MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Philip Kauffman, Chair, Board of Education Policy Management Committee

Subject: Tentative Action, Policy IKA, Grading and Reporting

Policy IKA, *Grading and Reporting*, provides a fair process for evaluating and reporting student progress that is understandable to students and their parents/guardians, and is relevant for instructional purposes.

The Montgomery County Board of Education Policy Management Committee (Committee) reviewed Policy IKA, *Grading and Reporting*, at its July 30, 2015, meeting. The interim superintendent of schools proposed revisions to the existing assessment strategy in his July 14, 2015, Districtwide Assessment Strategy memorandum to the Board (attached), and indicated that a review of relevant policies such as Policy IKA, *Grading and Reporting*, would be necessary. The interim superintendent of schools’ strategy also set forth recommendations for increasing instructional time and alleviating testing burdens on students, while continuing to gather needed assessment data to recognize and respond to student, teacher, school, and district needs.

The revised policy provides language clarifying that assessments that may be used to demonstrate and evaluate students’ mastery of grade level or course material, including marking period assessments, end of unit tests, projects, performance-based assessments, and other similar demonstrations of a student’s mastery of grade level or course material. Additionally, the draft policy explicitly removes the requirement that there be final exams of significant weight. A draft of the policy is attached.

The following resolution is provided for your consideration:

WHEREAS, Policy IKA, *Grading and Reporting*, has been revised to set forth guidance for providing a fair process for evaluating and reporting student progress; and
WHEREAS, Policy IKA, *Grading and Reporting*, has been revised to incorporate the key principles articulated in the interim superintendent of schools’ Districtwide Assessment Strategy designed to increase instructional time and alleviate testing burden on students, while gathering needed assessment data; and

WHEREAS, Policy IKA, *Grading and Reporting*, sets forth various grading and reporting practices to assess students’ mastery of grade level or course material; and

WHEREAS, The Policy Management Committee has considered and recommended revisions to Policy IKA, *Grading and Reporting*, now therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Education takes tentative action on Policy IKA, *Grading and Reporting*; and be it further

Resolved, That Policy IKA, *Grading and Reporting*, be sent out for public comment.

PK:mm

Attachments
MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education
From: Larry A. Bowers, Interim Superintendent of Schools
Subject: Districtwide Assessment Strategy

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is dedicated to ensuring effective and equitable teaching and learning in all schools and across all grade levels. Effective use of assessments is an integral part of effective teaching and learning and serves an essential role for students, parents/guardians, teachers, principals, and central services staff. During the last six months, staff has conducted a review of our current K–12 assessments and options for modifications to our assessment program. The review included the purpose of assessments, the types of assessments, the current assessment plan, and proposed changes to increase instructional time, improve the use of assessments, and, overall, improve learning for all our students.

As part of the review, MCPS staff gathered feedback from key stakeholders, including teachers, principals, parent organizations, employee associations, and the Board of Education Strategic Planning Committee on options for the proposed changes. Staff also considered in developing this assessment strategy, the number of state and local tests given in MCPS and the amount of instructional time lost due to test preparation and administration. In March 2015, Board President Patricia B. O’Neill and Board Member Philip Kauffman, Policy Management Committee chair, sent a letter to me asking that the district consider changes to its testing program. Maryland State Superintendent Lillian M. Lowery also has asked all districts to review their testing programs and the General Assembly has created a task force to research the testing load on public school students across the state.

Based on the overall interest to review our K–12 assessment program, the following question was considered: How can we increase instructional time, alleviate the testing burden, and continue to gather data to help us recognize and respond to student, teacher, school, and district needs? Today’s discussion will focus on the significant work completed to date and offer the Board the opportunity to ask questions about our K–12 assessment plan.
Background

An effective instructional program that is focused on supporting the needs of all students and ensuring attention to closing the achievement gap makes proper use of three types of assessments. They are categorized as assessments AS learning, assessments FOR learning, and assessments OF learning. Assessments AS learning (student self-assessments) and assessments FOR learning (ongoing, informal quizzes) are most often tools developed by the classroom teacher and administered at frequent intervals. The purpose of these assessments is to provide feedback to both students and teachers about progress toward learning goals so that adjustments to teaching and learning may occur quickly in the classroom. Assessments OF learning (standardized assessments) are the tools used to provide information about overall student mastery and growth toward learning goals at the end of a unit or school year and may be externally developed, centrally developed, or developed by school teams. The determining factor for categorizing an assessment is how it is used, not its particular format. It should be noted that for public discussion, terms such as self-assessment, quizzes, and standardized assessment will be used to ensure clarity.

Schools administer all three assessment types throughout the school year. However, greater emphasis is placed on frequent, informal assessment as a tool for diagnosing a student’s immediate need.

“Assessment FOR learning turns the classroom assessment process and its results into an instructional intervention designed to increase, not merely monitor, student learning. Research evidence gathered in hundreds of studies conducted literally around the world over the past decade shows that the consistent application of principles of assessment FOR learning can give rise to unprecedented gains in student achievement, especially for perennial low achievers. The implications for such gains for achieving adequately yearly progress goals and closing achievement score gaps are profound.” Written by Rick Stiggins, Assessment Training Institute, in consultation with the team representing the United States at the ETS/Assessment Training Institute’s International Conference: Promoting Sound Assessment in Every Classroom, Portland OR, September 2005. Other team members included Sue Brookhart, Linda Darling-Hammond, Bob Nielsen, Frank Philip, Jim Popham, and Lorrie Shepard.

Assessments are an important tool used by teachers, principals, and central services staff in our joint work toward addressing equity for all students and closing the achievement gap. In addition, MCPS recognizes the importance of increasing instructional time for the teaching and learning needed for success on both state and local assessments as well as decreasing time spent on large scale assessments. The K–12 Assessment Plan aims to meet both of these goals, finding opportunities for increasing instructional time while also collecting important data for identifying school and district needs.
Elementary Assessments

Monitoring Instructional Reading Levels

Elementary schools administer all three assessment types throughout the school year. However, greater emphasis is placed on assessment FOR learning as a tool for diagnosing a student’s immediate need.

Monitoring reading levels has been a component of the elementary school curriculum for many years. However, due to a variety of curriculum changes and initiatives, many schools had not maintained this as a best practice in all grade levels. As a result of declining elementary school reading scores, focus groups were convened to identify best practices of schools. Results from the focus group study revealed the importance of regular and ongoing assessment of reading levels paired with a consistent monitoring and analysis of data. Schools that had a reading level monitoring process and data discussions reported stronger reading gains than schools that did not. To further study the impact of monitoring reading levels, 15 elementary schools piloted the Monitoring Instructional Reading Level (MIRL) process including professional learning around guided reading groups, capturing running records of student reading performance, and sharing monthly collection of reading data with central services staff. Results from MIRL demonstrated that student reading levels increased when schools took this approach of careful monitoring during small group reading instruction.

During fall 2015, all elementary schools will be expected to implement the monitoring plan. Summer professional learning to build understanding and facilitation of guided reading groups for Grades K–2 teachers will be held in July and August 2015. Grades 3–5 will implement the monitoring plan in the second marking period following professional learning during the fall.

Increasing Instructional Time

Feedback from elementary school principals and early elementary teachers indicated strong concern about the current assessment windows as well as the number of required assessments given throughout the school year. In response to these concerns, as well as concerns about the impact of lost instructional time due to lengthy assessments, MCPS is making several adjustments to administration of district-required assessments that will reduce the number of assessment items and the amount of time for administration in Grades K–2 (see the following table). In addition, when the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Diagnostic Assessments are made available to districts, we will examine their suitability as a possible replacement for current Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing. The PARCC Diagnostics are intended to provide immediate feedback to teachers that is more aligned to Common Core expectations.
Elementary Assessment Reductions for 2015–2016

- MCPS Assessment Program—Primary Reading (MCPS AP-PR)—DIBELS optional
- MCPS AP-PR—Written Component at levels 16, M, P only
- MAP-Primary (P)—Kindergarten administration in spring only

Secondary Assessments

Background to Discussions Regarding Final Examination Practices

In the context of national standards-based reform during the 1990s, the Montgomery County Board of Education approved Policy IFA, Curriculum, in 2001, to establish expectations for aligning curriculum, assessment, instruction, and professional learning in order to promote consistency within and among schools. The district immediately embarked on creating and distributing centrally developed semester final examinations in high school content areas assessed by the state High School Assessments (HSAs)—English, mathematics, science, and social studies. All high schools were required to use the centrally developed examinations. Soon after, computer science and foreign languages were added to the list of content areas with required examinations. As middle school students began taking high school courses, such as Algebra 1 and foreign languages, the state of Maryland updated the Code of Maryland Regulations to require students taking high school courses in middle school to be held to the same level of rigor on the same content as students taking those courses in high school.

During the past two years, concerns about the MCPS testing environment began to increase as a result of several factors including the administration of the PARCC assessments in spring 2015, analysis of Algebra 1 final examination failure rates, and scheduling and grading challenges associated with high school final examinations given in middle school. In response, a Math Exam Work Group and a Middle School Exam Schedule Work Group were formed to develop recommendations addressing the challenges specific to each. Recommendations from the two work groups formed the basis for the K–12 Assessment Plan that included options to address concerns regarding high school final examinations.

Development of the K–12 Assessment Plan

High School Final Examinations: District Interests, Challenges, and Questions

Beginning in April 2015, staff members in the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs (OCIP) solicited input from high school and middle school principals’ advisory groups, as well as staff members in the offices of School Support and Improvement (OSSI), Special Education and Student Services (OSESS); and the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) to examine district interests, givens, challenges, and questions regarding final examinations (Attachment A).
Interests identified by these groups included increasing time engaged in meaningful instruction, reducing the assessment load on students, monitoring student achievement of the curriculum, and aligning efforts with Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, and PARCC assessments.

Several challenges also were identified in developing and communicating an assessment plan. They include aligning changes with state regulations regarding high school courses taken in middle school, building awareness and understanding of any changes in the current model, envisioning a fair and manageable grading structure, and updating the electronic grade book to accommodate changes.

**Proposed Options**

After a review of the background and current state of final examinations, and after seeking input from stakeholders, staff members in OCIP developed the following options for consideration and feedback:

| OPTION A: Non-high school credit courses in middle school will have no two-hour cumulative exams. |
| Marking period/unit assessments during one or two class periods will be used instead. |

| OPTION B: No semester exams. |
| No centrally developed, cumulative assessments required in a two-hour block. |

| OPTION C: Keep cumulative exam, but administer during multiple class periods. |
| Centrally developed exams remain the same, but are divided into multiple class period sections. |

| OPTION D: Replace end of semester exams with assessments during the semester. |
| Mid-semester, marking period, common tasks, and/or portfolio assessments used to create an end of marking period grade or a final exam grade. |

**Feedback**

Throughout May and June 2015, OCIP staff members provided background information and solicited feedback from school and central services administrators, teachers, parents/guardians, community groups, and students primarily through convening focus groups. Attachment B provides a list of stakeholder groups and recurring themes in their feedback. A summary of the specific feedback collected from each group is provided in Attachment C. Overall, the feedback has been mixed. However, in general, stakeholders support increasing instructional time by limiting or eliminating final examinations and promoting consistency by administering centrally developed assessments during the semester.
Central services administrators and principals share the common interest in the district of taking time to prepare fully for any changes to final examination procedures. For example, if exams are eliminated, we need to take time to explore the implications for grading and reporting. These groups also emphasize that the district must avoid overextending our capacity to develop assessments; reach consensus on grading; modify grade collection and reporting technology programming; build understanding among administrators, teachers, parents/guardians, and students; and prepare school staff members for a smooth implementation.

**High School Final Examination Plan**

After thorough review of the history and current state of semester final examinations and assessments during the semester, and consideration of stakeholder feedback, I plan to move forward with implementation of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2015–2016 School Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle School Changes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>No two-hour exams for middle school courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>High school credit courses offered in middle school follow the high school model</td>
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<th>2016–2017 School Year</th>
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<td><strong>Middle School Changes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>High school credit courses offered in middle school follow the new high school model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAP testing eliminated (under consideration)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PARCC diagnostics implemented (under consideration)</td>
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</table>

Full implementation of this plan eliminates the high school exam week that consists of five half-days in which students are in school for up to two, two-hour exam blocks. Under this plan, teachers would regain a week of instruction previously used for administering final examinations. In addition, many teachers will regain multiple days spent reviewing course information in preparation for the semester final examinations. While end of marking period assessments may occur, they will be administered during the regular school day and will not require review of material from more than one marking period.
Monitoring of Assessment Data

Stakeholder groups expressed an interest to maintain the district’s ability to use data to identify school needs, monitor progress in addressing the achievement gap, and maintain standards-based, high expectations for all students. To this end, OCIP staff members have identified courses that will have existing or new centrally developed assessments provided during each marking period in middle school and high school during the 2016–2017 school year. These assessments will offer formative data to teachers for assessing student progress toward learning goals and making instructional decisions for supporting that progress. Assessment types under consideration include unit tests, essays, projects, portfolios, and document-based questions. The assessments also will offer data for central services staff who work collaboratively with schools to review current practices and develop plans for impacting student achievement.

Next Steps

As we move forward with implementing this K–12 Assessment Plan, there are many details still to be resolved including the need to:

- Identify necessary grading guidelines or potential changes to grading procedures
- Examine necessary changes to the electronic gradebook, EdLine, and Achievement Series
- Investigate impact on students with disabilities or students receiving English for Speakers of Other Languages services
- Develop and implement communication plan
- Identify training or professional development opportunities

In addition, this K–12 Assessment Plan will have an impact on related policies. We request that the Board Policy Management Committee begin a review of related district policies this summer. This process will need to be completed by December 2015 so that any changes in exam implementation may be communicated at the beginning of the second semester. As a part of the policy review, in collaboration with the Strategic Planning Committee, there will need to be a simultaneous review and recommendations related to the weight of marking period and semester grades.

The K–12 Assessment Plan is an integral part of the teaching and learning culture in MCPS. As such, it impacts our students, school-based staff, parents/guardians, and the work of many different offices including OCIP, OSSI, and OCTO. As we all work together to align our processes, expectations, and communication, we will continue to keep the Board informed of our progress and bring critical decision points to the Board for discussion, input, and action.

LAB:MVN:EJL:smw

Attachments
Considerations for Changes to Secondary Final Examinations

A. Interests
1. Reduce the assessment load on students.
2. Increase time engaged in meaningful instruction.
3. Promote effective, equitable teaching and learning.
4. Provide opportunities for students to apply and synthesize learning independently and within a specific timeframe.
5. Monitor student achievement of the curriculum.

B. Givens
1. PARCC assessments are administered in mathematics in Grades 3–8 and in Algebra 1 and Algebra 2.
2. PARCC assessments are administered in literacy in Grades 3–8 and Grade 10.
3. Science assessments are administered in Grades 5 and 8 and in high school biology until MSDE changes to align with Next Generation Science Standards.
4. Government HSA will continue.

C. Challenges

Communication
1. Building awareness and understanding of any changes in current model among administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

Scheduling
2. Scheduling in-class tasks around external assessment windows.
3. Scheduling in-class tasks in different content areas so that students do not complete multiple tasks on a given day.
4. Managing time for teachers to score in-class tasks.

Grading
5. Devising a fair and manageable grading structure.
6. Changing the electronic grade book to accommodate changes.
7. Providing professional development to teachers on scoring common in-class tasks.
8. Developing models for in-class tasks that teachers may give during the semester.

Aligning with State and Local Assessment Policy
9. Aligning changes with state regulations regarding high school courses taken in middle school.
10. Revising the MCPS assessment vision.

D. Questions
1. How will semester final examinations be changed in middle school?
   a. Courses that do not earn high school credit
   b. Courses that earn high school credit
   c. Full-year foreign languages 1A or 1B courses that earn high school credit
2. How will changes align with current procedures for final exams for seniors and in AP/IB courses?
3. What are the implications for Semester A exams/courses that may fall during the 2nd semester or for Semester B exams/courses that occur in the 1st semester?
4. What are the implications for summer school?
Groups Represented in the Feedback

- Middle School Principals
- High School Principals
- Middle School Students
- High School Students
- Members of Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations, Inc.
- Members of the African American Student Achievement Action Group
- Members of the Latino Student Achievement Action Group
- Members of Curriculum Advisory Assembly (school and central services administrators, teachers, students, parents/guardians)
- Members of Middle School Councils on Teaching and Learning
- Members of High School Councils on Teaching and Learning
- Math Exam Work Group
- Middle School Exam Schedule Work Group
- Office of School Support and Improvement, Middle and High School Level-Alike Teams
- Office of Special Education and Student Services
- Office of the Chief Technology Officer
- Executive Leadership Team
## District Assessment Strategy—Feedback on Changes Under Consideration for Semester Final Exam Procedures

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<td>Middle School Principals</td>
<td>-Strong option. -Reduces student stress. -Improves scheduling. -Allows UDL—training for teachers? -Need centrally developed assessments. No negative implications.</td>
<td>-Ends disruptive two-hour block. -Need centrally developed assessments to ensure consistency. -aligned with high school? Implications for grading and reporting.</td>
<td>-This is doable. -No more two-hour exam blocks, please! -Too time consuming and disjointed. -May not be manageable. -Need something to monitor for accountability.</td>
<td>-Excellent idea. -Helps with consistency across schools and courses. -This makes good assessment part of regular instruction. -Potential to affect instructional time. Who would develop assessments? When available to staff?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Principals</td>
<td>-If no final, students may lose interest in learning after PARCC, HSA, AP, IB. -Students who are failing 2nd MP after earning D in 1st MP may stop trying. How to prevent that? Keep two-hour block.</td>
<td>-Gain instructional time.</td>
<td>-Like this option so the whole week isn’t impacted. -We already assess during the semester. -Still a stress on students and teachers. Use formative summative language to help understanding. Need to eliminate final exam category.</td>
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<td>Middle School Councils on Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>-Lessens test stress on students. -No need for huge final exam. -Ends disruptive exam schedule.</td>
<td>-Lessens test stress on students. No need for huge final exam. -How are you holding students accountable? -How to ensure equity and consistency?</td>
<td>-Too much time in testing. -Would be difficult to schedule. -How to provide accommodations?</td>
<td>-Love idea of getting rid of exam. Not developmentally appropriate. Better ways to grasp what a student knows than through a cumulative exam. -Like this option.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Councils on Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>-Concern about grading. -Students have no recourse if they fail.</td>
<td>-Helps with placement. -Does not decrease test load. -Not in favor. -How will this gain more instructional time?</td>
<td>-Balances stress load and holding teachers/students accountable. -Opens possibility for critical thinking. Can assessments be modified? How does reteach/reassess apply? Don’t make quarter assessment grades cumulative over semester. Grading will need clarification.</td>
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Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs
Montgomery County Public Schools

Feedback Collected during May and June 2015
# District Assessment Strategy—Feedback on Changes Under Consideration for Semester Final Exam Procedures

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<td>MCCPTA Members Focus Groups</td>
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### MCCPTA Members Focus Groups

- Lessens stress.
- Two-hour exam puts too much pressure on MS students.
- Opens up more time for end of year projects.
- Less testing, more teaching.
- These exams are pointless anyway.
- If students will take two-hour exams in HS, they should take two-hour exams in MS.
- Unit assessments determine student performance in a timely manner.
- Not realistic to expect students to cover entire year’s content in one test.
- Need centrally developed assessments to measure instructional achievement throughout MCPS.
- Need consistent/standard expectations.
- If colleges use two-hour exams, students need to be used to it.
- Not realistic Keep mid-terms and eliminate finals.
- Like the idea of keeping students in school—too much time off because of assessments.
- Shouldn’t have these tests at all.
- Weight of 25 percent of the grade is too much.
- Takes up too much instructional time.
- Will be prone to cheating.
- Too many tests on one day.
- Scheduling nightmare.
- Hard for students to prepare for.
- Hard to administer?
- Undermines good student work quarterly; one test carries too much weight.
- More instructional time.
- Could have more meaningful projects and portfolios.
- Teachers can identify gaps earlier in semester and help student immediately.
- Quicker feedback for students on how they are doing.
- Like multiple assessments spread across the semester.
- More time for students to review their assessments.
- This is better assessment of learning than a two-hour cumulative exam. Do this for Grades 9 and 10; use final projects or exams for Grades 11 and 12; need to prepare them for college experience.
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<td>Parents on Curriculum Advisory Assembly</td>
<td>No exams in non-high school credit courses; marking period/unit assessments over 1–2 class periods instead. (Anticipated timeline 2015–2016)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students on Curriculum Advisory Assembly</td>
<td>No issues with this option.</td>
<td>Exams collect valuable data.</td>
<td>Concerns about scheduling. Logistics can be challenging.</td>
<td>Issues about consistency. Should have a comprehensive, synthesized component.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Administrators on Curriculum Advisory Assembly</td>
<td>Great for middle school because they change schedule for just a few courses.</td>
<td>No support. Students may not care if they aren’t assessed. Need to know material is covered.</td>
<td>Not for high school.</td>
<td>Like this option.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Office Administrators on Curriculum Advisory Assembly</td>
<td>Lacks countywide monitoring.</td>
<td>Like variation of eliminating exams for externally assessed courses.</td>
<td>Maintains countywide accountability. Incorporates UDL Requires training on building learning over time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Members of Curriculum Advisory Assembly</td>
<td>No issues with this option. Great for middle school.</td>
<td>No support. County can’t make sure teachers cover material or measure students’ retention of material over time. MCPS developed exams are good check-ups.</td>
<td>Teachers lose class time. Students have more chances to cheat or cram information. Scheduling needs to be looked at.</td>
<td>Prefer this option. Keeps integrity of HS courses. Emphasizes short term memory; does not prepare for college. Requires grading consistency.</td>
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### High School Students
- Make exams optional for students who need them to improve a grade. (Most frequent comment)
- Provide projects rather than exams to better assess student learning. (Next most frequent comment)
- Spreading exams over several days increases stress on students.
- Semester exams allow students to progress in their learning over time; no penalty for not getting it right away.
- Clarify why change is needed; current system is fine.

### Middle School Students
- [Overall responses were mixed for all options with equal numbers supporting and not supporting. The exception was Option C, which had no support.]
- Eliminating exams would reduce stress.
- Exams are needed to prepare for high school and for college; exams can help boost a grade when needed.
- Spreading exams over several days increases stress on students and amount of studying and review needed.
- Current system is fine.
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<td>No exams in non-high school credit courses; marking period/unit assessments over 1–2 class periods instead. (Anticipated timeline 2015–2016)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher and Administrator Written Feedback</td>
<td>-Support reducing the testing load.</td>
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<td>-Will not provide additional time for instruction and will make the overall timeframe for exams longer.</td>
<td>-Increased instructional time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-More time for instruction and to reteach students as needed.</td>
<td>-Students taking duplicative assessments with a state test and a final exam so exams could be eliminated in state tested courses.</td>
<td>-Exams given over several days could have a negative impact on students.</td>
<td>-Offers opportunities for different kinds of assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Shorter and more frequent assessments may provide benefits to students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Interest in consistent measures of student performance across schools.</td>
</tr>
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<td>-Increase in instructional time.</td>
<td>-Exams should be eliminated in state assessed areas.</td>
<td>-Will provide more time for students to take exams and may reduce the stress.</td>
<td>-Increases instructional time</td>
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<td>-Exams should be eliminated in state assessed areas.</td>
<td>-If a student is taking a high school credit course in middle school, they should take the same exam as the high school students.</td>
<td>-Breaking up tests over multiple days is not a good idea.</td>
<td>and reduces disruptions to the schedule.</td>
</tr>
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<td>-If a student is taking a high school credit course in middle school, they should take the same exam as the high school students.</td>
<td>-Keep exams in the first semester, but eliminate exams in externally assessed areas for second semester.</td>
<td>-More days for administration will be required.</td>
<td>-Provides opportunities for more meaningful assessments.</td>
</tr>
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<td>-Don’t change the current model.</td>
<td>-Exams will be given but time for grading will go away.</td>
<td>-Exams will be given but time for grading will go away.</td>
<td>-Shorter and varied assessments throughout the year will more accurately measure student learning.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>-Exams prepare students for college-level work and expectations.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Taking away exams will have a negative impact. Students need to be able to recall information from throughout the semester and demonstrate mastery of information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## District Assessment Strategy—Feedback on Changes Under Consideration for Semester Final Exam Procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Represented</th>
<th>Option A</th>
<th>Option B</th>
<th>Option C</th>
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<td>Having no 2-hour block of assessments aligns with interests of the work group.</td>
<td>Splitting exams over several class periods creates challenges for accommodations, logistics related to distribution of exams, and maintaining security over multiple days. May increase test stress for students. Does not increase instructional time.</td>
<td>If administering exams in high school credit-bearing courses taken in middle school and which are not externally assessed (World Languages and Geometry) is determined to be a necessary interim step for one year, then it is preferred they be administered in a two-hour block rather than splitting exams across several class periods.</td>
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<td>Office of School Support and Improvement</td>
<td>Eliminating two-hour exams will be good for students with disabilities.</td>
<td>Shorter, more frequent assessments in varied formats allow students to demonstrate their learning.</td>
<td>Having assessments during the marking periods promotes consistency and provides an opportunity for accommodations, modifications, and Universal Design.</td>
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**Middle School Exam Schedule Workgroup**

- Having no 2-hour block of assessments aligns with interests of the work group.
- Splitting exams over several class periods creates challenges for accommodations, logistics related to distribution of exams, and maintaining security over multiple days. May increase test stress for students. Does not increase instructional time.
- If administering exams in high school credit-bearing courses taken in middle school and which are not externally assessed (World Languages and Geometry) is determined to be a necessary interim step for one year, then it is preferred they be administered in a two-hour block rather than splitting exams across several class periods.

**Office of Special Education and Student Services**

- Eliminating two-hour exams will be good for students with disabilities.
- Shorter, more frequent assessments in varied formats allow students to demonstrate their learning.
- Having assessments during the marking periods promotes consistency and provides an opportunity for accommodations, modifications, and Universal Design.

**Office of School Support and Improvement**

- Decisions should promote effective and equitable teaching and learning.
- Changes should align with a renewed focus on the instructional core (student, content, teacher) and an instructional cycle that relies on teachers planning and adjusting instruction based on assessments before, during, and after instruction.
- Providing some centrally developed assessments is preferable.
- District leaders should be prepared for an energetic discussion in schools and the community when grading and reporting procedures, regulation, or policy are reopened for revision.
## District Assessment Strategy—Feedback on Changes Under Consideration for Semester Final Exam Procedures

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### Office of the Chief Technology Officer
Varying degrees of effort and time will be needed to modify Achievement Series, the electronic grade book, OASIS, and EdLine to support possible changes when consensus is reached on items such as the following:
- Collecting data on assessments during the semester.
- Reporting exemptions from final exams in specific courses or eliminating all final exams.
- Managing grade reporting in a semester with two marking period grades and no semester final exam grade.
  - Change trend to higher of two grades when average is 3.5, 2.5, 1.5, or .5.
  - Change from 4-point scale to percentage scale to determine semester average.

### Executive Leadership Team
Timing and messaging is critical; needs to be tied to overall assessment philosophy/approach/purpose for why this change is needed.

Role of formative assessments in providing data for instructional changes and decisions can’t be lost. Not a dichotomy between instruction and assessment—one is not at the expense of the other.

Variability across schools could be an issue if some consistency is not maintained in assessment and grading practices.

More instructional time is an important goal to pursue.

Changes to grading policies and practices will need to be carefully navigated and communicated. This is a big issue and will generate community response.
A. PURPOSE

The Montgomery County Board of Education is committed to maintaining rigorous performance and achievement standards for all students and to providing a fair process for evaluating and reporting student progress that is understandable to students and their parents/guardians and relevant for instructional purposes.

B. ISSUE

Grades are an essential way to communicate student progress. As such, grading and reporting practices must include the following:

1. Meaningful feedback on student achievement to students, parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, and the
school system. This feedback, which should provide relevant information for instructional purposes.

2. Alignment with the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) curriculum.

3. Consistency within and among schools to reduce performance variability and promote accountability.

4. Accurate reflection of student achievement compared to grade level or course expectations outlined in the curriculum as demonstrated on assessments and teacher designed tasks.

5. Fair representation of a student’s performance on a variety of measures including those that are centrally developed, over time.

6. Clear and timely communication to parents/guardians and students as to the grading criteria and the components.

7. Commitment to school attendance as an essential component of a quality learning experience.

8. Summative assessments, which may include marking period assessments—final exams, end of unit tests, and cumulative projects, performance-based assessments, and other similar as reflections—demonstrations of a
student’s mastery of grade level or course material

9. Opportunity for students to demonstrate a mastery of grade level or course expectations outlined in the curriculum through a variety of methods

10. Regular and frequent information to all students and parents/guardians about the student’s progress

11. Consistently high expectations of all students across all courses and programs

C. POSITION

1. In All Schools

a) Teachers will use MCPS curriculum framework and instructional guides to develop mastery objectives and a variety of tasks, including assessments, to determine student achievement of those objectives.

b) Students and parents/guardians will be informed at the beginning of a course or marking period of the expectations outlined in the curriculum of each course or unit and of the basis upon which students' performance will be evaluated.

c) Students and parents/guardians will be informed about progress throughout the grading period, and
teachers are strongly encouraged to provide such information at frequent regular intervals. Progress will be reported formally at least every nine weeks.

d) Teachers will maintain accurate and precise records that support informally and formally reported achievement.

e) Student progress will be evaluated and reported in terms of the his/her performance on multiple and varied assessment measures corresponding with grade level and course expectations outlined in the curriculum or as designated in a special education alternative curriculum.

2. Elementary School

Formal reporting will accurately reflect student achievement compared to grade level expectations as outlined in the curriculum.

3. Middle School

Formal reporting, indicated by letter grade, will report student achievement on course expectations as outlined in the curriculum.
4. High Schools

a) Formal reporting, indicated by letter grade, will report student achievement on course expectations outlined in the curriculum.

b) Final exams afford students the opportunity to demonstrate a synthesized, integrated understanding of course material, that shall be incorporated into and therefore carry significant weight in the final his/her grade.

c) Active participation in the teaching and learning process and the intellectual exchange that occurs in the classroom make attendance an essential component of a quality educational experience. Regular attendance and engagement are required in order to demonstrate mastery of material and receive credit for the course.

D. DESIRED OUTCOMES

Grading and reporting practices will be fair and meaningful and support rigorous performance and achievement standards for all students. Grades will have consistent meaning throughout the school system and be based on grade level and course expectations as outlined in the curriculum.
E. REVIEW AND REPORTING

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Board of Education policy review process.

## Board of Education/Staff Policy IKA and High School Final Exam Review Draft Timeline

As a result of potential changes in policy and the proposed elimination of final exams, it is necessary to determine how marking period and semester grades are calculated. Montgomery County Public Schools staff members are developing options to determine marking period and semester grades. During the months of September and October, input and feedback from stakeholders will be solicited and utilized to make a final recommendation. The final recommendation will be shared with the Board of Education when Policy IKA is scheduled for final approval on November 10, 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>July</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Board of Education Meeting</td>
<td>Assessment Plan and Board action to send Policy IKA to the Policy Committee for review and action.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Board Policy Management Committee Meeting</td>
<td>Policy IKA language updated. Committee recommendation for tentative action by the full Board.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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### August

| 1 - 31 | Benchmarking and Research Review | Staff conducts a review and benchmarks with school districts on exam and grading practices. | In Progress |
| 27    | Board Policy Management Committee Meeting | Review and provide input on Board/staff work related to Policy IKA and final exam review timeline. | |

### September

| 1 - 9  | Development of Marking Period and Semester Grading and Reporting Options | Staff will utilize benchmarking and feedback to develop semester grading and reporting options. | |
| 8     | Board of Education Meeting | Tentative action on Policy IKA. | |
| 8     | Policy IKA Comment Period Opens | Initial communication to stakeholders soliciting feedback on Policy IKA. | |
| 9     | High School Principals’ Professional Learning Community | Input and feedback gathered on marking period and semester grading and reporting options. | |
| 16    | Curriculum Advisory Assembly | Input and feedback on marking period and semester grading and reporting options. | |
| 17    | MCEA Councils on Teaching and Learning | Input and feedback on marking period and semester grading and reporting options. | |
| 18 - 30 | Focus/Feedback Groups | School and community feedback focus groups on marking period and semester grading and reporting options. | |
| 22    | Board Strategic Planning Committee Meeting | Input and feedback on marking period and semester grading and reporting options. | |
| 29    | Board Policy Management Committee Meeting | Update on feedback received on Policy IKA. Input and feedback on marking period and semester grading and reporting options. | |
| 30    | Middle School Principals’ Professional Learning Community | Input and feedback on marking period and semester grading and reporting options. | |

### October

| 1 - 15 | Focus/Feedback Groups | School and community feedback focus groups on marking period and semester grading and reporting options. | |
| 19     | Policy IKA Comment Period Closes | Public comment period closes. | |
| 28     | Board Policy Management Committee Meeting | To Be Scheduled—Review and discuss public comment on Policy IKA. | |

### November

| 10 | Board of Education Meeting | Final action on Policy IKA. | |

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*Communication to Stakeholders on Final Decisions*

August 27, 2015