

The Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents and the Massachusetts Association of School Committees has provided a legal advisory which recommends that each district school committee vote to administer either the Partnership for Assessing Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) or the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) in the 2014-2015 School. This advisory suggests that the vote be taken upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools. It is the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools that the Northborough School Committee, Southborough School Committee and the Northborough-Southborough Regional School Committee vote to administer the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System in the 2014-2015 school years.

This recommendation is made based on the following:

1. The Massachusetts Board of Education has not voted to adopt PARCC, continue to administer MCAS or propose revisions to MCAS. The BOE will take this matter up and vote in the fall of the 2015-2016 school year.
2. Our Districts were three of the 15% of schools required to participate in the random selection of schools/grades in the 2014-2015 pilot. The DESE is hopeful that more schools will participate in operationalizing PARCC in 2014-2105.
3. Anecdotal data from our students suggests that the PARCC will need to be revised to address concerns regarding clarity of questions, accessibility of embedded technology tools, appropriateness of grade level content and skill.
4. The PARCC pilot provided us with information that will assist us in our curriculum alignment and teaching and learning strategies in the 2014-2015 school year and use model assessments and content to inform students as to their academic growth and performance.
5. The specific results of the DESE PARCC pilot are not available. The DESE released performance data based on the aggregate of participants and a random sampling of survey responses. No district or student performance data was released to individual districts, schools or districts.
6. Our districts piloted both the paper/pencil and online testing formats. Our experience with the online version supports our belief that we would not be ready to pilot an entire district-wide piloting of the online format without significant loss of technology support time, instructional time and potential costs. Note: The paper/pencil format will be available through 2018.
7. If PARCC is selected, MCAS will continue to be administered in grades 5, 8, and 9 science/technology, alternate assessments at all grades, and grade 10 ELA and mathematics. MCAS continues to be the high stakes test for graduation and the DESE has stated it will continue to be through the Class of 2018 (current 8th grade students). Choosing PARCC will require additional scheduling and time to implement both MCAS and PARCC in the 2014-2015 school year.
8. All schools in a district must participate in PARCC (grades 3 – 8) and any required MCAS tests. PARCC requires two tests in each content area, Performance Based Assessment and End of Year. The high school administers MCAS, and if chosen, PARCC in ELA and/or mathematics.

9. All schools are currently engaged in mathematics professional development and adopting new instructional resources in both ELA and mathematics. The MCAS test will assist in measuring our curriculum adoption and alignment with the common core as we will have pre and post consistent assessment data to measure student growth.
10. Our district is entering its second year aligning to the Core. The information we gained regarding the format and complexity of the PARCC assessment will be used within the teaching and learning framework in all classrooms. Formative feedback will be provided to students. We believe that preparing our students in the classrooms will better prepare our students for either MCAS in 2014-2015 and/or MCAS - PARCC in 2015-2016. Students who participate in PARCC next year will not receive feedback until the results are released in 2015-2016.
11. The DESE proposed “equipercentile linking” formula will report PARCC scores comparable to MCAS achievement and growth ratings. This formula will be implemented for the first time next year. The DESE “hold harmless” provision will hold districts at its current level of accountability rating or could potentially move districts to the next level of accountability. The formula is new and untested. It will require additional training and informational sessions to educate teachers, parents and students as to the meaning and value of the new data indicators.
12. The timelines set forth by the DESE to operationalize PARCC or choose MCAS does not allow r districts to make evidence based decisions, i.e., performance of our students. The timelines are in place to accommodate the timelines required by the assessment providers.
13. Teachers will be engaged in the continuation or implementation of initiatives, mandated by the State, including the educator evaluation plan, implementation of DDM’s (District Determined Measures), Phase 5 of the educator evaluation plan – student surveys, completion of RETELL (Rethinking Equity in Teaching English Language Learners), implementation of MKEA (Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment), review and analysis of the proposed K-12 science frameworks, and mathematics professional development as part of our on-going adoption of resources and teaching and learning practices aligned with the common core. There are also numerous district-wide initiatives that will continue and/or planned for next school year.