Montgomery County Schools

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TO: Board of Education

FROM: Dale Ellis

DATE: August 5, 2013

SUBJ: INFORMATION ITEM (NC Testing Proposal)

Attached is a testing proposal developed by a group of Superintendents led by Dr. Frank Till of Cumberland County and Dr. Heath Morrison of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, along with their accountability staffs. This information is currently being shared with DPI. The Superintendent's group as a whole has expressed concerns with DPI regarding the amount of testing we are currently required to complete.

If you will recall, this was a concern that was raised in the Spring Community Area Advisory meeting by several parents. It is a concern that has been raised by our staff members and is a continued drain on staff morale. While I was not specifically involved in the drafting of this document, I wanted the entire community to know my thoughts and feeling on accountability. It is a good thing but, combined with local testing that is necessary to know how our children are doing along the way, our state tests entirely too much. I am in full support of the reductions in testing outlined in the attached draft proposal.

I am available to answer any questions you might have.

Proposal for Testing in North Carolina

This past school year (2012-13), Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in North Carolina administered over 190 state or national exams. The purposes of these exams ranged from assessing student learning to evaluating educator effectiveness. We embrace being accountable for student outcomes, but our state's introduction of Common Exams as a measure of student learning has brought us to the point of too much testing. This focus on assessment has become a distraction from teaching and learning, presenting a hindrance to our charge to prepare every child, every day to be college and career ready. Overall, we have two primary concerns with our state's implementation of Common Exams:

Inadequate (Validity) Field Testing

The twenty-two (22) Common Exams administered this school year were informed by teachers throughout the state over several months. This was an essential element of test production that should be acknowledged. Additional validity testing or field testing was required before these assessments were administered for the high stakes purpose of evaluating educator effectiveness. Concerns about the length of the assessment and the number of constructed response items surfaced in the fall. In the spring, concerns about the focus and content of questions were raised. Such issues need to be resolved before the results of assessments are used to evaluate a teacher's impact on student learning.

Drain on Teacher Morale and Time

As our nation moves toward full implementation of the Common Core, our students are being asked to exhibit what they know and can do in more complex ways. That in turn requires us to design or adopt assessments that provide students with more authentic ways to show what they know. The inclusion of constructed response items provides such an opportunity. However, this shift in our assessments requires a commensurate shift in how we score and administer assessments. Our state's approach to administering Common Exams has been to put the responsibility for making that latter shift squarely on LEAs, specifically teachers. Without the additional fiscal or programmatic support needed to score these new constructed response items, LEAs had to press teachers into action to score students' exams. This scoring process, which LEAs were given the "flexibility" to design, required teachers in some large schools to dedicate over 20 hours each to appropriately score constructed response items. This took away from time usually reserved for lesson planning, work in professional learning communities, and grading other teacher developed assignments. The fact that this had to be

done with no additional compensation negatively impacted teacher morale as teachers were asked to score tests they saw as flawed, to determine their own effectiveness.

We propose a three-fold solution to provide increased accountability and greater insight to teacher effectiveness, while requiring fewer assessments. They are as follows:

1. Treat the 2012-13 School Year as a Pilot Year

The aforementioned challenges implementing Common Exams this past year, as well as others, creates a shaky foundation upon which to build our state's educator effectiveness work. However, these shortcomings become an occasion for learning and improvement if leveraged well. Instead of charging forward despite our missteps, we propose that the 2012-13 school year be treated like a pilot year. This allows us to learn from last year's implementation, make improvements, and launch this initiative with the benefit of those lessons in the 2013-14 school year. This would not compromise the initiative, but improve it.

2. Adopt a New Option for Determining Educator Effectiveness

Based on data from 2010-11, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) estimates that End-of-Grade (EOG) and End-of-Course (EOC) assessments cover approximately 40 percent of North Carolina's teacher workforce. Common Exams, as a measure of student learning, are intended to cover the remaining 60 percent of teachers. In our state's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility request, North Carolina proposed three options to determine a teacher's effectiveness. Each option placed a weight on individual teacher impact and school-wide impact. We do not believe that every student needs to be tested in every subject in order to determine student growth and teacher effectiveness. For teachers in non-tested areas, we propose that teacher effectiveness be determined by overall school impact, as long as that impact is positive. If the overall school impact is negative, then teachers in non-tested areas should be evaluated based on standards 1-5, without consideration of student growth. Our proposed approach, though lacking the granularity of our current direction, can incent collective ownership for student results and school-wide collaboration, tenets seen in effective schools. We support the inclusion of student growth in teachers' evaluations**,** but we need another option. We're willing and interested in working to craft and implement such an alternative.

3. Focus on the Core Areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies, through Grade 10, if Common Exams Must Be Administered

North Carolina is currently on the path of assessing students in every grade in every subject to determine educator effectiveness. We support the Common Core and increased rigor, and

desire a testing program that aligns with the Common Core. The expansion of our current testing program lacks that alignment. Nonetheless, if we must move forward with our expansion, we propose that the administration of Common Exams target the areas of English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies through the 10th grade, with a reduced testing program in the middle grades. This scaled back expansion will increase our ability to determine student growth and teacher effectiveness while curtailing the number of tests administered. This slow-down of our expansion allows us to move prudently ahead during this time when our testing program is evolving. However, if the administration of Common Exams in subjects and grades currently identified must continue, we propose that Common Exams be composed of only multiple choice items.

We offer these recommendations as the beginning of a larger dialogue on the reform of public education, which testing and accountability play prominent roles. Our aim is to prepare students equipped with 21st century skills to enter college or the workplace, and lead our communities. We seek modifications to our testing program to foster this focus on student learning and achievement.

Proposal for Testing In North Carolina

Grade Level	ELA/Reading Assessment	Math Assessment	Science Assessment	Social Studies/History Assessment	CTE Assessments	Additional Assessments	Locally Designed or Administered Assessments
3rd	EOG	EOG	None	None		BOG of 3 ELA	ClassScape/MAP
4th	EOG	EOG	Science MSL	None			ClassScape/MAP
5th	EOG	EOG	EOG	None			ClassScape/MAP
6th	EOG	EOG	None	None			ClassScape/MAP
7th	EOG	EOG	Science MSL	None	Eliminate Local Assessments		ClassScape/MAP
8th	EOG	EOG	EOG	None	Eliminate Local Assessments	EXPLORE	ClassScape/MAP
9th	English I MSL/Common Exam	Algebra 1/Math 1 EOC	* Physical Science MSL	Civics Final Exam or MSL/Common Exam	Agriscience Applications Biomedical Technology Career Management Core & Sustainable Construction * Fashion Merchandising Health Team Relations MS Excel & Access * MS Word, Power Point & Publisher * Multimedia & Webpage Design Personal Finance Principles of Business & Finance Public Safety I Tech Engineering & Design		ClassScape
10th	English II EOC	Algebra 2/ Math 2 or 3 MSL	Biology EOC	American History I Final Exam or MSL/Common Exam	Accounting I Animal Science I AOF Business Economics AOF Financial Services Apparel I Automotive Service Cabinetmaking I	PLAN PSAT	ClassScape

					Carpentry I * Drafting I Firefighter Tech I * Foods I Health Science I Horticulture I Interior Design I Intro to Culinary Arts & Hospitality Marketing Parenting & Child Development Principles of Tech I Scientific & Tech Visualization I Sports & Entertainment Market I		
11th	English III Final Exam	Math 3 or Math 4 Final Exam	*Chemistry Final Exam	American History II Final Exam	Accounting II Animal Science II - Small Animal Apparel II – Enterprise Automotive Brakes * Automotive Electrical Business Management Cabinetmaking II Carpentry II * Culinary Arts & Hospitality I Drafting II – Architectural Drafting II - Engineering Early Child Ed I Entrepreneurship I Firefighter II * Firefighter III * Foods II – Enterprise Health Science II Horticulture II Horticulture II Landscaping Hospitality & Tourism Interior Design II Marketing Management	ACT	ClassScape

					Principles of Tech II Scientific & Tech Visualization II Sports & Entertainment Market II Strategic Marketing		
12th	English IV Final Exam	Final Exam	Final Exam	Final Exam	AOF Business in a Global Economy AOF Applied Finance Auto Computer System Diagnostics Automotive Electrical Advanced * Business Law Carpentry III Culinary Arts & Hospitality II Early Child Ed II Entrepreneurship II Nursing Fundamentals	WorkKeys	

***Indicated science course or one most appropriate for the LEA's science course trajectory.**

We would like to eliminate the following MSLs/Common Exams in elementary and middle school grades: Grade 4 Social Studies, Grade 5 Social Studies, Grade 6 Science, Grade 6 Social Studies, Grade 7 Social Studies, and Grade 8 Social Studies.

We would like to eliminate the following MSLs/Common Exams in high schools: English III, English IV, Geometry, Advanced Functions and Modeling, Pre-Calculus, Chemistry, Earth/Environmental Science, Physics, World History, OCS English III, OCS English IV, OCS Financial Management, OCS Introductory Math, OCS Applied Science, 21st Century Global Geography, Sociology, American Humanities, 21st Century Civil Liberties and Rights, Discrete Math, Psychology, World Humanities, The Cold War, and Turning Points in American History.

We ask that schools not be required to administer an operational End-of-Grade or End-of-Course assessment and a field test in the same subject during any year.

Approved industry recognized credential assessments may be used for technical attainment in lieu of CTE post assessments. CTE post assessments are required for federal accountability per the Carl D. Perkins CTE Improvement Act of 2006.