



A Position Statement of Massachusetts ASCD

Contact: Peter Badalament, Massachusetts Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Chairman of Influence and Advocacy, (508) 966-3761

www.mascd.org

Multiple Types of Assessments are Needed to Measure Student Growth *Commentary on Proposed Amendments to Regulations on the Competency Determination– 603 CMR 30.00*

The purpose of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is to improve the standards for teaching and learning in Massachusetts schools. As originally conceived under the Massachusetts Education Reform Law, the MCAS tests are designed as part of a rigorous evaluation of student, school, and district performance and accountability. The proposed changes to the regulations will dramatically alter the assessment landscape for students, as members of the Class of 2012 will need to demonstrate proficiency in English Language Arts and in Mathematics, pass a discipline-specific Science exam and pass a History or Social Science exam in order to graduate from high school. **MASCD does not support the use of the MCAS tests, or any series of single assessment devices, as the final arbiter of student performance and high school graduation.**

MASCD's mission is to improve the quality of education in Massachusetts. Over the years, MASCD has consistently made efforts to provide quality support to instructional and curriculum leaders through its programs, products, and services. MASCD strives to provide educators with the tools to create learning environments that challenge all students to achieve at high levels. MASCD has supported professional development opportunities related to curriculum, literacy, technology, and teacher quality.

MASCD believes that educators and local school districts are well equipped to determine a student's eligibility for graduation if there are rigorous and measurable standards for student performance and achievement. As a single measure, the MCAS test is an insufficient indicator of a student's total performance. MASCD recognizes that children learn in different ways and at varying rates. We support assessments and accountability based on valid and reliable information from multiple data sources. When done properly, measuring student learning is an essential tool in educating children. The use of multiple and formative assessments provides appropriate evidence of student learning to ensure accountability to students and the district community. The data from these assessments can be used to help modify instructional practice to better meet students individual leaning needs.

We call upon the Massachusetts Board of Education to allow the use of multiple types of assessments for evaluating student growth and performance. Creating a more sophisticated assessment system is crucial to improving the education of all children. Such a system will ensure not only that important accountability decisions are based on the best possible data, but also that data can be used by educators to determine which students are struggling, what strategies are working to help those children, and how they should adjust their instruction to ensure that each child succeeds.

MASCD also calls for flexibility that will allow additional assessment data to be incorporated at the school level, including portfolio assessment and other authentic assessment data. As the directors of the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing have said, “A single test cannot address all that is important for students to know and be able to do. Multiple measures are needed to address the full depth and breadth of our expectations for student learning. Beyond multiple choice and short-answer items that are typical of current assessments, “other types of performance measures – essays, applied projects, portfolios, demonstrations, oral presentations, etc. – are needed to represent and guide students’ progress” (Herman, Baker & Linn, 2004).

MASCD believes that the measure of student performance and achievement is best accomplished through the use of multiple indicators. When viewed with grades, performances, exhibitions, conferences, and other assessments, the MCAS test provides useful information about a student’s academic performance. Reliance on the MCAS tests as singular measures of student performance and, ultimately, the sole determinant of graduation from high school, creates a high stakes environment that inhibits quality education. MASCD advocates the following:

- Continue to support high quality professional development linked to standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Implement a system of multiple indicators of high quality teaching and learning that uses several sources of school-level assessments
- Allow local school districts to establish rigorous standards for high school graduation and hold local school districts accountable for student performance and achievement
- Provide educators with the tools and resources with which to ensure a high quality learning environment for all students in all schools

September 25, 2006