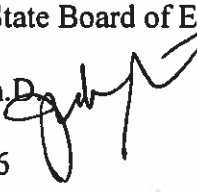




Jack R. Smith, Ph.D.  
Interim State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD • msde.maryland.gov

**TO:** Members of the State Board of Education  
**FROM:** Jack R. Smith, Ph.D.   
**DATE:** February 23, 2016  
**SUBJECT:** Social Studies Assessment

---

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide information and an update about Md. Ed. Art. §7-203(b)(3)(i) as it regards social studies and request the State Board's permission to draft a letter from either the State Superintendent or the State Board to the General Assembly about this assessment statute.

**BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:**

In Maryland classrooms, social studies skills and content are woven throughout the curriculum with the focus on developing historically literate and informed citizens who have the knowledge, concepts and strategies to actively participate in a democratic society. As Maryland transitions into the College and Career Readiness Standards, educators in all science, technical subjects, and history/social studies classrooms are expected to incorporate content-specific literacy into their instruction. Disciplinary Literacy standards are not meant to replace existing content standards in history or social studies classrooms, but rather to support them. Disciplinary literacy instruction is not an end in itself but rather a means to unlocking, communicating, and building discipline-specific critical thinking skills.

The assessment statute, Md. Ed. Art. §7-203(b)(3)(i), was passed in 2012 and contains two date specific sections that pertain to social studies. First, after the administration of the middle and high school assessments (i.e., PARCC), in 2014-2015, the State Board must determine whether the PARCC assessments "adequately measure the skills and knowledge" set forth in the social studies curriculum (as well as the reading, language, math and science curricula) Md. Ed. Art. §7-203(b)(3)(i). Second, if the State Board makes a determination that an assessment does not adequately measure skills and knowledge set forth in the State's adopted curricula for a core content area, the Department shall develop a "State-specific" assessment in that core content area to be implemented in the 2016-2017 school year.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

In order to make the determination of whether the PARCC assessments “adequately measure the skills and knowledge” set forth in the social studies curriculum, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) social studies staff reviewed the 45 PARCC released items available to the public. Of those released items, 5% of those have a social studies topic as the focal point of the reading stimulus. Upon analysis of those released items, 0% were found that explicitly measure social studies “skills and knowledge.”

When reviewing these items for the purpose of determining if they “adequately measure the skills and knowledge” set forth in the social studies curriculum, the distinction between content and disciplinary literacy was made clear. The difference between content area literacy and disciplinary literacy is comparable to the difference between content and process. Content refers to the specific topics within the subject of social studies; content includes everything from geography to civics and economics. Process refers not to *what* a student is thinking about but *how* they are thinking about it. In sum, social studies content literacy is focused on the unique content needs of the discipline, whereas disciplinary literacy is focused on various aspects of the thinking process.

On the MSDE website, Disciplinary Literacy is defined as “the use of discipline-specific practices to access, apply, and communicate content knowledge.” Literacy skills are an important part of every academic discipline. However, each discipline relies on different types of texts, writing styles, and language to convey ideas and learning. For students to be fully prepared for the challenges and expectations of college and career, it is critical that they develop literacy skills in all content areas.

It is clear to MSDE staff that the PARCC assessments do not adequately measure a student’s social studies skills and knowledge. The passages clearly do not measure specific social studies content, but rather students’ ability to navigate specific disciplinary literacy content.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

PARCC Public Release Items from:

<https://prc.parcconline.org/assessments/parcc-released-items>

<http://parcc.pearson.com/practice-tests/english/>

MSDE Social Studies Resources:

[http://www.mdk12.msde.maryland.gov/instruction/curriculum/social\\_studies/index.html](http://www.mdk12.msde.maryland.gov/instruction/curriculum/social_studies/index.html)

MSDE Disciplinary Literacy Resources:

[http://mdk12.msde.maryland.gov/instruction/curriculum/disciplinary\\_literacy/index.html](http://mdk12.msde.maryland.gov/instruction/curriculum/disciplinary_literacy/index.html)

Members of the State Board of Education  
February 23, 2016  
Page 3

**ACTION:**

To request the State Board's permission to draft a letter from either the State Superintendent or the State Board to the General Assembly about Md. Ed. Art. §7-203(b)(3)(i) regarding the next steps for this assessment statute.

Attachment

**Article – Education**

§7-203.

(a) The State Board, the State Superintendent, each county board, and each public school shall implement a program of education accountability for the operation and management of the public schools.

(b) (1) In this subsection, “grade band assessment” means one assessment of a middle school student’s knowledge in a core academic subject area during grades 6 through 8.

(2) The education accountability program shall include the following:

(i) The State Board and the State Superintendent shall assist each county board to establish educational goals and objectives that conform with statewide educational objectives for subject areas including reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies;

(ii) With the assistance of its county board, each public school shall survey current student achievement in reading, language, mathematics, science, social studies, and other areas to assess its needs;

(iii) 1. The State Board and the State Superintendent shall implement assessment programs in reading, language, mathematics, science, and social studies that include written responses;

2. The assessment program required in this subsection shall:

A. Provide information needed to improve public schools by enhancing the learning gains of students and academic mastery of the skills and knowledge set forth in the State’s adopted curricula or common core curricula:

B. Inform the public annually of the educational progress made at the school, local school system, and State levels; and

C. Provide timely feedback to schools and teachers for the purposes of adapting the instructional program and making placement decisions for students; and

3. Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, the following assessments shall be implemented and administered annually:

A. At the middle school level, a statewide, comprehensive, grade band assessment program that measures the learning gains of each public school student towards achieving mastery of the standards set forth in the common core curricula or the State's adopted curricula for the core content areas of reading, language, mathematics, science, and social studies; and

B. At the high school level, a statewide, standardized, end-of-course assessment that is aligned with and that measures each public school student's skills and knowledge of the State's adopted curricula for the core content areas of reading, language, mathematics, science, and social studies;

(iv) Each public school shall establish as the basis for its assessment of its needs, project goals and objectives that are in keeping with the goals and objectives established by its county board and the State Board;

(v) With the assistance of its county board, the State Board, and the State Superintendent, each public school shall develop programs to meet its needs on the basis of the priorities it sets;

(vi) Evaluation programs shall be developed at the same time to determine if the goals and objectives are being met; and

(vii) A reevaluation of programs, goals, and objectives shall be undertaken regularly.

(3) (i) After the 2014-2015 school year, the State Board shall determine whether the assessments at the middle school and high school levels required under paragraph (2)(iii)3 of this subsection adequately measure the skills and knowledge set forth in the State's adopted curricula for the core content areas of reading, language, mathematics, science, and social studies.

(ii) If the State Board makes a determination under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph that an assessment does not adequately measure the skills and knowledge set forth in the State's adopted curricula for a core content area, the Department shall develop a State-specific assessment in that core content area to be implemented in the 2016-2017 school year.

(c) National standardized testing may not be the only measure for evaluating educational accountability.

(d) The Department shall assist each county board to establish an education accountability program by providing:

(1) Guidelines for development and implementation of the program by the county boards; and

(2) Assistance and coordination where it is needed and requested by the county boards.

(e) (1) The Department shall survey a statewide, representative sample of public schools and public school teachers annually to measure:

(i) The amount of instructional time spent on social studies and science instruction in elementary schools;

(ii) The availability and use of appropriate instructional resources and teaching technology in social studies and science classrooms;

(iii) The availability and use of appropriate professional development for social studies and science teachers; and

(iv) The number of secondary school social studies and science classes that are taught by teachers who are:

1. Certified in the subject being taught; and

2. Not certified in the subject being taught.

(2) The Department shall:

(i) Compile the results of the survey conducted under paragraph (1) of this subsection; and

(ii) Publish the results on the Department's Web site.

(f) The State Superintendent shall send the Governor and, subject to §2-1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly a report each January that includes:

(1) Documentation of the progress of the Department, the county boards, and each public school in this State towards their respective goals and objectives; and

(2) Recommendations for legislation that the State Board and the State Superintendent consider necessary to improve the quality of education in this State.

(g) On the recommendation of the State Superintendent, the State Board shall include in its annual budget request the funds it considers necessary to carry out the provisions of this section.

# **Social Studies Assessment**

**February 23, 2016**

**Dr. Henry Johnson, Interim Deputy State Superintendent**  
**Heather Lageman, Director of Curriculum**



# Maryland Law 7-203 (2012)

- **3. Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, the following assessments shall be implemented and administered annually:**
- *(iii) 3. A. At the middle school level, a statewide, comprehensive, grade band assessment program that measures the learning gains of each public school student towards achieving mastery of the standards set forth in the common core curricula or the State's adopted curricula for the core content areas of reading, language, mathematics, science, and social studies; and*
- *(i) After the 2014-2015 school year, the State Board shall determine whether the assessments at the middle and high school levels required under paragraph (2) (iii) 3 of this subsection adequately measure the skills and knowledge set forth in the State's adopted curricula for the core content areas of reading, language, mathematics, science, and social studies.*

# PARCC & Middle School Social Studies

- Released items available to the public = 45
  
- Released items that have a social studies topic as the focal point of the reading stimulus = 5%
  - “History of the Cylinder Phonograph”
  - “Klondike Gold Rush”
  
- Released items that explicitly measure social studies “skills and knowledge” = 0%

Items from:

<https://prc.parcconline.org/assessments/parcc-released-items>

and

<http://parcc.pearson.com/practice-tests/english/>

# Grade 8: “History of the Cylinder Phonograph”

Today you will research the topic of sound and the invention of the phonograph. You will read the article “The Incredible Talking Machine.” Then you will read a passage from the article “History of the Cylinder Phonograph” and the article “Psst . . . Hey, You.” As you review these sources, you will gather information and answer questions about sound and the invention of the phonograph so you can write an essay.

Read the passage from “History of the Cylinder Phonograph.” Then answer the questions.

**1** The phonograph was developed as a result of Thomas Edison’s work on two other inventions, the telegraph and the telephone. In 1877, Edison was working on a machine that would transcribe telegraphic messages through indentations on paper tape, which could later be sent over the telegraph repeatedly. This development led Edison to speculate that a telephone message could also be recorded in a similar fashion. He experimented with a diaphragm which had an embossing point and was held against rapidly-moving paraffin paper. The speaking vibrations made indentations in the paper. Edison later changed the paper to a metal cylinder with tin foil wrapped around it. The machine had two diaphragm-and-needle units, one for recording, and one for playback. When one would speak into a mouthpiece, the sound vibrations would be indented onto the cylinder by the recording needle in a vertical (or hill and dale) groove pattern. Edison gave a sketch of the machine to his mechanic, John Kruesi, to build, which Kruesi supposedly did within 30 hours. Edison immediately tested the machine by speaking the nursery rhyme into the mouthpiece, “Mary had a little lamb.” To his amazement, the machine played his words back to him.

**2** Although it was later stated that the date for this event was on August 12, 1877, some historians believe that it probably happened several months later, since Edison did not file for a patent until December 24, 1877. Also, the diary of one of Edison’s aides, Charles Batchelor, seems to confirm that the phonograph was not constructed until December 4, and finished two days later. The patent on the phonograph was issued on February 19, 1878. The invention was highly original. The only other recorded evidence of such an invention was in a paper by French scientist Charles Cros, written on April 18, 1877. There were some differences, however, between the two men’s ideas, and Cros’s work remained only a theory, since he did not produce a working model of it.

**3** Edison took his new invention to the offices of *Scientific American* in New York City and showed it to staff there. As the December 22, 1877, issue reported, “Mr. Thomas A. Edison recently came into this office, placed a little machine on our desk, turned a crank, and the machine inquired as to our health, asked how we liked the phonograph, informed us that it was very well, and bid us a cordial good night.” Interest was great, and the invention was reported in several New York newspapers, and later in other American newspapers and magazines.

**4** The Edison Speaking Phonograph Company was established on January 24, 1878, to exploit the new machine by exhibiting it. Edison received \$10,000 for the manufacturing and sales rights and 20% of the profits. As a novelty, the machine was an instant success, but was difficult to operate except by experts, and the tin foil would last for only a few playings.

**The reading is about Thomas Edison and the invention of the phonograph.**



# Grade 8: “History of the Cylinder Phonograph”

## Part A

In paragraph 4, what is the meaning of the word **exploit**?

- A. research
- B. promote
- C. improve
- D. defend

## Part B

What phrase from paragraph 4 supports the answer to Part A?

- A. “. . . machine was an instant success . . .”
- B. “. . . difficult to operate . . .”
- C. “. . . except by experts . . .”
- D. “. . . last for only a few playings . . .”

The questions DO NOT measure social studies skills or content knowledge; the questions measure reading comprehension.

# Grade 7: “Klondike Gold Rush”

Today you will research the Gold Rush in the late 1800s. You will read the article “Klondike Gold Rush.” Then you will read a passage from *A Woman Who Went to Alaska* and view the video *City of Gold*. As you review these sources, you will gather information and answer questions about the authors’ points of view and the way they present information so you can write an essay.

Read the passage from the book *A Woman Who Went to Alaska*. Then answer the questions.

from *A Woman Who Went to Alaska*

by May Kellogg Sullivan

## THE RUSH.

- 1 Since the discovery of gold by George Carmack on Bonanza Creek in September 1896, the growth of this country has been phenomenal, more especially so to one who has visited and is familiar with Dawson and the Klondyke mining section.
- 2 As to the entire yield of gold from the Klondyke Creeks, none can say except approximately; for the ten percent royalty imposed by the Canadian government has always met a phase of human nature which prompts to concealment and dishonesty, so that a truthful estimate cannot be made.

The reading is about the Klondike Gold Rush.

- 3 The Canadian Dominion government is very oppressive. Mining laws are very arbitrary and strictly enforced. A person wishing to prospect for gold must first procure a miner’s license, paying ten dollars for it. If anything is discovered, and he wishes to locate a claim, he visits the recorder’s office, states his business, and is told to call again. In the meantime, men are sent to examine the locality and if anything of value is found, the man wishing to record the claim is told that it is already located. The officials seize it. The man has no way of ascertaining if the land was properly located, and so has no redress. If the claim is thought to be poor, he can locate it by the payment of a fifteen dollar fee.
- 4 One half of all mining land is reserved for the crown, a quarter or more is gobbled by corrupt officials, and a meager share left for the daring miners who, by braving hardship and death, develop the mines and open up the country.
- 5 “Any one going into the country has no right to cut wood for any purpose, or to kill any game or catch any fish, without a license for which a fee of ten dollars must be paid. With such a license it is unlawful to sell a stick of wood for any purpose, or a pound of fish or game.” The law is strictly enforced. To do anything, one must have a special permit, and for every such permit he must pay roundly.

# Grade 7: “Klondike Gold Rush”

## Part A

As used in paragraph 3 of the passage from *A Woman Who Went to Alaska*, what is the meaning of the word **oppressive**?

- A. unjustly harsh
- B. occasionally flexible
- C. unexpectedly angry
- D. appropriately demanding

## Part B

Which phrase from paragraph 3 in the passage from *A Woman Who Went to Alaska* helps the reader understand the meaning of the word **oppressive**?

- A. “. . . Canadian Dominion government . . .”
- B. “. . . arbitrary and strictly enforced . . .”
- C. “. . . prospect for gold . . .”
- D. “. . . he visits the recorder’s office . . . .”

The questions DO NOT measure social studies skills or content knowledge; the questions measure reading comprehension.

# PARCC & Middle School Social Studies

- Reading excerpts do not require any prior knowledge of social studies content and thus PARCC does not measure social studies knowledge.
- Content does not measure the Maryland Social Studies curriculum for grades 6-8.
- PARCC does measure disciplinary literacy in history/social studies.
- PARCC does not measure social studies knowledge.

# PARCC & Middle School Social Studies

- Social Studies is an essential tool for the preparation of students to be successful on the PARCC ELA assessment because good social studies instruction should include:
  - Comparing multiple sources
  - Close reading to identify the author's argument and the employment of evidence to support the central thesis
  - Writing effective arguments supported by evidence

**But**

Social Studies skills and content demand items specific to the content learned and skills employed within a Maryland social studies classroom. PARCC does not meet this threshold.



# PARCC & Middle School Social Studies

*(ii) If the State Board makes a determination under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph that an assessment does not adequately measure skills and knowledge set forth in the State's adopted curricula for a core content area, the Department shall develop a State-specific assessment in that core content area to be implemented in the 2016-2017 school year.*

# Action

- To request the State Board's permission to draft a letter from either the State Superintendent or the State Board to the General Assembly about Md. Ed. Art. §7-203(b)(3)(i) regarding the next steps for this assessment statute.