Twenty-two districts were given Race to the Top sub-grants to support improvements and upgrades to local technology and data infrastructures. According to the Race to the Top report (Appendix XI), “School systems used the funds in a variety of ways to address their individual needs, including increasing wireless Internet access in schools and classrooms, purchasing new equipment and devices, upgrading security systems, and developing or upgrading electronic transcript systems.” (Appendix XI, p.21)

The PARCC assessments must be administered fully online by the 2017-2018 school year, although MSDE has set a goal to give PARCC fully online by the 2016-2017 school year.

#### Follow-up Actions for Consideration

The Maryland State Department of Education should convene a meeting of all local school system PARCC-responsible technology coordinators in order to determine best practices, needs, and concerns during the 2014-15 school year.

### **Recommendations**

The Workgroup combined charges 6 and 8 for the purpose of making recommendations since the two are closely aligned.

#### ***Under charge areas 6 and 8 the Workgroup recommends:***

- 6.1 The Maryland State Department of Education work with local school systems as they acquire technology to bring equitable opportunities to students and educators who need to develop the computer skills necessary to take or administer the online PARCC assessments.
- 6.2 The Maryland State Department of Education work with local school systems to identify remaining unmet technology needs and to develop realistic plans regarding the percentage of paper and pencil PARCC assessments the system will administer as it transitions to 100% computer-based assessments. MSDE should allow each school within a local school system to determine which students will use paper and pencil vs. the online PARCC assessment. It is recognized that a small percentage of students will take paper and pencil versions of the assessment each year because of individual learning needs.
- 6.3 The Maryland State Department of Education develop a statewide plan, assessing and prioritizing additional funding needed by county to properly administer the PARCC. The plan should reference other related procurement and planning initiatives, the assessment of broadband capacity which is being conducted under a separate legislative mandate, and the investments already made by local school systems, identifying remaining unmet needs, with the findings reported to the General Assembly.
- 6.4 The Maryland State Department of Education continue to engage in work to assess equity issues among and within school systems relating to student and educator access to computer-based learning and assessment technologies both in school and in the home, and propose solutions to these issues that contribute to the digital divide.

#### ***7. Assess how the PARCC assessments testing window will affect the normal school calendar and school schedule***

##### **Presentations and Information**

On July 25, William Cappe, Maryland State Department of Education Ombudsman, presented school calendar considerations. He reviewed legal requirements (such as minimum number of school days and hours and certain holiday mandates), local school system start and end dates, how inclement weather affects calendars, and how school

systems have autonomy in setting calendars. (Appendix V)

The Workgroup discussed the PARCC testing windows and the number of state and local testing days for students. The Workgroup also discussed the length of the PARCC assessments. The Workgroup was informed that the PARCC Governing Board approved a reduction in testing times for certain grades; grade 3 was reduced by 72 minutes, grade 4 and 5 by 40 minutes, and middle and high school testing time was reduced by 20 minutes. (See also charge area #5)

The Maryland State Department of Education is collecting local test calendars from school districts.

### Findings

Workgroup members discussed that information can be collected about how the PARCC assessment window will affect the normal school calendar and school schedules, but the affect will not be known until after the first full administration of the PARCC assessments in 2014-2015 school year.

### Follow-up Actions for Consideration

The Maryland State Department of Education should continue to poll school districts about both the length of the testing window for PARCC and the number of State and local testing days for students.

The Maryland State Department of Education should determine how the needs of students receiving special education services whose Individualized Education Programs call for extra testing time will be addressed.

## Recommendations

### *Under charge area 9 the Workgroup recommends:*

- 7.1 After the first full administration of the PARCC assessments, the Maryland State Department of Education work with local school districts to determine how the assessment windows affected school calendars, specifically on the ability to provide effective instruction, including remediation and enrichment learning experiences. As appropriate, MSDE will work with the PARCC Consortium and local school systems to identify and/or recommend adjustments that will benefit students and schools.
- 7.2 The Maryland State Department of Education describe the calendar issues which are known, such as the assessment scheduling windows, including a description of the school scheduling issues relating to instructional responses to PARCC assessment scores and timeliness for school administrators to make further course or remediation scheduling decisions before, during and after assessment administrations.
- 7.3 After the first administration of the PARCC assessments, the Maryland State Department of Education assess how PARCC affected the school calendar and school schedules and make recommendations for adjustment, as appropriate. MSDE should assess the amount of time in each school system students are taking both local and state assessments, report on any duplication it finds, and make recommendations to reduce the amount of testing for students.
- 7.4 The Maryland State Department of Education prepare a survey for principals and teachers on how the PARCC testing window impacted the daily school calendar in both traditional and block schedule schools. It will present the results of the survey back to relevant stakeholders, including successes and challenges, as well as recommendations from those staff directly responsible for test administration.

### **8. *Assess how local education agencies are including teachers in the discussion to improve the implementation of the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards***

#### Presentations and Information

On November 12, five teachers identified by the Maryland State Education Association and from different school systems presented to the Workgroup as part of a panel. They discussed how teachers have been included in the discussion to improve the implementation of the MCCRS. Teaching experience ranged from three to 38 years, spanned the elementary, middle and high school grade bands, and covered both classroom and counseling experiences. The teachers briefly addressed the question and answered Workgroup member questions.

- Valerie Coll, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher, Flora M. Singer Elementary School, Montgomery County
  - The first time that many teachers and parents took notice of the reality of the PARCC assessments was during the field testing. Not everyone is as aware as they should be until an issue becomes real to them. It is helpful to look at the online PARCC questions. The rollout of the PARCC was not as smooth as it could have been. Teachers need training on tools for students, including keyboarding as an essential skill. Teachers are included in county-wide conversations through system-level committees, but teachers often have to go through the process once before they become sure of what will really happen.
- Gary Hammer, Band Director, Bennett Middle School, Wicomico County
  - Instructional time is being lost to testing and to learning skills such as keyboarding for the new assessments. The new assessments have a new look and use new tools, but the technology in his school district is not yet sufficient. In addition, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) are due during the spring testing windows, so teachers are overwhelmed.
- Ross Benincasa, English and Journalism Teacher, LaPlata High School, Charles County
  - Technology is a major issue in an old school. Essentially, the computer labs have been turned into testing rooms, and they are no longer available for instruction. Teachers he talks to feel uninformed and unready. All mandated surveys, etc., are given during English class, so English loses a disproportionate amount of instructional time. Local school systems are not receiving adequate help with curriculum and the new assessments.
- Rachel Leess, 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Phelps Luck Elementary School, Howard County
  - Teachers are not opposed to the new standards, but they are concerned about the lack of consistency in the implementation. Support and professional development have seemed to dry up after the first year of implementation. Teachers are involved in curriculum writing, but they are not experts in the new standards. Teachers she talks to feel unprepared for the PARCC assessments; her county has not produced PARCC-aligned reading assessments for teacher use. Some students do not have access to technology at home which affects their ability to use technology for the assessments.
- Brenda Luger, Counselor, Bel Air Elementary School, Allegany County
  - The presentation of the material on the paper version of the PARCC

field test was confusing, so some students got wrong answers just because of how the information was presented. Allegany had some technology issues during the field test which caused students to become frustrated. Teachers have a great deal of input into writing curriculum based on the new standards, but they need more time for implementation. Teacher frustrations are beginning to show – especially with the Student Learning Objective process being put on top of the new standards and assessments.

During follow-up discussion, the teachers offered the following examples of how things could be better in the future if changes were made:

- Change would be intentional, with time to develop the initiatives,
- Some things would be taken off teachers' plates'
- Implementation of the new standards, new assessments and new evaluations would be slowed down,
- Teachers would be given more autonomy in the classroom, and
- There would be less impact on instructional time.

#### Findings

Many of the best practices presented at Workgroup meetings and collected in the form of white papers report on how teachers are being included in these discussions. (Appendix II)

#### Follow-up Actions for Consideration

MSDE should continue to monitor and assess how teachers are included in the discussion to improve the implementation of the new standards.

### **Recommendations**

***Under charge area 10 the Workgroup recommends:***

- 8.1 The Maryland State Department of Education seek input from teachers, principals, and local education associations through future surveys on their involvement in the implementation of Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards. Best practices should be shared through the website portal Learn MD (See recommendations under Charge #1).

9. **The Workgroup combined charges 11 and 12 for the purpose of making recommendations since the two are closely aligned.**

***Analyze the guidance local education agencies have received from the State Department of Education in regards to measuring student growth in light of the new teacher evaluation system and student learning objectives***

***Assess how the new teacher evaluation system is impacting local education agencies' ability to implement the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards***

#### Presentations and Information

On September 17, David Volrath, Planning and Development Officer, and Ben Feldman, Subject Matter Expert, both from the Maryland State Department of Education, reviewed how Maryland approached state assessment measures. Maryland has a state model for Teacher and Principal Evaluation with an option for local systems to design their own models that meet certain criteria. The models must satisfy both the U.S. Department of Education requirements and Maryland law. The State model depends heavily on Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) which can be used to reflect progress or mastery, thus measuring student growth. SLOs can use State assessments as the outcome measure. Ultimately, PARCC can become an outcome measure. (Appendix VII)

#### Findings

Workgroup members discussed the importance of standardizing across the State the process of setting Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) so some teachers do not have SLOs that are too rigorous while others have SLOs that are set too low. Student growth as measured by state assessments will not be used for teacher evaluations for two years.

Educators are implementing a new curriculum and preparing for new State assessments in a short transition period, and some educators and Workgroup members think there is not enough time to effectively do the work.

In April 2014, the Maryland General Assembly voted to delay the inclusion and reliance of State assessments to make personnel evaluation decisions for principals and teachers due to the lack of valid and reliable assessments. This action helped alleviate some of the pressure educators were feeling implementing the new MCCRS curriculum, preparing for new assessments, and simultaneously attempting to learn a new educator evaluation system. The comparability of the data for evaluation purposes is compromised due to the lack of data and uneven implementation of reforms across the State.

Until there are reliable data, it will be hard to know the impact of a new Teacher Principal Evaluations and the new standards. The Workgroup discussed that the

workload for educators and local school systems has increased dramatically, and many educators are feeling overwhelmed due to the combined new reforms.

The Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC) conducted a study of educators' perceptions of the Teacher Principal Evaluation in September 2014. The report indicates that interviewees across all role groups suggest the pace of implementation has been unrealistic, limiting the development of knowledge and classroom support systems. The report further indicated other common issues with implementation across local school systems. These include districts struggling to make the connections to Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), observations, and the new MCCRS; inconsistent implementation across classrooms, departments and schools; and the fact that educators are concerned about the skills and capacity of principals. Regarding the challenges of implementing SLOs, the report states that interviewees like the promise of SLOs, but many are finding the implementation challenging for a variety of reasons. These include the concern of principal readiness to guide the SLO process, insufficient training for teachers on how to understand and develop SLOs, and what constitutes a high quality SLO.

Race to the Top grant funds have been used at the local and State level to improve data collection and analysis, and to create an educator evaluation system that increases educator effectiveness and is based on student growth.

#### Follow-up Actions for Consideration

The Maryland State Department of Education should continue to evaluate whether Student Learning Objectives are effective, leading to increased student achievement.

The Maryland State Department of Education should continue to communicate with educators and parents about the reasoning behind the need for an educator evaluation system based on student growth.

### Recommendations

The Workgroup combined charges 11 and 12 for the purpose of making recommendations since the two are closely aligned.

***The Workgroup recommends:***

- 9.1 The Maryland State Department of Education continue to intensely monitor, analyze, assess, and adjust the guidance local school districts receive regarding measuring student growth in light of new teacher and principal evaluation systems. The evaluation systems will continue to depend on rigorous classroom observations and reliable and valid Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). (In June 2014, major stakeholders signed a memorandum of understanding to coordinate resources and strategies in developing these SLOs. Groups will work together to ensure consistent messaging and training on SLOs.)
- 9.2 The Maryland State Department of Education work with local school systems to ensure Student Learning Objectives are collaboratively developed by teachers and administrators working together to develop objectives that are the most relevant for each individual teacher's student population and content area, and that provide a clear, measurable connection to instruction.
- 9.3 The Maryland State Department of Education should provide further resource materials on key aspects of the teacher observation process.

***10. Develop a plan to transfer from the Maryland High School Assessments in English and Algebra/Data Analysis to the comparable PARCC assessments as a graduation requirement***

Presentations and Information

On August 12, the workgroup was briefed on the Maryland State Board of Education's plan to transition from the Maryland High School Assessments in English and Algebra I/Data Analysis to the PARCC assessments as graduation requirements. The calendar of PARCC and HSA test administrations for the 2014 – 2015 and 2015 – 2016 school years, as well as a visual depiction of the calendar, were distributed. (Appendix IV, Exhibit III)

Findings

The Maryland State Board of Education published in February 2015 for public comment regulations that define which high school students must pass PARCC assessments as a graduation requirement. This will provide time for passing scores to be established.

The Workgroup discussed a lack of clarity about what it means to be college and career-ready and how to assess whether a student is college and career ready.

### **Recommendations**

***Under charge area 13, the Workgroup recommends:***

- 10.1 The Maryland State Department of Education carefully monitor and continue to recommend any adjustments deemed necessary to the high school assessment transition plan adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring students have options for completing graduation requirements and that cut scores are appropriately set.
- 10.2 The Maryland State Department of Education work with local school systems to anticipate what supports will be needed for special student populations as the transition moves forward.

## References

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## Appendix Summary

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- Appendix I: Chapter 246 (HB 1164) Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Implementation Review Workgroup
- Appendix II: Best Practices
- Exhibit I: Anne Arundel Public Schools Best Practice
  - Exhibit II: Prince George’s County Public Schools Best Practice
  - Exhibit III: Carroll County Public Schools Best Practice
  - Exhibit IV: Queen Anne’s County Public Schools Best Practice
  - Exhibit V: Baltimore City and Washington County Public School Systems Best Practices
  - Exhibit VI: School District White Papers – Best Practices
- Appendix III: Impact on Student Populations
- Exhibit I: Impact on Select Student Populations Presentation
  - Exhibit II: National Center for State Collaborative and Alt- MSA presentation
  - Exhibit III: Data for Follow-up Questions on Student Performance
- Appendix IV: PARCC Resources and Transition Information
- Exhibit I: PARCC Information and Resources
  - Exhibit II: PARCC Resources for Parents
  - Exhibit III: Transition from HSA to PARCC
  - Exhibit IV: Technology Readiness
  - Exhibit V: Report on the PARCC Field Tests and LEA Technology Readiness for PARCC Assessments
  - Exhibit VI: Learn MD Online Portal Update
- Appendix V: School Calendar Information
- Appendix VI: Meeting Agendas and Minutes
- Exhibit I: July 10, 2014
  - Exhibit II: July 25, 2014
  - Exhibit III: August 12, 2014
  - Exhibit IV: September 17, 2014
  - Exhibit V: October 21, 2014
  - Exhibit VI: November 12, 2014
  - Exhibit VII: January 30, 2015
  - Exhibit VIII: February 9, 2015
- Appendix VII: Review of Maryland Approaches to State Assessment Measures
- Appendix VIII: Professional Learning Survey Results

Exhibit I: Professional Learning Survey Presentation

Exhibit II: Complete Survey Comments

Appendix IX: Workgroup Attendance

Appendix X: Comments Received on Draft Recommendations

Exhibit I: Dr. Robert Lissitz, Workgroup Member

Exhibit II: Maryland Association of Boards of Education

Exhibit III: Maryland State Education Association

Exhibit IV: Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland

Exhibit V: Frederick County Public Schools Board of Education

Appendix XI: Race to the Top

Appendix XII: Extension Request

Exhibit I: Letter Requesting an Extension of the Final Report Deadline

Exhibit II: Letter Granting an Extension of the Final Report Deadline