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Office of the Superintendent of Schools  
William H. Lupini, Ed.D.

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To: Members of the Brookline School Committee

From: William H. Lupini, Ed. D.  
Superintendent of Schools

Re: State Assessment for 2015

On May 22, 2014, I recommended that the Public Schools of Brookline administer the PARCC Assessment for grades 3-9 and 11 for the 2014-2015 school year. This recommendation was based on the following considerations:

- Our experience with the recent PARCC field test allowed our team to gain a deep understanding of all that is required to administer this assessment to support students' success. Our learning was detailed in my presentation to the School Committee at our last meeting.
- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will "hold harmless" the accountability status of Districts choosing to administer PARCC in 2015. Specifically, a school's level will either stay the same or improve but cannot decline due to PARCC test results.
- MCAS will be phased out in favor of either PARCC or another new "next generation" assessment after the 2015 test administration.
- Administering PARCC in 2015 will allow all students tested the opportunity to get comfortable with the new expectations and testing environment, and will give us the opportunity to fine-tune its administration, which may reduce the risk of disruption in future years.
- The high school did not participate in the 2014 pilot. Administering PARCC in grades 9 and 11 in 2015 offers BHS a year to pilot the new assessment. Also, a score of 4 or 5 on the PARCC Assessment would allow an 11<sup>th</sup> grader to skip remedial courses at Massachusetts state colleges. MCAS will still be administered to all 10<sup>th</sup> grade students through the class of 2018 for competency determinations.
- In addition to being "held harmless," DESE has mitigated other risks for districts that choose to administer PARCC in 2015, including:
  - ✓ Pencil and paper tests will be an option for a number of years in order to allow districts to adequately prepare their technology to meet the needs of the online test; and,
  - ✓ Student Growth Percentiles (SGP) will be calculated continuously; therefore, there will be no interruption in utilizing SGP in the educator evaluation system.

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide you with additional information about PARCC testing, our revised recommendation for your consideration during the June 5<sup>th</sup> Public Hearing and your June 19<sup>th</sup> vote, and the reasoning for these revisions to our thinking.

## Additional Information

One of the main areas of discussion during our May 22<sup>nd</sup> presentation involved the number of PARCC testing sessions at each grade level. Following is a chart detailing the grade-by-grade and subject area testing sessions for both PARCC and MCAS (grades 3-8):

Grade Level	PARCC & Science	MCAS	Difference
3 <sup>rd</sup>	9 (5 ELA; 4 Math)	5 (3 ELA; 2 Math)	+4
4 <sup>th</sup>	9 (5 ELA; 4 Math)	7 (5 ELA; 2 Math)	+2
5 <sup>th</sup>	11 (5 ELA; 4 Math) (2 MCAS Science)	7 (3 ELA; 2 Math) (2 MCAS Science)	+4
6 <sup>th</sup>	9 (5 ELA; 4 Math)	5 (3 ELA; 2 Math)	+4
7 <sup>th</sup>	9 (5 ELA; 4 Math)	7 (5 ELA; 2 Math)	+2
8 <sup>th</sup>	11 (5 ELA; 4 Math) (2 MCAS Science)	7 (3 ELA; 2 Math) (2 MCAS Science)	+4

These differences are somewhat governed by the addition of end-of- year (EOY) testing in PARCC, along with the inclusion of a writing composition component for grades beyond the fourth and seventh grade currently tested in MCAS.

The amount of time to be spent in testing is a much more complicated analysis. Students are permitted 50% additional time beyond what is recommended in PARCC, while MCAS is an untimed assessment. Below is a comparison of the “expected” times for both grade 3-8 scenarios described above:

Grade Level	PARCC & Science	MCAS	Difference
3 <sup>rd</sup>	490 minutes (8.2 hours)	270 minutes (4.5 hours)	+220 minutes (+3.7 hours)
4 <sup>th</sup>	530 minutes (8.8 hours)	360 minutes (6.0 hours)	+210 minutes (+3.5 hours)
5 <sup>th</sup>	620 minutes (10.3 hours)	360 minutes (6.0 hours)	+260 minutes (+4.3 hours)
6 <sup>th</sup>	570 minutes (9.5 hours)	270 minutes (4.5 hours)	+300 minutes (+5.0 hours)
7 <sup>th</sup>	570 minutes (9.5 hours)	370 minutes (6.2 hours)	+300 minutes (+5.0 hours)
8 <sup>th</sup>	660 minutes (11.0 hours)	370 minutes (6.2 hours)	+290 minutes (+4.8 hours)

These numbers are somewhat misleading in that the PARCC timing is probably much closer to actual for most students, given the “timed” nature of the assessment. Furthermore, given that factor, it would be possible to schedule multiple testing sessions in one day with PARCC, while this is not possible in our current MCAS assessment configuration.

The high school analysis is even more difficult, given the following factors:

- As noted earlier, current MCAS assessment occurs only in 9<sup>th</sup> grade with a Science test, 10<sup>th</sup> grade with the English Language Arts and Mathematics exams, and again beyond 10<sup>th</sup> grade for those students who did not initially meet the competency determination standards.

- The PARCC assessment system is designed to provide 11<sup>th</sup> grade students who score of 4 or 5 on the PARCC Assessment to skip remedial courses at Massachusetts state colleges.
- MCAS will still be administered to all 10<sup>th</sup> grade students through the class of 2018 for competency determinations.
- PARCC high school math assessments are based on courses aligned to the Common Core State Standards, not grade levels. Assessments are available for Algebra I, Geometry, Mathematics I, Mathematics II, Algebra II and Mathematics III.

Given these factors, it is more difficult to provide a comparison of numbers of testing sessions and total time devoted to assessment for PARCC v. MCAS. However, it is very safe to conclude that students would experience a greater volume of testing under the PARCC plan than is currently the case.

### Revised Recommendation

After considering input from the Headmaster and her administrative team, as well as issues raised by School Committee members at our May 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting, we are now recommending that the Public Schools of Brookline participate in the PARCC operational test for grades 3-8 only during the 2014-2015 school year. High School testing would be limited to those MCAS tests required for the competency determination in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.

### Reasoning

We do not come to any of these recommendations lightly. This new assessment will consume more valuable teaching time than the current program. The timed nature of the assessment for students who do not have an IEP is not in the best interest of any of our students and represents a significant change in beliefs for the Commonwealth. The PARCC assessment is still in development and, as such, will continue to represent a learning opportunity for all of us, even while students are receiving scores for their performance on the exams. Finally, we are not at present prepared to move to an on-line testing environment as a school system, meaning that some of our students will participate in a paper and pencil assessment and, therefore, we will have students being tested on somewhat different competencies and skills across our schools.

However, much of our rationale for this recommendation is, in our view, compelling and remains the same as discussed in May. We cannot recommend staying with MCAS for another year if this assessment is to be phased out in favor of either PARCC or another new “next generation” assessment. We believe that students should be given the opportunity to experience “next generation” expectations and testing environments, and that we need the chance to work with the administration of these assessments. Finally, we need to take advantage of having school accountability status held “harmless” while we work to support student, teacher and school success within this new testing situation.

While this same logic exists with respect to high school testing, we simply do not believe that it outweighs the issues for our students. As was discussed on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, eleventh grade students would be taking a PARCC assessment after most of them had already met the competency determination in their sophomore year, without the benefit of knowing up front that this was to be the case. Ninth grade students would be participating in a “next generation” pilot program, only to revert to MCAS as a competency determination exam. Therefore, we do not believe that the benefits of PARCC testing outweigh these concerns for our high school students in 2014-2015.

I am looking forward to continuing our discussion of this recommendation with you at our meeting on Thursday, June 5, 2014.