



## 20 Facts Parents Need To Know About PARCC

### How Did We Get Here?

1. New Jersey has had state assessments for decades, and the federal government has required every state to test 95% of their students in grades 3 to 8 since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.
2. The New Jersey State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010 and the state needed a new state assessment to test the new standards.
3. PARCC, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, is a group of 12 states (plus DC) collaborating on a common set of K–12 assessments that cover the CCSS and the skills students need to be successful in college and life.
4. A number of organizations are supporting New Jersey's efforts to implement effective assessments that are aligned with New Jersey's higher educational standards including the New Jersey PTA, and organizations representing principals (NJPSA), superintendents (NJASA), school boards (NJSBA), higher education (NJ Council of County Colleges), and business (NJ Chamber of Commerce).

### Why is PARCC Beneficial?

5. PARCC is aligned to the Common Core State Standards in language arts and math and measures how well students can apply their knowledge of concepts rather than memorizing facts. Many New Jersey educators joined hundreds of K–12 and postsecondary educators, content specialists, and assessment experts from across the country to create, review and approve every test item.
6. The computer-based PARCC tests are replacing the former paper-and-pencil-based NJ ASK and HSPA exams, and will test more students and grade levels than the previous assessments (Grades 3-8 in language arts and math and end-of-course exams in language arts grades 9, 10 and 11 and Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II).
7. Computer-based assessments are becoming common for today's students with the GED test now computer-based, and the SAT college-entrance exams soon becoming computer-based.
8. The selling of student data was never allowed under the previous tests in New Jersey, and it is not allowed under the PARCC tests. Protections are in place at both the state and federal levels, and through all contracts and agreements, intended to prevent student-identifiable data from being marketed or distributed.
9. PARCC empowers parents by providing informative feedback through the PARCC parent report on whether their children are on track to be properly prepared for college and careers, and provides schools with meaningful data to help improve classroom instruction and raise student performance.
10. A full 70% of students entering New Jersey's county colleges can't begin their college career unless they pay for remediation classes to learn what they should have learned in high school, and many surveys repeatedly find that business leaders feel high school graduates are not

properly prepared for the workforce. The data from the PARCC assessments is designed to help address these issues.

11. Many New Jersey colleges have agreed to accept the College- and Career-Ready Determinations from the PARCC assessment in math and language arts based on new high school tests. This means that students who pass the high school level PARCC tests can enter directly into credit-bearing college courses without remedial coursework.

#### **Are Parents or Students Required to Take PARCC?**

12. Neither federal nor state law provides parents with an option regarding participation in the tests. School districts apply their local policies on how they will work with parents and students to address instances where students attend school on test day but refuse to participate in the tests.

#### **What Does PARCC Mean for Students and for Teachers?**

13. For students in New Jersey, PARCC is not a "high-stakes" test. The state does not require passing PARCC to advance from one grade to the next.
14. With PARCC, teachers really can't "teach to the test" since it is designed for students to demonstrate their understanding of a concept, versus choosing a multiple-choice or true/false answer or reciting facts from memorization, as was common under previous assessments.
15. For less than 20 percent of teachers who meet specific criteria (such as grades/subjects taught, number of students and time in class, etc.), state law requires a portion of annual evaluations to be based on student growth on state assessments. For 2014-15, PARCC results will count for 10% of those evaluations for educators who meet all criteria.

#### **How Much Time Will PARCC Take?**

16. The PARCC tests account for only about 10 hours of a 1,200-hour school year, with most testing done during the school year being the result of decisions made at the local level.
17. PARCC assessments will have two different testing administration windows in the spring, but local districts have the ability to work their schedules as they see fit.

#### **Are We Ready?**

18. In the spring of 2014 over 80% of school districts and charter schools across New Jersey, encompassing about 15% of the total students in our public schools, volunteered to take part in field testing for the new PARCC assessments. Results from the field test provided quality experience for addressing device readiness and potential PARCC administration issues.
19. The Department has continuously worked with school districts for over two years, through surveys, information sessions, and site-visits, to ensure schools are tech-ready for the administration in the spring of 2015. In fact, schools have requested computer-based tests for 98% of students, indicating that the vast majority of schools are ready for the administration.
20. Since problems during testing happen each year for a variety of reasons, every school and school district has a test coordinator who is trained to respond to a variety of irregularities that may transpire during test administration. Each irregularity will be handled on a case-by-case basis by the local district, the state education department or the testing vendor.