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Commissioner Chester Recommends Path to Next-Generation MCAS

MALDEN –Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Mitchell D. Chester today announced that he is recommending the state transition to a next-generation MCAS that would be given for the first time in spring 2017 and would use both PARCC and MCAS items, along with items developed specifically for the Massachusetts tests. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will vote on his recommendation on November 17.

For spring 2016, districts that administered PARCC in spring 2015 would do so again, and the remainder of districts would continue with MCAS unless they affirmatively choose to administer PARCC. The MCAS tests in spring 2016 would be augmented with a limited number of PARCC items in order to help make statewide comparisons easier and to offer students and staff the opportunity to experience PARCC items while the new assessment is being developed.

The commissioner's memo calls for the state to:

- Award a new MCAS contract to include a next-generation assessment for English language arts and math using both PARCC items and items specific to Massachusetts;
- Commit to computer-based state assessments with the goal of implementing this statewide by spring 2019;
- Remain a member of the PARCC consortium in order to have access to high-quality assessment development while sharing costs with other states and to be able to compare next-generation MCAS results with those of other states' assessments; and
- Convene groups of K-12 teachers, higher education faculty and assessment experts to advise ESE on the content, length and scheduling of statewide tests; testing policies for students with disabilities and for English language learners; the requirements for the high school competency determination (currently the 10th grade MCAS); and the timeline for reinstating a history and social science test.

Under Commissioner Chester's recommendation, any districts that administer PARCC in spring 2016 for the first time would be held harmless for any negative changes in their school and district accountability levels, which is consistent with the state's approach to districts that used PARCC for the first time in spring 2015. The commissioner proposes that every district would be subject to accountability levels in 2017, when all of the state's districts would use a single test.

"The approach I have recommended lets us continue to benefit from the high-quality, next-generation PARCC assessment in which we've invested a great deal of time and effort. But it also ensures that the assessment will reflect the Commonwealth's unique needs and concerns," Commissioner Chester writes in the recommendation.

The commissioner's full recommendation is attached and will be posted at www.doe.mass.edu.

Massachusetts has just completed a unique two-year tryout of PARCC (Partnership for

Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers), an assessment developed by a consortium of states of which Massachusetts is a founding member. The commonwealth's participation allowed Massachusetts to pool its expertise with other states, share the costs of test development and realize economies of scale in test administration.

In spring 2014, approximately 81,000 Massachusetts students participated in field tests, and in spring 2015, more than 220,000 students in [more than half](#) of the state's districts took complete PARCC tests.

The Board will hold its last [public comment session](#) on PARCC from 4-7 p.m. November 16 at Malden High School, 77 Salem St., Malden. The Board will vote on the commissioner's recommendation at its [regular meeting that starts at 8:30 a.m. November 17](#) at 75 Pleasant St., Malden.

Massachusetts has released spring 2015 results for [schools and districts that took PARCC](#), as well as results for all [PARCC districts statewide](#). Parents of children who took PARCC in spring 2015 will receive their child's test scores in late November or early December. The state will release accountability determinations for schools and districts in December.

For more information on Massachusetts' two-year tryout of PARCC, please see <http://www.doe.mass.edu/parcc/>.

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