



Press Release

For immediate release

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Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Approves Path to Next-Generation MCAS

MALDEN – The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education today voted 8-3 to 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 vote followed many of the recommendations that Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Mitchell D. Chester made last week.

"Massachusetts is a national leader in education, and today's vote gives our students, families and educators a better measure of student achievement while maintaining state control over our assessment system," said **Secretary of Education James A. Peyser**. "I would like to thank my fellow Board members for the many hours they spent listening to public comment and reviewing materials over the last six months."

"I am grateful to the Board for their thoughtful review of my recommendation and all of the input and materials they received," **Commissioner Chester** said. "Their vote paves the way to a next-generation assessment that will be a better reflection of student achievement and, at the high school level, of readiness for college and a career."

For spring 2016, districts that administered PARCC in spring 2015 will do so again, and the remainder of districts will continue with MCAS unless they affirmatively choose to administer PARCC. The MCAS tests in spring 2016 will 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.

As a result of the vote, the state will:

- 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 with access to high-quality assessment development, cost-sharing with other states and the ability 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.

Any districts that administer PARCC in spring 2016 will be held harmless for any negative

changes in their school and district accountability levels, a policy which is a continuation of the state's approach to districts that used PARCC in spring 2015. The Board also voted to hold all districts harmless on the basis of test scores in 2017, when all of the state's districts would use a single test.

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. 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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