MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Rockville, Maryland

March 24, 2015

MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Larry A. Bowers, Interim Superintendent of Schools

From: Patricia B. O’Neill, President
Philip Kauffman, Chair, Policy Management Committee

Subject: Final Examination Exemptions

At the March 3, 2015, Policy Management Committee meeting, we added to our annual work plan a review of Policy IKA, Grading and Reporting. Policy IKA was last revised in March 2003, and is due for review by the Board. As part of this review, we are planning to consider the weight of final exams, as well as whether passing final exams are necessary for course credit, two issues that were discussed in the June 2014 Report of the Math Semester Exam Work Group. In addition, Board members were of the opinion that a comprehensive review of all of our local assessments should be undertaken. The current implementation of PARCC assessments has fostered considerable debate at the national, state, and local level of the appropriate role of testing for our students. State Superintendent Lillian Lowery, in a March 6, 2015, opinion published in the Washington Post, noted that she has asked local school officials to review our testing policies and specifically asked that we identify opportunities to potentially reduce the number of tests given and eliminate any tests that seem redundant. Our review of Policy IKA will provide that opportunity to undertake this comprehensive and meaningful review of our locally-administered assessments.

In addition, while the Policy IKA review is ongoing, we believe steps should be considered in the short term to address the issue of redundant tests. Regulation IKA-RA, Grading and Reporting, at Section III.G.1a)(2) states:

Final examination exemptions are provided to students taking externally developed and scored examinations, such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate, in accordance with the Grading and Reporting Procedures Manual.

Under our current practices, final examinations will be administered in courses which are also being tested by PARCC, including Algebra, Algebra 2, and English 10. In addition, there will be exams in Biology and National, State, and Local Government, for which there are state High School Assessments (HSAs). The PARCC and HSAs would seem to qualify as externally developed and scored examinations. Accordingly, we are requesting
you to consider providing exemptions in the current school year, as you deem appropriate from the second semester final examinations in these courses. Such an action will provide some relief for our students and staff from this redundant local and state testing.

Thank you for your consideration in this request.

PBO:PK:kmy

Copy to:
  Members of the Board of Education
  Dr. Statham
  Dr. Navarro
  Dr. Zuckerman
  Mr. Ikheloa