



March 28, 2022

Senator Jason Lewis, Chair  
Joint Committee on Education  
State House  
24 Beacon Street, Room 511-B  
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Alice Peisch, Chair  
Joint Committee on Education  
State House  
24 Beacon Street, Room 473G  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Senator Lewis and Representative Peisch:

On behalf of the Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment (MCIEA), I am pleased to provide you with a copy of the MCIEA 2022 Annual Report for the Massachusetts State Legislature.

The Consortium and Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) are deeply grateful for the state legislature's continued support of MCIEA's work. The Consortium has been building a new model of assessment and accountability that measures what our communities most value and that prepares students with the skills, knowledge, and mindsets to achieve their varied goals in today's changing world. Through this work, we seek to close historical opportunity gaps and thereby achievement differences by race, income, language, and disability.

As we returned to school in 2021, the pandemic continued to present challenges, and yet we have continued to do good work and make progress towards increasing educational equity through MCIEA. 2022 highlights include:

- Corbett Coutts, formerly a school principal in Revere and Boston, was hired as the Project Lead to work with the MCIEA governance, Consortium districts and schools, partners, and stakeholders. Corbett is facilitating a collaborative design process to ensure that the School Quality Measures (SQM) and Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) frameworks become more interdependent and ultimately lead to a holistic system of accountability and learning that is authentic and equitable, and that is based on reciprocal accountability, inclusive of community voice and ownership.
- CCE and MCIEA have contracted with online platform providers to implement two interactive, online platforms for MCIEA.
  - The MCIEA PBA Task Bank is being launched publicly during the month of April 2022, with over 100 tasks available for download and use, and Consortium teachers continue to submit performance assessments for review, approval, and inclusion in the Task Bank.
  - The MCIEA SQM Dashboard is also being launched publicly in the Spring of 2022. Consortium districts use the SQM Dashboard, and coaching from MCIEA staff, to use data for school improvement, to engage in collaborative efforts with their communities, and to create equitable school cultures that embrace the diversity of the students they serve.

Thank you again for your continued support, and please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
Oscar Santos  
Executive Director

Cc: Members of the Joint Committee on Education  
Senator Pat Jehlen  
Commissioner Jeff Riley  
Members of the Board of Elementary & Secondary Education



## MCIEA Annual Report for the Massachusetts State Legislature

*Submitted by the Center for Collaborative Education*

**March 2022**

### Introduction

The 1993 Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA) called for the state to create a multi-layered assessment system that included local as well as state assessments, including work samples, portfolios, exhibitions, and paper and pencil tests. The state chose to develop a set of single, on demand, paper and pencil standardized tests in English language arts, math, and science, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System or MCAS. Yet, while the No Child Left Behind federal act shone a needed spotlight on achievement disparities by subgroup, standardized testing across the country has done little to close persistent achievement gaps by race, income, language, and disability. In MA, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is a single set of standardized tests in English language arts, math, and science and the differences in achievement on MCAS for high-need (economically disadvantaged students, ELLs or former ELLs, and/or a student with disabilities) and non-high need students are substantial. These gaps persist in every other measurable indicator, including suspension, graduation, and four-year college-going rates. These wide outcome gaps are even more concerning given that Massachusetts' student enrollment has significantly greater percentages of low-income, Latinx, and English Learner students than in generations past. These are the students who have been historically underserved by our state's current accountability system.

Research has shown time and again that standardized test scores are most strongly correlated with students' demographic characteristics (race, income, language, disability) rather than an accurate measure of what students are learning or the quality of their school experiences. Rather than reveal an achievement gap, these test results merely reflect an immense opportunity and equity gap by race, income, language, and disability. Districts serving percentages of historically underserved students are under-resourced while held to an accountability system that has historical roots in the eugenics movement, projects a too narrow vision of school quality, and provides districts with too little information too late to use in meaningful school and district improvement initiatives. Further, in these districts MCAS and the threat of state punitive sanctions due to low test scores and growth rates have pressured educators to teach to the test and narrow their classroom curriculum, sapping the engagement, interest, and curiosity from students and their learning.

Launched in spring 2016, the Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessments (MCIEA) is a grassroots partnership of eight Massachusetts public school districts and their local teacher unions: Attleboro, Boston, Lowell, Milford, Revere, Somerville, Wareham, and Winchester. **MCIEA districts represent 88,554 students (~10% of state enrollment), 192 schools, and 7,920 teachers.** The combined student body reflects 72% students of color, 25% English language learners, 64% economically disadvantaged students, 20% students with diagnosed learning differences, and 75% high needs. The

eight MCIEA districts came together to address the problem of a substantial mismatch between the state's high-stakes MCAS test and the type of schools and education our students, and in particular high-need students, deserve. MCIEA proposes a move away from one predominate, standardized test towards a more robust education accountability system of multiple measures of school quality, with teacher-created and curriculum-embedded performance assessments as the primary measure of student learning.

### **MCIEA Governing Structure**

MCIEA's Governing Board consists of the superintendent and local teacher union president of each member district. All consortium decisions are made by this body. A small Steering Committee, comprised of governing board members, meets in between governing board meetings to make decisions or provide input on immediate topics that need addressing, as well as plan upcoming governing board meetings. A Project Management Team consisting of district- and union-appointed representatives from each member district meets regularly with CCE to guide the operations and implementation of the performance assessment professional development and school quality measures data dashboard.

The Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) serves as the consortium's coordinating organization.

### **MCIEA Goal**

MCIEA's goal is to work with schools, districts and their communities to create a more humanistic accountability system that is grounded in educational equity and moves beyond a one size fits all approach to determine school and student growth and success. MCIEA is working to build a new model of assessment and accountability that measures what our communities most value and that prepares students with the skills, knowledge, and mindsets to achieve their varied goals, while seeking to close historical opportunity gaps and thereby achievement differences by race, income, language, and disability. The MCIEA assessment system recognizes the multi-dimensionality of students and schools, increases teacher agency and student voice, and results in high-quality, actionable data to guide student learning and school improvement.

### **MCIEA Model**

The MCIEA model consists of two primary components.

#### ***School Quality Measures Project***

At the school and district levels, MCIEA has created a holistic system for measuring school quality that offers a range of information about the school experience that stakeholders can confidently use to make decisions that support student success. Unlike standardized assessment, research has recently shown that our School Quality Measure framework is not correlated with student demographic variables. MCIEA developed the School Quality Measures framework based on feedback from community focus groups in

which more than 250 stakeholders reflected on what they most wanted to know about their schools. The framework identifies five key categories:

- Teachers & Leadership
- School Culture
- Resources
- Academic Learning
- Community & Wellbeing

Within each of the five categories, data is gathered on multiple measures of school quality through the administration of teacher and students surveys (grades 3-12) and collection of additional administrative data. We offer multiple platforms for school-level data analysis. Most notable, we've created an online data dashboard for each consortium school that is easily accessible and navigable by educators, parents, and community members. In the final revision to the dashboard, users will be able to view administrative data disaggregated by student race, income, language, disability, and gender; as well as student survey data by race, language, and gender. Users will be able to view multiple years of student data on one screen. Each school's dashboard will provide robust data that can be used to assess school and student progress, and identify strengths and challenges.

In addition to collecting and displaying data on our online dashboard, MCIEA staff work with district- and school-level staff throughout the year to utilize data for continuous school improvement. MCIEA staff review collected data alongside consortium partners, identifying key trends in school strengths and areas for improvement. We then offer our partners field-tested tools for building out school-based action plans and/or collecting more detailed data on a particular topic of interest. We continue to support a Research Agenda to document the impact of MCIEA and how districts and schools are using the SQM data in annual school improvement efforts. CCE staff work with schools and districts to support strategic planning to integrate MCIEA into the districts' vision, instructional approach, and decision-making processes to drive change and build capacity within and throughout the district to sustain and unite QPA and SQM in pursuit of increasing educational equity and ensuring that students succeed, and communities thrive. We are implementing tools that will enable school teams to use School Quality Measures data to understand and respond to examples of inequity across student experiences in their schools. Because the School Quality Measures framework is designed to be holistic, we are able to identify inequity in everything from students' experiences in the classroom (e.g., access to challenging coursework, access to diversity in curriculum), to extra-curricular experiences, school discipline and even physical and emotional health. In this way, MCIEA has created a new framework by which schools can think about school improvement, one which aims to empower local communities with tools and supports to use data to drive meaningful school improvement initiatives.

## **Quality Performance Assessments**

Curriculum-embedded performance assessments are the primary student learning measure in MCIEA's framework. MCIEA is building the capacity of teachers across the consortium's eight districts to design and administer high quality, standards-based, and curriculum-embedded performance assessments that enrich the curriculum and student learning experiences. Consortium teachers are being trained to lead the performance assessment movement in their schools; these teachers become resources for their colleagues as they build faculty-wide capacity in quality performance assessment design.

An online MCIEA Performance Assessment Task Bank, consisting of teacher-generated vetted and approved performance assessments across tested grades and subjects, is being launched. Teachers from across the consortium submit to the task bank performance assessments they have created. A cadre of trained MCIEA teachers review each task submission to assess for standards alignment, fairness and bias, universal design, and student engagement, and then provide recommendations to teacher authors on how to improve the task. Upon revision, the performance task is then approved for entry into the task bank. The task bank is sortable by grade, subject, district of origin, and Massachusetts standard. Any consortium teacher will be able to access and download for use any performance assessment in the MCIEA task bank.

Eventually, teachers will be trained to make determinations of student learning progress and proficiency via scoring portfolios of selected student work within ELA, math, and science that are derived from MCIEA performance assessments. Our goal is that this process becomes the predominant accountability and assessment model for consortium students.

MCIEA teachers will also be trained in how to conduct annual double-blind scoring of randomly selected portfolios of student work to ensure inter-rater reliability across classrooms, schools, and districts. Annually, data from these double-blind scoring sessions will be provided to consortium schools on alignment and variation of individual teacher scores of student work versus those of double-blind scorers in order to spur greater consistency across consortium schools in scoring student work. This process will lead toward greater validity and reliability of teacher determinations of student learning progress.

## **MCIEA Progress in FY 2022**

As we returned to school in 2021, the pandemic continued to present challenges, and yet we have continued to do good work and make progress towards actualizing the MCIEA model. Six years in, MCIEA has evolved from an idea and effort to create an assessment and accountability system founded in a commitment to equity of opportunity, to a model which is beginning to take root in many MCIEA districts. Districts have reported that MCIEA has resulted in "changing the culture of who we are," with more schools, administrators, and teachers focused on integrating performance assessments and data dashboards into their daily practice.

## ***1. Reaffirmed Vision and MCIEA Design Process***

After six years, the governing board led an inclusive process to reassess and refine the consortium's vision. MCIEA's goal remains the same as when it started: to build a model of accountability and assessment that provides educators and the communities they serve with meaningful data that can be used for school improvement, with teacher-generated performance assessments as the primary means for assessing student learning. The consortium still seeks to influence state policymakers to transition from a single standardized test as the primary measure to assess students, educators, schools, and districts to a more holistic model focused on improvement and meaningful student assessment. Equity has been brought more to the forefront. As stated, "MCIEA believes that the state should replace its current system with one that is free of racial and socio-economic bias, approaches schools and students from an asset-based and culturally-affirming perspective, and promotes the full spectrum of qualities that make for a good school."

During the 2021-2022 school year, as we transition back from the pandemic, MICEA is using this Vision to engage in an educational redesign process . A Project Lead was hired to work with the MCIEA governance, consortium districts and schools, and stakeholders. Onboarding interviews were conducted to inform a collaborative design process to facilitate planning for uniting the SQM and QPA frameworks into a holistic system of accountability and learning that is authentic and equitable, and that is based on reciprocal accountability, inclusive of community voice and ownership.

## ***2. Discretionary Grants and Technical Assistance***

During the Fall of 2021, district grant applications were reviewed and five were approved for funding up to \$25,000.

- **Attleboro**

- **Attleboro High School** - focus on designing and incorporating performance assessments into our curriculum work. Our long-term goal is to attach one performance assessment to each unit of study within a particular curriculum content area.
- **Attleboro High School Welcome Center** - through the development of the Attleboro Public Schools (APS) Welcome Center, APS aims to build the capacity of all stakeholders to improve and effectively implement family and community engagement practices. Through the analysis of the survey provided to the district by MCIEA to reflect on School Quality Measures (SQM) we have determined that our focus will be on increasing open communication, creating connections, and building a common space where families, APS, and the community come together.

- **Milford**

- **Woodland Elementary School** - create quality performance assessments, covering all three grades and a variety of subject areas (ex: math, science, social studies, ELA, music, etc.) These performance assessments will be reviewed by colleagues and shared as

potential common assessments. Additionally, teachers will be involved in the development of a Woodland-based task bank to internally house performance assessments. Teachers will also be encouraged to submit their QPA's to MCIEA's task bank.

- **District-wide Lead Team** - The district will be creating a lead team of representatives from each school. The central purpose of the team will be to connect the district's Portrait of a Graduate to the SQM in order to determine areas of strength and areas in need of growth. Further, the team will be responsible for developing professional learning opportunities for all staff particularly focused in QPA development. Finally, the team will be reviewing tasks, working with building administrators and creating presentations for families and community members.

- **Boston**

- **District-wide Academic Ladder Credit (ALC) course for teachers** - We wish to build a healthy ecosystem of assessments that capture student learning without over-relying on specific assessment types. Specifically, this ecosystem would be a comprehensive and balanced anti-racist assessment system that allows students to define their learning goals and measure their progress towards achieving those goals. This system will support culturally responsive classroom assessment by providing both adaptive and grade-level, standards-aligned assessments based on complex text and tasks that can be triangulated with ongoing, within-instruction formative assessments, student-created assessments and performance assessments.

On a rolling basis throughout FY 2022, mini-grants were provided to schools and districts to pilot a Performance Based Assessment System. As of March 2022, four schools were prepared to move forward with year one activities that consist of identifying grade level and content areas to be included in the pilot, power standards to be assessed in SY 2022-2023, and selecting or creating QPAs to be administered in year 2 of the pilot.

The Governing Board also agreed to continue with the MCIEA Mini-Grant Program that was launched in FY 2021, however, they recommended to wait until the Summer and Fall of 2022 to launch these discretionary grants due to challenges that would prevent this work from taking place during the Spring of 2022.

### **3. MCIEA Online Platform**

CCE and MCIEA have contracted with online platform providers, MZD and VMWare, which will allow us to implement two interconnected, interactive, online platforms for MCIEA. MZD is prepared to launch the QPA Task Bank in the Spring of 2022. Members of the MCIEA Project Management Team have beta tested this site and provided us with valuable feedback and recommendations that we will incorporate into the development of the site. VMWare completed their build of the SQM Dashboard in the Fall of



2021, and a development consultant was then contracted to populate the Dashboard with historical data from Consortium schools and districts. The Dashboard was beta tested with members of the Steering Committee during the Winter of 2021/2022 and will be launched in the Spring of 2022. These platforms will include the following capabilities:

- **School Quality Measures (SQM) data dashboard** created for every MCIEA school, with data updated annually
  - An introductory section that explains the purpose of the dashboard, how to navigate it, and a “table of contents”
  - Summary of school’s strengths and opportunities for improvement
  - Disaggregated administrative data by student race, income, language, disability, and gender, as well as student survey data by race, language, and gender
  - Capacity to view multiple years of data side-by-side on one screen
  - Data can be accessed both through the current framework categories and as single source documents (e.g., student and teacher survey results)
  - Accompanying data inquiry toolkit for use in data analysis and school improvement planning
- **Quality Performance Assessments (QPA) Task Bank**
  - Stores a MCIEA Performance Assessment Task Bank of approved tasks created by consortium teachers. All assessments have been vetted for alignment, fairness, engagement, and Universal Design.
  - Accessible by all consortium teachers, that is sortable by grade, subject, district, and standard
  - Teachers can assign performance tasks directly to students from the platform
  - Student work can be uploaded into password-protected folders to be used in teacher scoring
  - MCIEA can conduct double-blind scoring of portfolios of student work to assess and ensure interrater reliability of individual teacher scoring

#### **4. School Quality Measures Project**

While the permanent MCIEA online platform is being constructed, the consortium has continued to collect multiple data and post school quality data dashboards for every consortium school. Annual MCIEA student and teacher perception surveys are administered in every consortium school to all teachers and students in grades 3-12. Survey scales are adapted from empirically validated scales or developed by experts in the field. The reliability and validity of the surveys are assessed annually. Data from these surveys is invaluable in triangulating with administrative data to identify strengths and challenges within each school.



The survey data, along with administrative data in multiple categories (traditional data provided annually to DESE as well as additional data such as breadth of courses and electives offered, teacher retention, amount of funds spent per teacher on professional development, student to guidance counselor ratio) are loaded onto each consortium school's data dashboard. A suite of inquiry tools has been developed to assist schools and districts in using the SQM data in annual school improvement efforts. CCE staff work with schools and districts to use the data dashboards to identify strengths and gaps in the school, and to drive school improvement efforts to address the gaps.

Last year we provided examples of 2 districts using SQM data dashboards and during FY 2022 we have identified 3 additional districts for a total of 5 districts. New examples of district use of the SQM data dashboards include the following:

- **Attleboro Public Schools** is launching a Welcome Center for families using their analysis of the survey provided to the district by MCIEA to reflect on School Quality Measures (SQM)
- **Milford Public Schools** is creating a lead team of representatives from each school to connect the district's Portrait of a Graduate to the SQM in order to determine areas of strength and areas in need of growth.
- **Winchester Public Schools** and MCIEA staff from CCE presented to the School Committee in January 2022, the results of their Pilot Study on the Use of Performance Assessments in Winchester Public Schools that used supplemental questions to the Winchester SQM student survey to help give educators in Winchester a sense of student views on performance assessments

## **5. Performance Assessment Design**

Many MCIEA districts now have a large percentage of their teachers engaged in the cycle of performance assessment design, administering, and scoring student work. Over multiple years, this work has led to further developments in improving teaching, learning, and assessment as well as cycles of continuous improvement. MCIEA staff are supporting schools and districts to build internal capacity to lead and support QPA work that is sustainable and that is integrated into instructional practices on a consistent basis.

New coaches were hired by CCE in the Winter of 2022, and are working with school-based teams to schedule both virtual and in person coaching sessions through the end of the school year.

The MCIEA Governance has expressed interest in re-launching institutes, convenings, and networking sessions and is working with MCIEA staff to plan events to share best practices and MCIEA learnings, create opportunities for cross-district collaboration, and to build awareness for MCIEA as a driver for increased educational equity.

The MCIEA Task Bank now contains over 100 performance assessments across all grades and disciplines that have been designed by MCIEA teacher teams, vetted by trained MCIEA teacher reviewers, and undergone final reviews for approval and insertion into the task bank.

## **6. Research on the Efficacy of the MCIEA Model**

MCIEA continues to document the impact and value of its model on student learning and school quality. During FY 2022 the focus of these efforts has been on documentation and storytelling. To help tell the story of the work being done in each district and across the consortium, MCIEA is asking all district grant recipients to lead and participate in several aspects of the data collection. This data collection along with pieces led by MCIEA coaches and the CCE research team will allow the team to understand both the outcomes from the grant-funded work and the process that led to these outcomes. In addition to documenting the work, MCIEA will also lead case studies or profiles of the larger themes emerging across projects. Research activities include:

- Kick-Off Research Meeting with District Leads
- Reflections/Check-Ins with District Partners
- Ongoing internal district meeting notes and materials
- Check-ins with participants/stakeholders
  - District Administrators
  - School administrators/coordinators/directors
  - Teachers
  - Students
  - Parents/Family/Caretaker
- Administrative data
- MCIEA and the district leads will determine what other data collection is needed

## **Massachusetts State Funds**

The state legislature approved \$550,000 in the FY 2022 state budget to support MCIEA. Funds have been used for the following purposes:

- CCE staffing of all MCIEA activities (Governing Board, Steering Committee, Project Management Team, performance assessment and school quality measures work, technical assistance to schools and districts)
- District Grants of \$25,000 each to support a strategic plan to integrate MCIEA into the districts' vision, instructional approach, and decision-making processes.
- Mini-grants of \$5,000 to pilot performance based assessment systems
- Website developers
  - MZD for the QPA Task Bank
  - VMWare for the SQM Dashboard
- Website development consultant

- Evaluation and research

### Next Steps in Building a Quality Accountability Model

MCIEA's capacity to test out a more humanistic accountability system that is grounded in educational equity and moves beyond a one size fits all approach to determine school and student growth and success. Thus in FY 2023, we will accomplish the following:

- Complete the full build-out of the MCIEA model
  - Launch and support access to and usage of the SQM Data Dashboard for every consortium school. This includes coaching and an annual Qualtrics license, as well as ongoing developer consultation and coordination.
  - Launch and support access to and usage of the QPA Task Bank. Train and build capacity for teachers to download and assign performance assessment tasks to students, for students to upload resulting student work, and for teachers to then score student work. Annual MZD/Pearson license for student and teacher users.
  - All MCIEA schools will continue to submit new performance tasks for review and approval into the MCIEA performance assessment task bank, with the eventual goal of growing the task bank to 200 vetted and approved performance tasks sortable by grade, subject, interdisciplinary, and standard. Fund work with teachers to support the task bank and review process.
  - Capacity to engage in double-blind scoring of student work to assess for interrater reliability
  - Conduct a baseline year in selected schools within the Consortium schools to fully test the MCIEA assessment and accountability model
  - All MCIEA schools will continue to use their school quality measures data dashboards to assess their strengths and gaps, and use this data to engage in school improvement planning. Provide coaching, tools, and resources to train and build capacity in all consortium districts and schools.
  - Support MCIEA schools and districts with coaching, and resources and tools we have created, to integrate MCIEA into districts' vision, instructional approach, and decision-making processes to drive change and build capacity within and throughout the district to sustain and unite QPA and SQM in pursuit of increasing educational equity and ensuring that students succeed, and communities thrive.
  - Provide coaching, tools, and resources to train and build capacity in all districts/schools within the Consortium to eliminate barriers and/or create conditions to increase educational equity.
  - Provide coaching, tools, and resources to train and build capacity in districts/schools outside of the Consortium to explore QPA and SQM as drivers for change in their pursuit of increasing educational equity.

- Host institutes, convenings, and networking sessions to share best practices and new learning, to build cross-district community and ownership for MCIEA as a driver for increased educational equity, and to build awareness for MCIEA, SQM, and QPA as examples of a more humanistic accountability system.

## Recommendations

Based on the progress of the Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessments, the consortium and the Center for Collaborative Education offer the following recommendations:

- Continued MCIEA Funding to Fully Build Out the Model. Continue funding MCIEA to provide support to use in field testing and further refining the accountability model. Such funding will enable the state legislature to consider fully the benefits of a different type of state education accountability system that better reflects the original Education Reform Act of 1993 legislative wording.
- Adopt the School Quality Measures Data Dashboard. Consider adopting MCIEA's School Quality Measures (SQM) Data Dashboard for all Massachusetts' public schools as a means to provide a more complete set of data and indicators for educators, parents, students, and community members to use in assessing school progress. Provide professional development to school districts on using the SQM dashboard for school improvement purposes. Pair schools that may be struggling in some categories with other schools that have made more progress in those same areas.
- Provide Performance Assessment Professional Development. Provide statewide professional development to educators on how to design, administer, and score high quality, teacher-generated, standards-based, curriculum-embedded, and culturally responsive performance assessments. Such assessments can drive more meaningful learning and curriculum in classrooms that surpasses that spawned by a state accountability system dominated by a single standardized test.
- Support a Research Agenda on the Impact of MCIEA on Teacher Practice and Student Learning. MCIEA should be further studied to assess its impact in whether and how its model promotes high quality instruction, meaningful curriculum, and student learning that encompasses critical thinking, problem solving, and cultural competency.