

# THE PARCC TEST

## A Q&A FOR PARENTS

After being field-tested earlier this year, the new online PARCC test will be rolled out to students in grades 3-11 across New Jersey this spring. The PARCC test is aligned to the Common Core State Standards adopted by New Jersey in 2010, and features interactive questions to assess critical thinking skills. To ensure parents have the information they need to prepare their children for the test, we have compiled the following list of frequently asked questions from those we have heard from our members.

### ? WHAT SUBJECTS DOES PARCC COVER?

PARCC tests will assess English Language Arts and Math.

### ? DOES PARCC REPLACE NJASK/HSPA? WHY?

The PARCC assessment will replace the prior statewide assessments - the NJASK in grades 3-8 and HSPA in high school. PARCC was developed in response to the longstanding concerns of educators, parents and employers who want assessments that better measure students' critical-thinking and problem-solving skills and their ability to communicate clearly. Additionally, PARCC will enable educators to assess all of the State Standards, whereas the NJASK and HSPA tests only assessed some of the State Standards.

### ? WHEN WILL THE PARCC TEST BE ADMINISTERED?

PARCC will be administered in two parts. The performance-based assessment component, which includes open-ended questions, will be administered between March 2 and March 27, 2015. This part of the test is given earlier to allow time for it to be scored by educators by hand whereas the second portion, the end of year component, is scored by machine and will be administered between April 27 and May 22, 2015.

### ? ARE THERE SAMPLE TESTS AVAILABLE?

Sample tests are available on the PARCC website at:

[www.parcconline.org/practice-tests](http://www.parcconline.org/practice-tests)

## **? WHY SO MANY DAYS OF TESTING?**

The 20-day testing windows provide sufficient opportunity to administer the assessments via computer in schools with a limited number of devices and limited bandwidth. While the testing window in some schools may span as many as 20 days, individual students will only participate in testing sessions during a portion of that time.

## **? HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE STUDENTS TO COMPLETE THE TEST? IS THE TEST TIMED?**

The test will be timed. It will be given during two windows for each component and in segments for Math and English Language Arts. The estimated total for both components and both subjects are as follows:

- 8 hours in 3rd grade
- Just over 9 hours in grades 4-5
- A little less than 9 ½ hours in middle school
- A little more than 9 ½ hours in high school

While it is anticipated that most students will complete the test sessions within the estimated time-periods or less, schools will make a limited amount of additional time available so that students do not feel rushed during the test.

The PARCC involves approximately 1-2 hours of additional testing time (depending on the grade level) as compared to NJASK and HSPA, but since the testing is spread over more segments it offers a deeper assessment of student proficiency.

## **? WHY ARE THE TESTS BEING GIVEN ONLINE?**

Computer-based testing allows for more interactive question types, which better assess critical thinking, keep kids engaged and minimize 'test besting' preparation. The online testing also allows for faster scoring and reporting of results, along with richer data.

## **? HOW ARE THE SCORES USED?**

Test results are used to measure student progress toward grade level Common Core State Standards and their progress toward graduation. Districts will review results, as they did with NJASK/HSPA scores, along with other factors to determine if students require intervention or acceleration. Students will not be stopped from moving to the next grade on the sole basis of their PARCC scores, and PARCC scores do not affect report card grades.

## **? CAN MY CHILD OPT-OUT OF THE TEST?**

The State of New Jersey has been administering statewide assessments in English Language Arts and Math for nearly two decades. Providing regular, honest assessments is a critical tool in ensuring students are meeting standards and progressing toward graduation. Districts are required to administer assessments as part of New Jersey state law, and the participation of all students (a minimum of 95%) is necessary to ensure results are a representative and useful measure of school performance. More information on the role of student participation can be found on the NJDOE website.

## ? WILL MY CHILD BE HELD BACK OR NOT ABLE TO GRADUATE IF THEY DON'T PASS?

To allow sufficient time for educators and students to adapt to the new assessment, the PARCC test will not be a graduation requirement until 2019. Because 2015 is the first year PARCC will be administered to all students, there is a transition plan in place under which students have a variety of pathways to meet graduation requirements, including achieving a passing score on a number of substitute competency tests or through a portfolio review process. Those students who score well on the PARCC test can choose to apply their results toward meeting graduation requirements. More information on graduation requirements can be found on the NJDOE website.

## ? WHAT HAPPENS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS?

PARCC is designed to provide accurate measures of achievement and growth for all students, including those with disabilities and English language learners.

The online test offers options that can address many visual, auditory, and physical-access barriers for students with disabilities, while enabling them to take tests at the same time as others in their class. Just like prior state assessments, there will be accommodations for English language learners at various levels of language proficiency depending on eligibility based on different levels.

## ? DO STUDENTS WITH AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN NEED TO TAKE THE PARCC?

Accommodations are available for students with Individualized Education Plans and Child Study Teams will work with teachers to address accommodations needed for paper and pencil testing.

## ? WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO PREPARE FOR PARCC?

- Meet with your teacher to discuss your child's progress throughout the year
- View samples of new test questions and get more information about the test at: [www.parcconline.org](http://www.parcconline.org)
- Become familiar with the Common Core State Standards that the test is designed to assess at: [www.pta.org/parentsguide](http://www.pta.org/parentsguide)

Visit our Facebook page and share your questions with us at: [www.facebook.com/njpta](http://www.facebook.com/njpta)