January 26, 2015

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am writing to provide you with a timely update about a very important matter in our school district. Parents in Wayne and most other communities in New Jersey are struggling with their feelings about a new wave of educational reform (Common Core) and the accompanying standardized testing program (PARCC). The district has been working diligently to transition and to prepare our students to meet a new set of performance standards. We also face a challenge in delivering a computer-based standardized test that is much different than the familiar NJASK and HSPA.

In addition to preparing students, we recognize that we need to prepare our parents for the PARCC. We have been meeting with parents at each of the schools to talk about the PARCC and we will continue to do so in the following weeks. I believe the sessions have been extremely helpful for many parents. We also recognize that many more parents may not have had the opportunity to attend these meetings, but may have questions (and anxiety) about the PARCC. We want all of our parents to have accurate information about the PARCC and the direction the district is taking with test administration.

On the following pages, you will see a compilation of frequently asked questions from Wayne parents along with other useful resources. For parents who already heard our presentation, you will find some new information and additional resources. At the end, you will also find information about public hearings about the PARCC that are being hosted by the New Jersey Department of Education.

Sincerely,

Mark Toback
Superintendent of Schools
Frequently Asked PARCC Questions from Wayne Township Public School Parents

Q: How will the district use my child’s PARCC results?
A: The district will not use the PARCC results to make any placement decisions this coming school year due to the fact that the PARCC is new and the district is transitioning. There is also a matter of practicality. The results for the PARCC may not be available until next winter. Students will not be placed in remedial classes or gifted and talented classes as a result of PARCC performance. In following years, the district will need to assess the usefulness of PARCC results for student placement purposes.

Q: I have a child in high school. Is the PARCC a graduation requirement?
A: YES AND NO…Because the PARCC is a new test, the NJDOE is allowing the PARCC to be used by students to meet graduation requirements along with other standardized tests. In other words, the PARCC is one pathway to high school graduation. Students in the classes of 2016, 2017, and 2018 may also meet graduation requirements by taking the following tests and achieving a passing score as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Language Arts</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passing Score on PARCC ELA Grade 9 or</td>
<td>Passing Score on PARCC Algebra I or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing Score on PARCC ELA Grade 10 or</td>
<td>Passing Score on PARCC Geometry or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing Score on PARCC ELA Grade 11 or</td>
<td>Passing Score on PARCC Algebra II or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT &gt;= 400 or</td>
<td>SAT &gt;= 400 or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT &gt;= 16 or</td>
<td>ACT &gt;= 16 or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuplacer Write Placer &gt;= 6 or</td>
<td>Accuplacer Elementary Algebra &gt;= 76 or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSAT &gt;= 40 or</td>
<td>PSAT &gt;= 40 or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT Aspire &gt;= 422 or</td>
<td>ACT Aspire &gt;= 422 or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASVAB-AFQT &gt;= 31 or</td>
<td>ASVAB-AFQT &gt;= 31 or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet Criteria of the NJDOE Portfolio Appeal</td>
<td>Meet Criteria of the NJDOE Portfolio Appeal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: ASVAB is the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery and the Accuplacer is a test typically given by colleges for placement in college level courses.
Q: If my high school child completes the PARCC, will the results appear on my child’s transcript?
A: NO…While the New Jersey Department of Education originally suggested that PARCC scores would be required on transcripts, their position has changed. For now, there is no requirement to place PARCC scores on transcripts. Our opinion, after consultation with the NJDOE, is that PARCC scores will not become part of high school transcripts anytime soon given a host of factors including the fact that other standardized tests like the SAT are not recorded on transcripts.

Q: How can my child benefit from taking the PARCC?
A: There are a number of benefits from taking the PARCC for students, parents, and teachers. Overall, the new PARCC performance reports will provide additional information well beyond what the NJASK and HSPA reports provided in the past. For example, parents and teachers will receive a new and more comprehensive performance report indicating overall student growth based on prior year performance and also in relation to growth when compared to students with similar scores. Taking the PARCC will prepare your child for the future. According to the College Board, the new SAT will be aligned to the Common Core, thus making PARCC a great tool for SAT preparation. During this prior week, the NJDOE announced that high school students who demonstrate proficiency on the PARCC will receive a certificate that can be used to bypass remedial coursework and placement exams as they enter college. This certificate may be helpful for juniors who have already met graduation requirements through SAT performance or other standardized tests as noted above.

Q: What will happen if I opt my child out of PARCC testing?
A: New Jersey law requires students to participate in the state testing program and there is no language about opting out. However, the district recognizes that parents have the right to direct the education of their children and that parents may refuse the PARCC on behalf of their children. In other cases, children may simply refuse to take the PARCC.

While the district is not offering an opt-out option, parents and students always have the option to refuse a test. The district will respond to cases of PARCC refusal as follows.
1) High school and middle school students refusing the PARCC will be required to report to their testing site and will be allowed to bring a book or other reading materials (non-electronic and non-textbook). Upon dismissal from the test location, all students will return to their regular schedule. The district is required by the NJDOE to complete an irregularity report for each case of test refusal. While a tremendous amount of focus exists on the rights of students not taking the PARCC, the district must consider the overwhelming majority of students who will be taking the test. At the middle school and high school level, the district is requiring all students to report to a testing location as a matter of fairness. It would be unfair to place students who are taking the PARCC at a disadvantage to their classmates who are refusing the test. If students refusing the test continue with their regular schedule, students in PARCC testing would fall behind in their studies, thus placing them at a disadvantage.

2) The district reserves the right to use all employees and educational space necessary to allow students to take the PARCC. However, the district also recognizes an obligation to provide an age appropriate response in situations when students are not taking the PARCC. The district will seek to provide an alternative placement for elementary school students refusing the PARCC. In some cases, students may be placed in a classroom at another grade level while in other cases, they may be placed in another room with other students not taking the PARCC. In all cases of test refusal, students will be able to read quietly during the test. Because we are uncertain about the number of test refusal cases, the response may vary depending on unique conditions at each school and classroom.

Q: What will happen if I keep my child home during PARCC testing?
A: The district is required to schedule your child to take the PARCC during a make-up session in accordance with NJDOE testing requirements.
Q: What do I have to do if I want to refuse the PARCC on behalf of my child?
A: The district would like to work in partnership with families who decide that the PARCC is not for their child. Please write to your child’s principal to notify him or her that you are refusing the PARCC on behalf of your child. The district needs to plan and we can do a better job of planning if we know about test refusal cases in advance.

Q: How much time will my child spend in the PARCC testing program?
A: Testing times vary by grade level. The following link will direct you to a memo from the NJDOE indicating the amount of time required for each PARCC session by grade level (click here). At this time, the PARCC testing schedules for high school and middle school students can be found at each school website. The elementary schools will be posting their testing schedules soon.

Q: Are there any other resources that might help me to learn more about the PARCC?
A: YES…Any search of the web will yield countless articles about the PARCC and Common Core. The New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) recently provided guidance (click here). The New Jersey Department of Education offers a host of information (click here). Although controversial, the Commissioner of Education also provided a letter to guide the transition to PARCC (click here). Finally, you are able to preview the PARCC by clicking here.
OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC FEEDBACK ABOUT THE PARCC WITH THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

On January 21, the NJDOE announced that it will hold three public hearings about the PARCC exam.

Here’s the schedule:

Tuesday, Jan. 27, at 10 a.m., in Civic Hall 105, Connector Building, Camden County College, 200 College Drive, Blackwood.

Wednesday, Jan. 28, at 4 p.m., in the Franklin Williams Middle School (MS #7) Auditorium, 222 Laidlaw Ave., Jersey City.

Thursday, Jan. 29, at 6 p.m., in the Jackson Liberty High School Auditorium, 125 N. Hope Chapel Road, Jackson.

Members of the public must register to testify, and can also submit testimony online. For more information click here.