



## **Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents**

### ***Position Paper- Executive Summary***

#### ***Conditions and Considerations for a New Generation of Student Assessment in Massachusetts***

##### **Introduction**

- As district leaders we respect the value and the complexity of a statewide assessment and we are less concerned with which state system is used and more concerned that a new system meets the criteria that we define within this position paper.
- We strongly suggest that the implementation process be regarded as ongoing in nature with frequent opportunities for feedback from the field regarding the success of our efforts.

##### **Purpose**

- A high quality assessment measures student achievement first and foremost to inform instruction in order to improve learning. The next generation of assessment should increase emphasis on the development of higher order thinking skills that allow students to transfer knowledge to new situations and problems and should ensure that developing these skills is a core expectation for all students. Accountability is a secondary purpose.
- The primacy of instructional improvement should influence critical decisions regarding frequency and timing, school based implementation, and state-wide roll out.

##### **Characteristics**

- A high quality assessment system must be valid, reliable and fair.
- It must assess higher-order cognitive skill and critical abilities, must be aligned to internationally benchmarked standards, and must use items that are both instructionally sensitive and educationally valuable.

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### Frequency and Timing

- Any new assessment system should consume enough time to sufficiently diagnose gaps in students' understanding and achievement but only that much time in order to minimize the interruption to instruction.
- M.A.S.S. recommends that the Board make every effort to minimize the amount of time and frequency of the statewide assessment system. The argument to do so has been made more compelling by the substantial investments many districts have made in developing meaningful common assessments as part of the educator evaluation system.
- Statewide assessment should occur after learning takes place and results should be available in time to impact student placement decisions and future instruction.

### Necessary Conditions

- For the next generation of assessments to authentically measure students' learning and skills outlined by the Massachusetts State Frameworks, certain key conditions must be in place.
- Teachers must have a reasonable amount of time to make curricular and instructional shifts to the new Massachusetts State Frameworks
- Appropriate accommodations such as extended time must be identified to support equitable access for all students including those with special needs and English Language Learners.
- Classroom technology including hardware, technology infrastructure, support personnel and professional development must be in place and equally distributed to enable students to be familiar with the use of technology to promote, and be assessed on, higher order thinking skills.

### Logistics and Roll Out

- Realistically if the new assessment is to fully realize the purpose of assessment and the characteristics of high quality assessment as outlined in this paper, then we must provide an initial pilot period to meet the challenges that are inherent in any new assessment system.
- We would recommend that these results be characterized by the DESE as provisional, and not be used to calculate the district accountability rating until the initial implementation issues have been resolved.