



Statement by Michael Casserly, Executive Director
Council of the Great City Schools
On
DCPS Decision on Teacher Evaluations

June 20, 2014

The Council of the Great City Schools applauds the decision by leaders of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) to delay by one year the use of new test scores from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) to evaluate its teachers.

The PARCC assessments are part of the school system's larger efforts to improve instruction for students citywide. These new tests will be given for the first time in the spring of 2015 and reflect the Common Core State Standards that the school system is putting into place.

These assessments are different from those that students have taken before. Students will be asked to demonstrate and apply what they have learned in ways that are fundamentally different from what was expected in the past. In addition, they will be asked to write out their answers and justify their thinking well beyond what is required in traditional multiple choice tests. This means that teachers will be changing their instructional practices profoundly over the next several years.

Moreover, the new tests will be administered mostly online and will be longer than many students are used to. This will involve significant challenges to the school system and its administrators and teachers in terms of technology equipment, broadband capacity, student and teacher scheduling, professional development, logistics, and other issues.

The PARCC assessment has been piloted nationwide and is beginning to provide valuable lessons on what students, teachers, and school systems should expect, but this sample testing will be nothing like implementing the new tests throughout the district. Both the school system and its teachers therefore need a little extra time to implement both the standards and their assessments properly.

DCPS is being thoughtful, prudent, and balanced in its decision to delay personnel evaluations based in part on the assessments while district staff and teachers learn how the new tests will work and what instructional and administrative changes will be necessary.

For its part, the public should know that DCPS has been one of the most aggressive in the country at implementing these new and more rigorous standards, preparing its teaching force for the changes, and improving opportunity for all its students. Our children will continue to be the district's priority and the beneficiaries of these critical reforms.