

The PARCC Assessments:

Informing Teaching and Learning

October 20, 2015

Executive Summary

This report presents preliminary data received from PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers), regarding our 2015 statewide assessment. Statewide assessments have been used for decades in New Jersey and are designed to measure student progress toward achieving our academic standards. PARCC is a multi-state consortium that allows states, including New Jersey, to pool resources and expertise to develop a meaningful, comparable high-quality assessment — one that can be used to guide our efforts to continually improve our educational system by supporting teaching and learning, identifying struggling schools, informing teacher development, and providing parents with feedback on their own child’s strengths and challenges.

PARCC provides the most accurate reflection of student progress toward our academic standards that we have ever had. When combined with other measures of student success, it is an assessment that will provide a true gauge of a student’s academic needs.

Today we set a new baseline for student achievement and begin a new journey to deliver on our promise that all children, regardless of life’s circumstances, graduate ready for success in life.

The readiness scores from this first PARCC administration will show that we have great challenges ahead. Many students in New Jersey are not graduating from high school with the skills and knowledge they need to fulfill their career aspirations or support the needs of a growing economy. However, the data cannot be viewed as a criticism of the work or commitment of our teachers and school leaders. New Jersey has historically been one of the highest performing states in the country. We as a nation, however, have just begun to appropriately align our academic standards with the higher expectations of colleges and employers. Our educators and school leaders are committed to a process of continual improvement, and we should be proud of that.

And as we reflect on the challenges that lie ahead, we must understand that educational opportunity and success must be available to all and without regard to family circumstances, race, ethnicity or special needs. One of the reasons New Jersey established its statewide assessment program many years ago was to deliver on this promise by clearly identifying achievement gaps statewide and in individual schools.

Most importantly, we must not retreat from this commitment to our children. We as a state should be proud of the accomplishments that we and our educators have already made in the movement toward higher academic expectations. For example, we have formed a broad and deep coalition of organizations in education, higher education and the business community that is committed to the work ahead. We have also established a continual improvement process, including the PARCC assessment that is capable of supporting our journey to higher student outcomes. We should also be proud that the first PARCC administration went smoothly with nearly 99% of students taking the test in a computerized format. This means not only were students assessed in the applied knowledge, problem-solving skills and analysis emphasized under the new standards, but they were also exposed to the technology-based expectations of the professions to which they aspire.

We should also place the scores in the appropriate context. This marks the first year of results from a very new test based on new, more advanced academic expectations that most districts have only been fully implementing for two years. We know from our prior experience with statewide assessments that the initial year’s scores are often lower, but that student achievement in subsequent years improves as teachers and students become familiar with the new format. Educational outcomes will improve over time if we remain committed to supporting these efforts every day and for years to come. That is the nature of continuous improvement.

NEW JERSEY'S VISION FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The vision of New Jersey's public education system is to prepare all students to lead productive, fulfilling lives. Today's students are preparing to enter a world that requires more demanding skill sets and knowledge than ever before. Colleges and employers expect students to be able to analyze complex situations and to collaborate and to develop effective solutions to challenging problems. For years, New Jersey has been a national leader in not only student achievement, but in setting academic standards and measuring student progress. However, we will need to maintain our commitment to continual improvement in order for New Jersey to deliver on the promise of preparing students for success in college or careers and to continue this leadership position.

The objectives for student learning at the New Jersey Department of Education encompass a unified set of strategies that does the following:

- ✓ Aligns academic expectations in P-12 schools with those of colleges and employers;
- ✓ Improves instruction through meaningful preparation, induction and professional development experiences for teachers and leaders;
- ✓ Builds capacity in schools for the implementation of tiered systems of support that provide interventions and enrichment based on data;
- ✓ Includes effective and efficient assessments, including alternate assessments, that measure student growth over time and provide meaningful and timely feedback to students, parents and educators;
- ✓ Fosters positive school climates and cultures that promote lifelong learning, honor teaching as a critical profession and encourage school, parent and community partnerships; and
- ✓ Employs technology to drive innovation and continuous improvement.

NEW JERSEY'S CHANGE PROCESS

In its pursuit of continuous improvement, the State's system of public education must have a strong, shared expectation for achievement through advanced standards that are closely aligned with the expectations of colleges and employers; high-quality assessments with which to measure student, school and statewide progress; and policies and practices to constructively use the information that these assessments provide to improve teaching and learning and help struggling schools.

The nation is reaching consensus on what students must know and be able to do to be successful in the world of the 21st century, including applied knowledge, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills. Our students will be asked to use technology to analyze complex problems and develop solutions. Our new standards and next-generation computerized assessments are an important link to this future.

In this context, New Jersey's standards and statewide assessments must be viewed as part of an aligned and coherent process of school improvement in conjunction with other measures of student performance to provide valuable information that informs continuous improvement strategies at the student, classroom, school, district, state and national levels.

DEFINING SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS

To better prepare students with the skills needed for success, New Jersey adopted a set of more rigorous academic standards in 2010. The standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade level in English language arts and mathematics, so

that they stay on track for success throughout school and graduate prepared for college and life. The standards provide broad targets for knowledge and skill attainment and have always been adopted through a highly inclusive, transparent and public process. The standards inform the curriculum, established by each local school district in New Jersey, which specifies a course of study that includes textbook choices, lesson plans and end-of-unit tests, as appropriate.

Student success is measured by more than a one-time snapshot from a single standardized test, but rather from multiple measures across a student's entire school experience that can be used to provide a more complete picture of educational needs and inform strategies for continuous improvement.

Educational opportunity and success must be available to all equally and without regard to family circumstances, race, ethnicity or special needs. One of the reasons New Jersey established our statewide assessment program many decades ago was to deliver on this promise by clearly identifying achievement gaps statewide, as well as in individual schools and classrooms. We must not retreat from this commitment as we begin to see much more clearly the work that remains before us.

The standards emphasize skills that students need for the real world, including problem-solving, critical- thinking, analysis and justification. The English language arts (ELA) standards require students to read and analyze complex texts and develop well-organized responses based on supporting evidence. In mathematics, students learn to follow procedures in solving real-world problems and also describe why a solution works.

Students are required to think deeply and work collaboratively, which are skills they need to succeed in the real world. The standards, which are the same at each grade level for every student across New Jersey, were designed to provide a high-quality education for all children. They level the playing field by articulating the expectations for all students, regardless of where they live or their socioeconomic status, with the aim of closing the persistent achievement gaps seen among subgroups of students.

GOALS OF OUR STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS: MEASURING PROGRESS AND INFORMING IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

New Jersey's statewide assessments are meant to be valuable tools for parents, educators, students, schools and districts. These assessments are designed to do the following:

- ✓ Serve as an academic checkup to ensure that students are meeting grade-level expectations and remain on track for the next grade level and ultimately, high school graduation;
- ✓ Help teachers and schools identify students who need support so they can provide additional instruction;
- ✓ Help districts identify persistent achievement gaps so they can identify strategies and allocate resources appropriately; and
- ✓ Help districts measure the effectiveness of their curriculum, interventions and programs.

In order to be full partners in their child's education, parents need accurate and timely information about whether their child is meeting grade-level expectations and is on track to graduate ready for college and career.

Using Data as an Instructional Tool: State test results provide valuable information about student learning. Test results from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment show how well a student performed in subcategories of skills in each subject to identify where a student is excelling and/or where he or she needs additional support or enrichment. Teachers can use this information to better plan instruction and provide more personalized instruction to address areas where a student needs to improve. Schools and districts can use the information to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction. State assessment data can also be used to measure individual student progress over time. The scores from this year's test will set a new baseline for student proficiency that will allow educators, parents and students to measure progress moving forward. Test results from the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessment indicate how well students with the most significant cognitive disabilities have learned the most essential skills within the content standards.

Data as a Tool for Parents: Parents can use their child's test results to better understand his or her needs and strengths and work with teachers to identify resources that would provide additional support. The test results can be used as a springboard to start a discussion with teachers about how parents can help ensure their child is staying on track, and learn how they can view their child's progress over time.

PARCC STATEWIDE RESULTS

In the 2014-15 school year, approximately 850,000 students across New Jersey took the PARCC assessments. As a result of remarkable efforts by schools across the State, nearly 99% of New Jersey's students took the PARCC test on computer platforms, a percentage that led states in the PARCC consortium and positions New Jersey schools to be a national leader in integrating educational technology in classroom instruction and preparing students for the technology expectations in college and careers. This in itself is a great success story in terms of improving educational outcomes.

The results of the first year of assessments are presented in the tables below by subject area and grade level. PARCC defines five levels in characterizing whether a student's performance on the assessment meets the expectations of the grade level:

- Level One: Not Yet Meeting Expectations
- Level Two: Partially Meeting Expectations
- Level Three: Approaching Expectations
- Level Four: Meeting Expectations
- Level Five: Exceeding Expectations

As shown in the table below, roughly half of New Jersey students are meeting or exceeding expectations in English Language Arts/Literacy across all of the grade levels. In mathematics, a slightly lower percentage of students are meeting or exceeding expectations, with the highest percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations in our youngest grade levels.

The first step in any change process is to ascertain the truth. The second is to face that reality with courage and conviction by forming broad partnerships with educators, business and higher education leaders to get the job done. The release of our first year of PARCC results is a call to action to help our children succeed.

NEW JERSEY'S 2015 PARCC OUTCOMES ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS/LITERACY

	Not Yet Meeting (Level 1)	Partially Meeting (Level 2)	Approaching Expectations (Level 3)	Meeting Expectations (Level 4)	Exceeding Expectations (Level 5)
Grade 3	15%	18%	24%	39%	5%
Grade 4	8%	15%	27%	39%	12%
Grade 5	7%	15%	26%	45%	6%
Grade 6	8%	16%	28%	40%	9%
Grade 7	11%	15%	23%	34%	18%
Grade 8	12%	15%	22%	39%	13%
Grade 9	18%	19%	24%	30%	9%
Grade 10	26%	18%	20%	25%	11%
Grade 11	17%	19%	24%	30%	11%

Note: Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

NEW JERSEY'S 2015 PARCC OUTCOMES MATHEMATICS

	Not Yet Meeting (Level 1)	Partially Meeting (Level 2)	Approaching Expectations (Level 3)	Meeting Expectations (Level 4)	Exceeding Expectations (Level 5)
Grade 3	8%	19%	28%	37%	8%
Grade 4	7%	22%	30%	36%	4%
Grade 5	6%	21%	32%	35%	6%
Grade 6	8%	21%	30%	35%	6%
Grade 7	8%	22%	33%	33%	4%
Grade 8*	22%	26%	28%	23%	1%
Algebra I	14%	25%	25%	33%	3%
Geometry	32%	25%	20%	22%	2%
Algebra II	12%	36%	30%	20%	3%

*** Note: Approximately 30,000 New Jersey students participated in the PARCC Algebra I assessment while in middle school. Thus, PARCC Math 8 outcomes are not representative of grade 8 performance as a whole.**

Note: Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

INITIAL TAKEAWAYS

The PARCC assessments measure how well New Jersey students are progressing toward attainment of our college- and career-aligned standards.

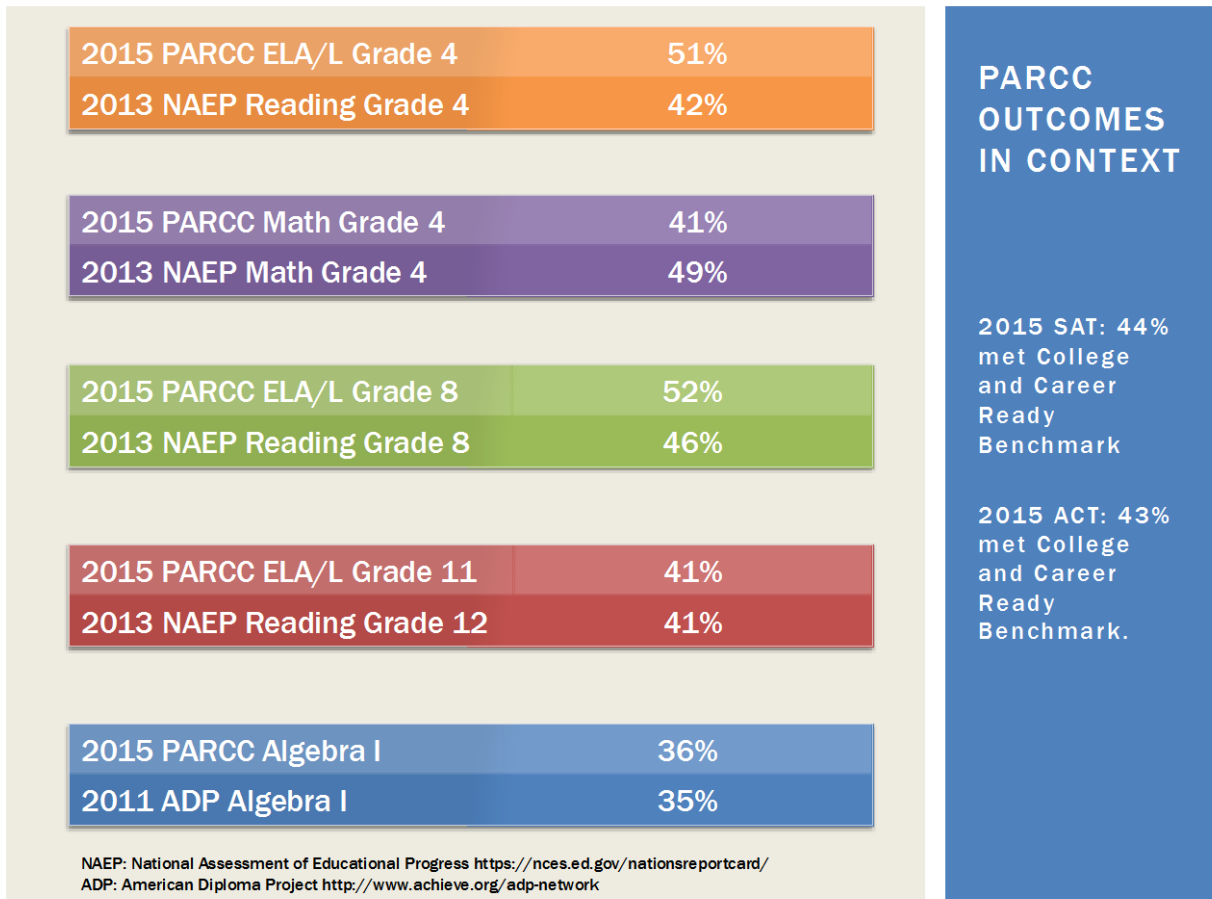
PARCC assessments measure higher learning expectations for students and focus more on the application of knowledge of concepts and skills over memorizing facts than previous assessments. Thus, the PARCC assessments are designed to be a more accurate measure of whether students are on track in their preparation for college and careers. For many years, an "honesty gap" persisted between students' performance on the State assessment and the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) – a nationwide assessment that has long been held as the gold standard for testing. For example, a comparison of the 2013 NAEP scores and the 2014 NJASK scores in 4th grade math and 8th grade reading revealed significant discrepancies in the percentage points (26 and 34 respectively) with regard to the number of students reaching proficiency. The PARCC assessment results more closely resemble the NAEP results. With PARCC, we have a clearer picture of how well prepared our students truly are for success after high school, and we also have a clearer call to action to do better.

Although it is not possible to compare PARCC scores directly with previous statewide assessments, as those assessments were not measures of college and career readiness, it is possible to benchmark New Jersey's PARCC results against other 'third-party' measures of college and career readiness, such as NAEP Grade 12 assessments, the SAT or the ACT. Each of those assessments has defined its own process for identifying students as meeting their benchmarks of college and career readiness. In recent years, New Jersey students have performed as follows:

- In 2013, 41% of New Jersey's 12th grade students met the NAEP definition of College and Career Readiness in Reading.

- Of the graduating class of 2015 who took the SAT, 44% met the College Board's benchmark of College and Career Readiness by achieving a composite score of 1550 across the three sections of the SAT.
- Of the graduating class of 2015 who took the ACT, 43% met the ACT's benchmark of College and Career Readiness by meeting individual performance levels in all four subject areas of the ACT.

Additionally, for a few years, New Jersey administered the American Diploma Project (ADP) Algebra I assessment across the State to students as they took Algebra I courses. The last time that test was administered statewide was in 2011. In that year, approximately 35% of New Jersey students met or exceeded the expectations as measured by that assessment.



AREAS FOR ATTENTION

As expected, the PARCC test results reveal areas where significant attention is needed. It should not be surprising that the results demonstrate that on average our youngest students meet or exceed expectations at higher levels than our high school students. After all, third grade students in 2015 began their schooling as kindergarten students in the 2011-2012 school year and have been continuously educated in our new standards. Yet, the results in high school – particularly in mathematics – demonstrate that there is significant work ahead to align curriculum and instructional practices to the standards and better scaffold student learning throughout a student's career.

MOVING FORWARD WITH THE VISION: USING PARCC DATA

The 2015 PARCC results, as a first-year baseline for the percentage of students meeting the expectations of the standards, serve as a useful tool for the State, districts and schools, as well as parents and various stakeholders, including the business community, education partners and advocacy groups, to work collectively in support of the statewide vision for student success and achievement in the following ways:

- ✓ Teachers can analyze their students' performance on specific test questions and standards and evaluate the instructional tools, strategies, methods and interventions they are implementing in the classroom and adjust, if needed. Teachers are supported through coaching, professional development and Professional Learning Communities. The process of student assessment and educator evaluation provides important and valuable feedback to improve teaching and learning.
- ✓ Schools can disaggregate the results to identify achievement gaps, make more informed curriculum decisions, and better plan for enrichment and support for all students.
- ✓ Districts can use the results to identify schools in need of extra support or intervention and ensure that resources are appropriately allocated. In addition, New Jersey's Regional Achievement Centers, along with struggling schools and their districts, can use data such as those gleaned from assessments to drive decision-making and help close the achievement gap.
- ✓ The Department can identify areas needing additional guidance and professional development and schools/districts needing targeted technical assistance and support.

Any assessment is only as good as its ability to support good teaching and good learning. PARCC is New Jersey's first statewide test that can effectively do that.

PREPARING NEW JERSEY EDUCATORS TO USE PARCC DATA

The Department is committed to ensuring that New Jersey educators are prepared to use assessment data as a tool to measure and ensure progress, as well as improve instruction and student learning through the following initiatives:

- ✓ Convening teams of educators and extensively training them on how to understand the score reports and conduct thoughtful item analyses of the data, so that they could in turn work collaboratively with and train colleagues at the school and district levels.
- ✓ Building capacity for schools, through coordinated professional development, to offer tiered systems of interventions for students based on State and district assessment data.
- ✓ Extending the scope of the Achievement Coaches program to empower New Jersey teachers to provide direct support to other educators through coaching and related resources.
- ✓ Creating online PARCC toolkits and webinars to inform educators on how to support daily instruction through the cycle of teaching and learning.
- ✓ Sharing an online assessment module for teachers to use as a professional development tool in their Professional Learning Communities.
- ✓ Sharing PARCC's set of diagnostic tools for educators that will feature sample test questions, allowing teachers to periodically measure and assess their students throughout the year using activities that mirror the PARCC tasks to ensure they are on track for the end-of-year State test.
- ✓ Conducting professional development for educators regarding the selection of accessibility features and accommodations for students with disabilities and English language learners.
- ✓ Sending a monthly newsletter via e-mail with more information on the new test scores and helping educators make the most of them.

PREPARING NEW JERSEY PARENTS TO USE PARCC DATA

Equally as important as helping teachers understand the data is helping parents understand what the score reports mean and how they can be used as a springboard to start a discussion with teachers about how to ensure their child is staying on track. We know that educators are the number one resource for parents, so we must prepare teachers to have in-depth conversations with parents.

To assist them, the Department provides the following:

- ✓ Parent Academy for Student Success (PASS) 4 materials are to be distributed statewide to help school leaders frame conversations with parents about student data and the new reports.
- ✓ The New Jersey Educator Leader Cadre (NJELC) team is to host a training in November that will focus on communicating the new score reports and language to parents. All materials developed at the conference will be available to educators statewide.

CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR SUCCESS

The Department will continue to provide resources and opportunities for professional development to advance our State vision. Support for educators and parents will range from informational sessions, resources and guidance to targeted technical assistance, focused on the following:

- ✓ Effective classroom instruction designed for diverse learners;
- ✓ Curriculum scaffolds;
- ✓ Co-teaching and consultation;
- ✓ Tiered interventions and supports;
- ✓ Positive and inclusive school climate;
- ✓ Positive behavioral supports;
- ✓ Person-centered approaches in school and transition; and
- ✓ Community-based instruction.

We must use the information that is now available to us to assist students in classrooms, schools, and districts throughout the state to inform curriculum and instruction; assist struggling schools; and to engage parents and communities.

NEXT STEPS

For the first year of PARCC results, districts are expected to receive individual student reports in mid-November 2015 for students in high school and beginning in late November 2015 for students in grades 3-8. Results for subsequent years are expected to be available to parents and school districts earlier, as the initial year scoring process will not be required.

Districts also will receive results of the Dynamic Learning Maps assessment administered to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- 1. Will PARCC data be used as the sole criteria for student promotion or placement?** In New Jersey, local school districts make decisions about student placement and promotion. Typically, State assessments are one of several measures used to gauge how well students are progressing toward attaining new standards and do not solely determine grade promotion or report card grades. Results from the statewide assessment, along with student performance on class assignments and tests, homework and other measures, combine to give parents and teachers a complete picture of a child's academic progress.
- 2. Has New Jersey always had standardized tests?** New Jersey has had annual statewide assessments since the 1970s. Starting in 1978, students in grades 3, 6 and 9 were required to take the Minimum Basic Skills (MBS) test in reading and mathematics and students were required to pass the ninth-grade tests to graduate. The State continually reviewed and refined the testing program in subsequent years, adding a writing assessment and adopting a High School Proficiency Test in 11th grade in the 1980s. With the adoption of the Core Curriculum Content Standards in 1996, the State developed new assessments – the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment and the High School Proficiency Assessment. These tests were administered until the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, which required all states to test all students annually in grades 3-8 and in high school in English language arts and mathematics and at periodic grade levels in science. To meet this requirement, New Jersey in 2004 adopted the New Jersey Assessment of Student Knowledge (NJASK) in Grades 3-8 and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) in high school, which were in place until 2014. To ensure that all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, were included in State assessment systems, testing accommodations were expanded and alternate assessments were developed. Since 2002, New Jersey has also administered an alternative assessment for those students with the most severe cognitive disabilities.
- 3. What is PARCC and why did New Jersey join?** The adoption of the Common Core State Standards in 2010 triggered the need for a new and improved assessment to accurately measure student knowledge and skills. That same year, New Jersey joined the PARCC consortium – a group of states that collaboratively developed a common set of assessments in English language arts and mathematics to measure student progress against higher standards. The PARCC assessments, which replaced the NJASK and HSPA in grades 3-8 and 11 in mathematics and English language arts, measure students' ability to apply their knowledge of concepts rather than memorize facts. Hundreds of New Jersey educators participated in the development and review of PARCC test questions. New Jersey also joined a consortium of states that was led by the University of Kansas and participated in the development of the Dynamic Learning Maps assessment that is based on the Common Core State Standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities. New Jersey became a governing member on the PARCC consortium in 2011. In this role, the State and our higher education partners participate in major policy and operational decisions, including those related to the overall test design. As such, New Jersey was part of the decision in the spring of 2015 to reduce the total testing time by 90 minutes and collapse the two testing windows into one.
- 4. How were the performance levels set?** The first year of any test administration is a transition year. Before results can be released and score reports can be sent to parents, the tests must be scored and the performance levels for student achievement must be set. On the PARCC test, selected-response questions are computer scored, but open-ended questions and performance-based tasks require trained scorers. This is similar to the process New Jersey used for many years to score the NJASK and HSPA assessments. The standards-setting process involves determining the threshold scores, which are minimum scores that establish each of PARCC's five levels of student performance. A student's overall score (out of a possible 850) and Performance Level (1-5) give a quick evaluation of whether he or she is achieving grade-level expectations (Level 1 indicates the greatest need for improvement and Level 5 indicates the strongest performance). Separate threshold scores were established for the tests in grades 3-8 and those

in high school. More than 200 educators from various states, including New Jersey, participated in this process, which included a thorough review of each test question.

5. **Will PARCC data serve as a new baseline for continuous improvement?** The 2015 results cannot be compared to previous State assessment scores but are instead setting a new baseline. Teachers can use this information to understand where their students are excelling and where they need additional instruction. Beyond 2015, it will be important to measure progress in the percent of students meeting expectations against this new baseline to show the growth of New Jersey students toward college- and career-readiness. Meaningful change is expected to happen gradually, with positive outcomes determined by patience and persistence.
6. **What has the State done to reduce testing time and administrative burdens on PARCC?** We will always be balancing the efficiency of testing in terms of time spent in administration and preparation against its effectiveness, i.e., its ability to serve as a valid measure of student learning, as well as its ability to inform curricular and instructional improvement. We will continue to pursue every opportunity to reduce testing time and administrative burdens without compromising our goals of measuring progress regarding the breadth and depth of the standards. For 2016, we have collapsed the testing windows into one and have reduced testing time overall. We have exempted 11th graders who participate in other testing programs such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate programs in English language arts from participating in the PARCC 11th Grade ELA EOC assessments. It is also expected that time devoted to preparation will decrease as schools become familiar with the testing format and technology. Finally, the PARCC assessments were designed to support and emulate the type of highly effective instructional strategies that faithful implementation of the standards requires, rather than furthering the educational strategies associated with multiple-choice-only assessments.
7. **What is the DLM?** The Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessment is an alternate State assessment administered to students with the most significant intellectual disabilities. Students in grades 3-8 and 11 who meet specific eligibility criteria will be administered the DLM assessment for ELA and math instead of the PARCC assessments. The DLM is based on the essential elements of the content standards which link the instruction of students with significant cognitive students to the content standards developed for all students. For more information on DLM, visit: <http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/newjersey>.
8. **Are students with disabilities who have IEPs required to take the PARCC or DLM assessments?** Both the *No Child Left Behind Act* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004* require that **all** students participate in statewide assessments in the grades and subjects tested. The purpose is to ensure that achievement of the State's standards is measured for **all** students. The vast majority of students with IEPs will take the PARCC assessments. These students will be able to participate with appropriate accommodations listed in their IEPs. The PARCC assessments also include a variety of "accessibility features" that all students can access during assessments. Students with the most significant intellectual disabilities who meet specific eligibility criteria will take the DLM assessment instead of the PARCC assessment. The IEP team determines if a student will take the PARCC or the DLM. For more information visit: http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/sites/default/files/documents/dlm_participation_guidelines.pdf
9. **What is ACCESS for ELLs?** ACCESS for ELLs is an English language proficiency assessment administered to Kindergarten through 12th grade students who have been identified as English Language Learners (ELLs). It is given annually in World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium member states, which include New Jersey, to monitor students' progress in acquiring academic English. For programs funded by Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), all ELLs are required to take the ACCESS for ELLs (K-12) assessment annually. For more information about ACCESS for ELLs 2.0, go to <http://www.nj.gov/education/bilingual/ells/20/>

10. Are English language learners (ELLs) required to take the PARCC or ACCESS for ELLs?

Federal law requires that ELLs be included in the statewide assessments with the intention of holding schools accountable for the academic performance of all students. However, there is a narrow exception granted to ELLs in their first year of instruction in U.S. schools. For grades 3 through 8, newly arrived ELLs attending U.S. schools before July 1 of the current school year are not required to participate in the English language arts literacy portion of the PARCC assessment. (English language proficiency of these students must be assessed using another assessment, such as ACCESS for ELLs.) These students must take the mathematics portion of the assessment. Newly arrived high school students entering U.S. schools are required to participate in both the ELA/L and mathematics sections of the PARCC assessments and do not receive an exemption. ELLs who also have significant cognitive disabilities are assessed using DLM. For more detailed information, visit:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/bilingual/policy/PARCCELLsFAQ.htm>.

RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION:** Provides more details about standards and assessments.
<http://www.nj.gov/education/assessment>
- **UNDERSTANDTHESCORE.ORG:** Contains sample PARCC parent score reports, a score report guide, resources for educators and parents, as well as state-specific pages for additional information.
<http://understandthescore.org>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67G12fhSXmA&feature=youtu.be> (accompanying video)
- **PARCC:** Provides practice tests, sample questions and information regarding the development of the test.
<http://www.parcconline.org>
- **BE A LEARNING HERO:** Provides parent-friendly information and resources on the standards and PARCC tests.
<http://bealearninghero.org>
- **THE HONESTY GAP:** Offers more detailed information about the effects of the honesty gap in New Jersey.
<http://www.honestygap.org/state/new-jersey>
- **DYNAMIC LEARNING MAPS ASSESSMENT:** Contains information regarding the State assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
<http://www.dynamiclearningmaps.org>