

For immediate release:
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State Releases Second Year of PARCC Results for City Schools

(Baltimore, MD) – Baltimore City Public Schools’ results from the spring 2016 administration of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) tests, released today by the Maryland State Department of Education, show mixed progress.

The PARCC tests, first given in Maryland in 2015, measure whether students are on track for success as they progress toward high school graduation and postsecondary options. In 2016, students in grades 3 to 8 took PARCC in English language arts/literacy and mathematics, and high school students took PARCC in English 10, English 11, Algebra I, and Algebra II. The tests are scored on a 5-point scale, with 4 indicating “meets expectations” and 5 indicating “exceeds expectations.”

Mathematics

In mathematics, City Schools’ PARCC results show modest gains, with the exception of 6th grade and Algebra II.

“We are seeing movement in the right direction in math, but we are nowhere close to where we need to be,” said Chief Executive Officer Sonja Brookins Santelises.

“Annual gains of one or two percentage points are not enough for us to move our students to levels of true readiness for college and careers.”

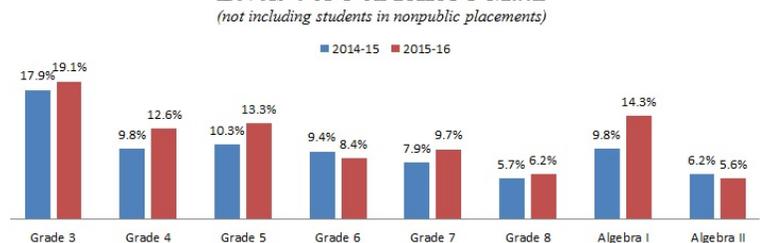
Students across Maryland as a whole outperformed their peers in Baltimore at all grade levels. The state also gained more ground year over year than did City Schools, except in 8th grade and Algebra I. For example, 44% of 3rd-grade students statewide met or exceeded expectations in 2016, a gain of 7.6 points over 2015; for City Schools, 19.1% of students scored a 4 or 5, a gain of 1.2 points.

“We have hard work ahead, but the overall upward trend gives us valuable information and some positive momentum to build on,” said Chief Academic Officer Sean Conley. “I was particularly pleased to see the results in Algebra I, where our students’ growth matched that of students across the state. That tells us that we need to continue our focus on middle grades math and work harder to make sure our younger students are prepared for algebra.” In 2016, 14.3% of City Schools’ Algebra I test takers scored a 4 or 5, a 4.5-point gain from 2015. Across Maryland, the percentage increased by 4.3 points, to 35.6%.

English language arts/literacy

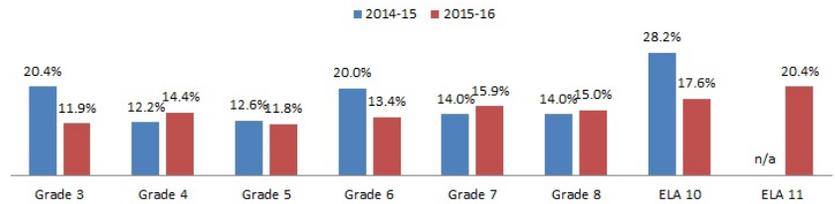
In English language arts, results for students in grades 4, 7, and 8 improved from 2015 to 2016, while declines were seen in grades 3, 5, and 6 and in English 10. (English 11 was given for the first time in 2016.) As in math, City Schools students trailed their peers statewide.

Percentage of City Schools Students Scoring at Levels 4 or 5 on PARCC Math
(not including students in nonpublic placements)



“These declining or relatively stagnant levels of achievement in English language arts are particularly troubling to me,” said Dr. Santelises. “The new standards emphasize reading for meaning and writing for a variety of purposes, but we are not giving large numbers of our students the skills needed to master increasingly complex texts of different kinds. These results show that systemic changes are needed in the way we teach literacy and language arts, beginning in the earliest grades. We must also continue to emphasize high-quality teaching and learning in science, social studies, and the arts beginning in the early elementary years, because proficiency on PARCC is tied to students’ knowledge and understanding across subject areas. Schools are asking for direction and specific supports, and we hear them loud and clear.”

Percentage of City Schools Students Scoring at Levels 4 or 5 on PARCC English Language Arts
(not including students in nonpublic placements)



Declines for City Schools students were significant in grades 3 and 6 and in English 10. In 2015, students at these levels took PARCC on paper; in 2016, all students at all grade levels took both English language arts and math tests on computer. Maryland and other states have noted this negative impact of test administration “mode” on students’ test results. “Like the state, we are examining the effect of online testing on measures of student achievement,” said Mr. Conley. “Lack of strong infrastructure to support technology use at some of our schools creates barriers for students. We are working on ways to incorporate technology more effectively in classrooms and to provide additional training for teachers on using technology for instruction.” City Schools has developed a project-based technology curriculum for pre-k to grade 9 that is being piloted in selected schools this school year. As students use technology to conduct research and solve problems, they also improve skills such as keyboarding.

Moving forward in 2017

“We know from a recent in-depth review that our curricula in both math and English language arts are sound,” said Mr. Conley. “Now our focus needs to be on building expertise with curriculum and providing ongoing professional learning and support on how to implement it well and consistently.”

“The PARCC data confirm what I’ve seen in classrooms,” said Dr. Santelises. “While understanding of the new Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards has grown, school leaders and teachers are telling me that the district needs to provide more high-quality support around best practices in instruction that aligns to those standards. We will be working this year to give our teachers the knowledge and tools they need to accelerate our students’ progress.”

In the current school year, PARCC tests will be given between April 18 and June 5. Results on the Algebra I and English 10 PARCC tests will be used toward meeting graduation requirements for students who take these courses in 2016-17.

“It will take time for all of us to learn how to teach to the new standards, but it is important that we continue to work hard to help students meet and understand them,” said Dr. Santelises. “If we have high expectations for our students, they will continue to have high expectations for themselves. That’s what PARCC is about—providing information and tools to support students as they reach for successful futures.”