

To: Stand for Children

January 21, 2015

From: Steve Koczela
President, The MassINC Polling Group

Re: Summary of 2014 principals survey on teacher evaluations, Common Core and PARCC

To better understand the implementation process for the new Curriculum Frameworks based on the Common Core State Standards and the PARCC assessment, Stand for Children Massachusetts sponsored a survey of the state’s public school principals. Also included was a pared-down set of questions exploring principals’ experience with the new teacher evaluation system. This is the third such survey conducted for Stand for Children by The MassINC Polling Group since 2011. Full methodological details and topline results are attached as appendices.

Executive Summary

The new Curriculum Frameworks based on the Common Core State Standards and the accompanying PARCC assessment are viewed broadly positively by principals. Principals think the new frameworks and assessment are more demanding than the previous standards and better achieve goals like imparting and testing critical thinking and reasoning skills.

At the same time, principals indicate there is still room for improvement in terms of preparing their schools for these new processes. They are looking for more information and communication, as well as technical support for implementing the new standards and assessments.

Principals also offer positive comments about the new teacher evaluation process. Principals seem to have adjusted to the additional time required to administer the new evaluations, and they think the evaluations are a better management tool than the previous versions.

Principals see new frameworks as demanding and having a positive impact on learning

Two-thirds (67 percent) of principals see the new Curriculum Frameworks based on the Common Core State Standards as more demanding than the previous frameworks. This is an increase from the 2013 survey, when 58 percent thought the standards were more demanding.

Majorities of principals think the new standards will have a positive impact on a battery of learning goals (Figure 1). Over 90 percent think the new standards will have a positive impact on the reading, critical thinking and writing skills that are explicit goals of the Common Core. More than 80 percent think the new standards will enhance clarity and consistency of education across schools and improve the quality of

Figure 1: Principals see various learning benefits from new frameworks

	Very Positive	Somewhat Positive
Students’ ability to read and comprehend informational texts	36%	55%
Students’ ability to present their ideas based on evidence	34%	56%
Clarity about what students are expected to learn	32%	56%
Students’ ability to think critically and use reasoning skills	32%	59%
Consistency in learning goals from school to school and across states	32%	54%
The overall quality of the education students receive	25%	57%
The degree to which students will be prepared for college	20%	53%
Students’ preparedness for competing in a global economy	18%	51%
The degree to which students will be prepared for careers	18%	51%

education overall. On each attribute, less than 10 percent saw negative impacts coming from the new frameworks.

Principals see PARCC as more demanding than MCAS, but uncertainty remains.

Principals also view the PARCC test itself positively, with 71 percent saying PARCC will be more demanding than the MCAS. The rest say it will be the same as MCAS or are unsure. On a variety of attributes (Figure 2), most principals say the new test will be either equal or superior to the old test. Just 7 to 12 percent say PARCC will be worse on each of the attributes.

There is considerable room for these ratings to move in either direction, given the fairly high percentage of “unsure” responses. Between 23 and 42 percent have yet to make up their mind on each comparison factor. This level of uncertainty is not surprising, given how new the test is and that many still have no experience with it. Pluralities are unsure whether PARCC will be better than the MCAS at assessing students’ readiness for college and careers and students’ use of real world skills.

Figure 2: Majority of principals think PARCC will be as good as or better than MCAS
Based on what you know now, do you think PARCC will be better or worse than the current MCAS assessment in each of the following areas?

	Better than MCAS	About the same as MCAS	Worse than MCAS	Unsure
Presenting test material in a format relevant to today’s students	40%	25%	12%	23%
Assessing students’ ability to think critically	40%	30%	7%	23%
Assessing students’ use of real world skills	31%	29%	8%	31%
Assessing students’ readiness for college	20%	36%	7%	37%
Assessing students’ readiness for a career	17%	33%	8%	42%

Teachers say new evaluations useful, effective at various goals

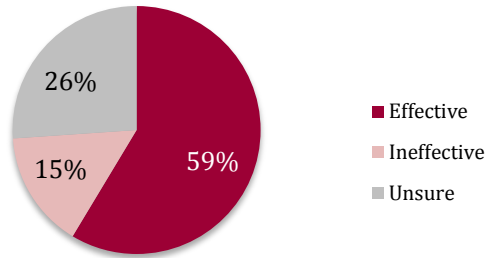
The new teacher evaluation system is now almost universally adopted, and principals seem to feel it is working effectively. Nearly all (93 percent) of principals say they have adopted the new evaluation framework, with another 4 percent taking up the new evaluations this school year. As in past years, the responsibility of evaluating teachers falls squarely on most principals’ shoulders. The vast majority (88 percent) of principals are primarily responsible for conducting the evaluations at their schools; the few who rely on other school officials are mostly in larger schools with vice principals, department heads and other layers of administration.

Majorities see the new regulations as effective at improving both the evaluation process (59 percent) and the instruction provided to students (64 percent). Most of the rest are still unsure, with only a few calling them ineffective in either regard (Figure 3). As in 2013, most (56 percent) think the new evaluations are better than the previous system for dealing with unsatisfactory teachers, and another 32 percent say they are about the same.

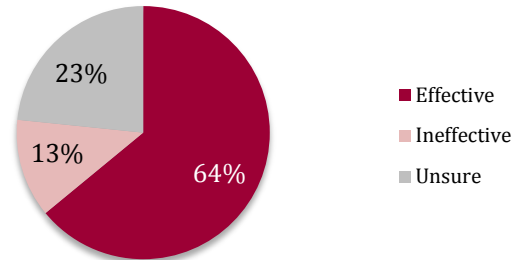
There are signs that principals are becoming more comfortable with conducting the new evaluations. The percent who say their training on the new evaluations has been adequate (81 percent), has risen ten points over previous years

Figure 3: Principals Think New Evaluations Will Be Effective

Based on your experience so far, do you think the new regulations on teacher evaluations will be effective or ineffective at improving the teacher evaluation process?



Based on your experience so far, do you think the new regulations on teacher evaluations will be effective or ineffective at improving the quality of instruction provided to students?



Principals continue to report using the new evaluation system for more staffing processes than when the new system was first introduced. The two main increases have been in the area of identifying areas for remediation and professional development. In most categories, current utilization levels represent a considerable increase since the system was first introduced in 2011, although several slipped slightly.

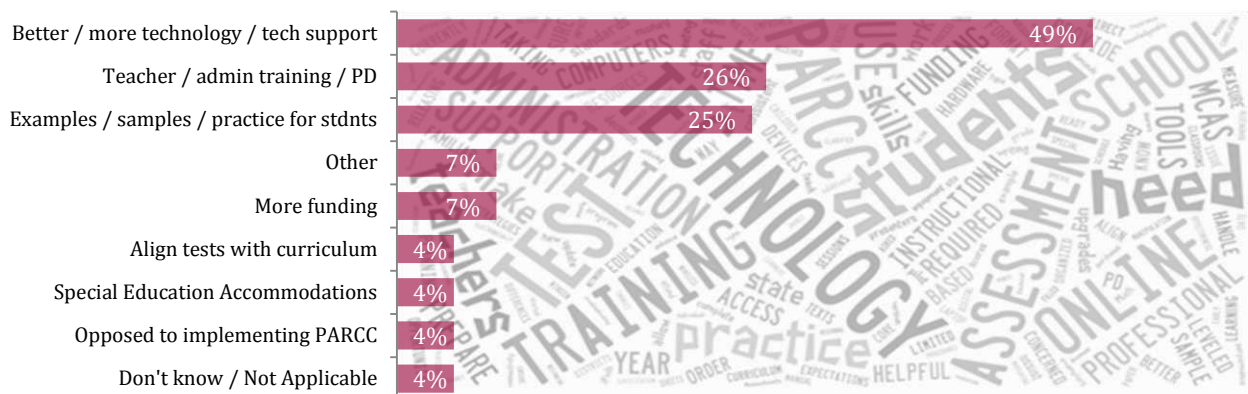
Principals seek communication, assistance in implementing new Frameworks, PARCC

Principals see both the new Frameworks and the PARCC assessment as positive developments, but they also report they could use more information and support to ensure a successful implementation. A majority of principals say their teachers are either “mostly” (53 percent) or “completely” (7 percent) prepared to implement the new Frameworks. This figure is similar to reported levels of preparation for the PARCC assessments. In each case, there is considerable room to grow preparedness.

A good part of this is the need for more information. Just 23 percent say they have heard “a great deal” about PARCC. Responses to an open-ended question about improving PARCC implementation reinforced the need for better communication and training, and also focused on technical needs. About half (49 percent) of the comments focused on technology needed to implement the test. Another theme was training time for administrators, teachers and students alike. A quarter (26 percent) of comments referred to the need for more professional development, including more training for principals in administering the new assessment. Another quarter of comments mentioned a lack of practice materials and questions to acclimate students to the new question wordings and the online test format.

Figure 4: Keys to successful PARCC implementation

Summary of open-ended comments and word cloud. Full text of responses in Appendix C.



Appendix A - About the Survey

Consulting with Stand for Children, The MassINC Polling Group developed the online survey, the link to which was emailed to approximately 1800 public K-12 principals in Massachusetts. We received 285 responses, in line with the 286 responses received in 2013 and the 271 from 2011. Responses to demographic questions were also consistent across both surveys, allowing for comparison of responses. The survey results were weighted by demographics and geography to better approximate the opinion of all principals in Massachusetts. The survey repeated several questions about teacher evaluations and Common Core, so as to track changes in opinion as these reforms have been implemented. The full questionnaire and results, including responses to repeated questions from 2011 and 2013, are included as Appendix B, below.

Appendix B - Stand for Children Principals Survey

TEACHER EVALUATIONS

Who is primarily responsible for conducting the performance evaluations of teachers at your school?

	2011	2013	2014
The principal	85%	88%	88%
A vice principal	2%	2%	3%
A department head	5%	4%	3%
A teacher's peers	0%	0%	0%
Other/More than one person	9%	6%	0%
Unsure	0%	0%	7%

Do you feel the training you received on conducting performance evaluations was adequate to allow you to conduct the process effectively?

	2011	2013	2014
Yes	71%	70%	81%
No	16%	16%	12%
Unsure	13%	13%	6%

Approximately what percentage of your teachers have received training on the teacher evaluation system since 2011?

	2013	2014
Less than 80%	12%	7%
80% to 99%	11%	19%
100%, all teachers trained	74%	74%
No Response	4%	<1%

Has your district adopted the new evaluation framework?

Yes, for the coming 2014-2015 school year	4%
Yes, during the 2013-2014 school year	52%
Yes, during the 2012-2013 school year	41%
No, we have not adopted the new framework	1%
Unsure	2%
No response	<1%

Has your district participated in the Race to the Top program?

Yes	60%
No	36%
Unsure	3%
No Response	1%

How frequently does each teacher with **provisional status** receive a performance evaluation at your school?

	2011	2013	2014
Two or more times per year	81%	64%	68%
Once a year	16%	33%	30%
Every two years	3%	0%	1%
Less often than every two years	0%	0%	0%
Unsure	0%	3%	<1%
No Response	1%	0%	0%

How frequently does each teacher with **professional status** receive a performance evaluation at your school?

	2011	2013	2014
Two or more times per year	8%	30%	27%
Once a year	17%	39%	43%
Every two years	65%	28%	29%
Less often than every two years	9%	0%	0%
Unsure	0%	2%	0%
No response	1%	<1%	1%

How much total time, on average, is spent observing each teacher in the classroom while gathering information for each cycle of performance evaluations?

	2011	2013	2014
Less than 1 hour	14%	8%	11%
1 to 3 hours	55%	40%	49%
4 to 8 hours	24%	29%	26%
More than 8 hours	5%	16%	11%
Don't Know/Unsure	1%	6%	3%
No Response	1%	<1%	0%

Overall, how useful would you say performance evaluations are as a management tool for you?

	2011	2013	2014
Very useful	17%	29%	27%
Somewhat useful	57%	53%	59%
Not too useful	19%	10%	10%
Not at all useful	5%	1%	3%
Unsure	1%	6%	1%
No Response	1%	1%	<1%

Please indicate the extent to which performance evaluations are used in the following staffing processes?

<i>Order randomized</i>		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know	No Response
Identifying staff for recruitment	2011	2%	7%	18%	23%	41%	7%	3%
	2013	7%	14%	14%	14%	29%	17%	4%
	2014	5%	11%	16%	21%	35%	10%	1%
Deciding whom to hire	2011	3%	9%	24%	19%	37%	5%	2%
	2013	9%	17%	19%	14%	25%	13%	3%
	2014	6%	14%	21%	16%	36%	7%	1%
Identifying areas for professional development	2011	11%	29%	42%	10%	5%	<1%	2%
	2013	24%	48%	18%	3%	2%	2%	2%
	2014	22%	44%	27%	5%	1%	1%	0%
Determining compensation levels	2011	2%	2%	3%	6%	81%	3%	2%
	2013	1%	4%	5%	9%	70%	9%	2%
	2014	3%	5%	2%	5%	76%	9%	0%
Deciding whether to grant Professional Teacher Status	2011	53%	20%	12%	3%	7%	1%	3%
	2013	45%	27%	10%	5%	3%	7%	3%
	2014	45%	21%	16%	7%	8%	3%	1%
Deciding whom to lay off, if necessary	2011	12%	10%	21%	13%	35%	7%	3%
	2013	8%	13%	15%	15%	30%	17%	2%
	2014	13%	10%	17%	14%	31%	15%	<1%
Identifying staff for mandatory remediation training	2011	23%	17%	31%	11%	11%	4%	3%
	2013	32%	27%	20%	8%	3%	7%	2%
	2014	29%	22%	30%	12%	5%	1%	1%
Dismissal decisions	2011	38%	20%	24%	11%	3%	2%	3%
	2013	39%	26%	17%	9%	1%	6%	2%
	2014	39%	22%	22%	6%	4%	5%	1%

Based on your experience so far [2011 & 2013: what you have heard or read], do you think the new regulations on teacher evaluations will be effective or ineffective at improving the teacher evaluation process?

	2011	2013	2014
Effective	32%	57%	59%
Ineffective	14%	12%	15%
Unsure	49%	30%	26%
No response	5%	1%	0%

Based on your experience so far, do you think the new regulations on teacher evaluations will be effective or ineffective at improving the quality of instruction provided to students?

Effective	64%
Ineffective	13%
Unsure	23%
No response	0%

When teachers are rated “needs improvement” or “unsatisfactory”, would you say the options you have available to you are better than the previous system, worse than the previous system, or about equal to the previous system?

	2013	2014
Better than previous system	57%	56%
Worse than previous system	4%	3%
About equal to the previous system	31%	32%
Unsure	8%	8%
No response	1%	1%

COMMON CORE

Do you think the new Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (Common Core State Standards) are more demanding, less demanding, or about equal to the previous MCAS standards here in Massachusetts?

	2013	2014
More demanding	58%	67%
Less demanding	7%	3%
About equal to previous standard	30%	29%
Unsure	5%	1%
No response	<1%	0%

Overall, how prepared are the teachers at your school to teach the new Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (Common Core State Standards)?

	2013	2014
Completely prepared	8%	7%
Mostly prepared	55%	53%
Somewhat prepared	30%	30%
Slightly prepared	7%	6%
Not at all prepared	1%	3%
Unsure	<1%	1%

Do you think the new Curriculum Frameworks will have a positive or negative impact on each of the following?

<i>Order randomized</i>	Very positive	Somewhat positive	Somewhat negative	Very negative	Don't know / refused	No Response
Students' ability to present their ideas based on evidence	34%	56%	2%	<1%	7%	<1%
Students' ability to think critically and use reasoning skills	32%	59%	2%	1%	6%	<1%
Students' ability to read and comprehend informational texts	36%	55%	3%	0%	5%	1%
Consistency in learning goals from school to school and across states	32%	54%	5%	0%	9%	1%
Clarity about what students are expected to learn	32%	56%	5%	0%	7%	0%
The overall quality of the education students receive	25%	57%	6%	1%	10%	<1%
The degree to which students will be prepared for college	20%	53%	4%	1%	20%	1%
The degree to which students will be prepared for careers	18%	51%	6%	1%	23%	1%
Students' preparedness for competing in a global economy	18%	51%	6%	1%	23%	<1%

Has your school purchased new textbooks or materials aligned with the new Curriculum Frameworks or the Common Core State Standards?

Yes	63%
No, but we are planning to	20%
No, and we are not planning to	11%
Unsure	5%
No Response	<1%

Have you received any comments about the new Curriculum Frameworks from parents of students? If so, was that feedback mostly positive or negative, or was it about equally positive and negative?

Yes, mostly positive	10%
Yes, mostly negative	15%
Yes, about equally positive and negative	34%
No feedback received	40%
Unsure	<1%
No Response	<1%

PARCC ASSESSMENTS

How much do you know about Massachusetts' possible transition to a new student assessment test, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, commonly called the PARCC test?

A great deal	23%
A fair amount	61%
Not very much	14%
Nothing at all	<1%
Unsure	<1%
No Response	2%

Which test did your school choose to use for this coming school year: MCAS or PARCC?

MCAS	52%
PARCC	46%
Unsure	1%
No response	2%

Did your school participate in the pilot testing of PARCC at the end of the 2013-2014 school year?

Yes	65%
No	33%
Unsure	1%
No Response	0%

The following was asked only of those who participated in PARCC pilot testing.

How would you rate your school experience pilot-testing PARCC?

Mostly positive	16%
Somewhat positive	38%
Somewhat negative	27%
Mostly negative	11%
Unsure	7%
No Response	1%

Based on what you know now, do you think PARCC will be better or worse than the current MCAS assessment in each of the following areas?

<i>Order randomized</i>	Better than MCAS	About the same as MCAS	Worse than MCAS	Unsure	No Response
Assessing students' readiness for college	20%	36%	7%	37%	1%
Assessing students' readiness for a career	17%	33%	8%	42%	0%
Presenting test material in a format relevant to today's students	40%	25%	12%	23%	0%
Assessing students' ability to think critically	40%	30%	7%	23%	0%
Assessing students' use of real world skills	31%	29%	8%	31%	1%

Do you think PARCC will be more demanding, less demanding, or about equal to the previous MCAS test?

More demanding	71%
Less demanding	1%
About equal to previous standard	16%
Unsure	12%
No response	<1%

Overall, how prepared is your school to administer the PARCC test?

Mostly prepared	14%
Somewhat prepared	46%
Not very prepared	27%
Not at all prepared	5%
Unsure	6%
No response	1%

What could be done to help prepare for the implementation of PARCC at your school? *Figure reflects 164 open-ended responses. Please see Appendix C for full listing of responses.*

Better/more technology/tech support	49%
Teacher/administrator training/professional development	26%
More examples/samples/practice for students	25%
More funding	7%
Opposed to implementing PARCC	4%
Special Education Accommodations	4%
Align tests with curriculum	4%
Other	7%
Don't know / Not Applicable	4%

Will your school need to purchase new technology or other materials to administer the PARCC text?

Yes, will need to purchase	60%
Yes, have already purchased	15%
No, have all the resources we need	14%
Unsure	10%
No response	2%

Have you received any comments about PARCC from parents of students? If so, were the comments positive or negative?

Yes, mostly positive	7%
Yes, mostly negative	22%
Yes, about equally positive and negative	22%
No feedback received	45%
Unsure	3%
No response	2%

DEMOGRAPHICS

Approximately how many years have you served as a school administrator?

	2011	2013	2014
0 to 4	16%	19%	14%
5 to 9	36%	31%	37%
10 to 14	22%	21%	27%
15 or more	27%	28%	23%
No response	0%	1%	0%

Were you a teacher before serving as a school administrator?

	2011	2013	2014
Yes	94%	99%	98%
No	4%	1%	2%
No response	2%	0%	0%

How many years did you serve as a classroom teacher?

	2011	2013	2014
0 to 5	14%	15%	14%
6 to 10	28%	32%	38%
11 to 15	26%	28%	26%
16 or more	26%	24%	21%
No response	6%	2%	2%

Approximately how many full time teachers of each status are employed at your school?

<u>PTS Teachers</u>	2011	2013	2014
Fewer than 25 PTS teachers	30%	31%	31%
25 to 39 PTS teachers	32%	32%	32%
40 or more PTS teachers	34%	34%	34%
No response	4%	3%	2%
<u>Provisional Teachers</u>	2011	2013	2014
3 or fewer provisional status teachers	25%	22%	20%
4 to 9 provisional status teachers	37%	39%	38%
10 or more provisional status teachers	31%	34%	38%
No response	6%	4%	4%

Approximately what percentage of your school's students qualify for free and reduced price lunch?

	2011	2013	2014
0 to 9	25%	24%	24%
10 to 24	28%	26%	27%
25 to 50	19%	21%	20%
51 or more	25%	24%	25%
No response	4%	5%	5%

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

	2011	2013	2014
Bachelor's Degree	1%	1%	1%
Master's Degree	54%	57%	50%
Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies	30%	31%	34%
PhD	14%	11%	13%
No response	2%	1%	2%