

Christie Administration Announces First Year of PARCC Results

Education leaders now place emphasis on using data to improve classroom instruction

For Immediate Release

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Date: October 20, 2015
Updated November 5, 2015

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Trenton, NJ – The Christie Administration today announced statewide PARCC assessment results, making good on its promise to provide parents and educators with a more accurate measurement of students' progress on the path to success after high school.

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment, which replaced the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) and High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) in English language arts and mathematics, asks students to demonstrate and apply their knowledge and skills by utilizing critical thinking, analytical writing, and problem solving.

"We promised parents an honest assessment regarding their children's readiness to succeed in school and to graduate ready to meet the challenges of college or a career," said Education Commissioner David C. Hespe. "PARCC delivers on that promise. For the first time in more than 30 years, we have a test that is designed to actually improve instruction in our schools."

Setting a New Baseline, Focusing on the Future

The scores released today set a new baseline and cannot be compared to previous scores from now outdated exams that reflected different, lower-level knowledge and skills. Whenever a new test is introduced, there is a period of adjustment as teachers and students become acclimated to the new standards and assessments.

"This first year's results show there is still much work to be done in ensuring all of our students are fully prepared for the 21st century demands of college and career," said Commissioner Hespe.

Summary of New Jersey's 2015 PARCC Outcomes

English Language Arts

	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%	10%
Grade 10	25%	18%	20%	26%	11%
Grade 11	17%	19%	24%	30%	11%

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%
Algebra II	32%	25%	20%	22%	2%
Geometry	12%	36%	30%	20%	3%

Numbers for charts may not total 100% due to rounding.

** 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.*

Results from the PARCC assessment go beyond the old exams by providing parents with greater detail for each subject in which their child is excelling or may need support.

"We expect the scores to give parents a useful assessment of where their children are, and we encourage parents to use the individual score reports to work with teachers to support their children's development," said New Jersey Parent Teacher Association President Rose Acerra. "We all know that our children are much more than a single score, but the assessment results will present an opportunity to help our students reach higher achievement levels than we ever thought possible."

As results from future assessments are returned to school districts and parents much sooner, Commissioner Hespe noted how school leaders can use the data to improve instruction. For instance, teachers whose students struggle in a certain area may benefit from targeted professional development. Educators will soon be able to review large numbers of actual test questions, including how they were evaluated, which can help guide classroom instruction more toward critical-thinking and problem-solving skills the test demands.

"For local boards of education, the 2015 PARCC data can serve as an important starting point for an ongoing discussion about improving instruction," said Dr. Lawrence S. Feinsod, executive director of the New Jersey School Boards Association. "We urge our members to work with their administrative teams and teaching staffs to use this information to identify the strengths and weaknesses of curriculum and to ensure that professional development is aligned with the learning needs of their students."

Raising Expectations

With the previous NJASK test, there were some schools where every student was proficient, and some schools where a third of the study body received a perfect score. The HSPA test was more accurately a ninth-grade level evaluation.

"Parents and educators have been seeking a more thorough, accurate assessment like PARCC," said Commissioner Hespe.

In recent years, the College Board, makers of the SAT, as well as the ACT and the National Assessment for Educational Progress, each have reported that approximately four in 10 of New Jersey students are leaving high school fully prepared for college or career.

"Only 40 percent of New Jersey's students are college and career ready, so when students get to college, too many of their tuition dollars are spent on remediation courses to learn skills that should have been mastered in high school," noted NJ Institute of Technology President Joel S. Bloom. "This is a real problem, but higher expectations and standards, and high-quality assessments are a part of the solution."

Dana Egreczky, Senior Workforce Specialist at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, agreed. "For 20 years, the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce has been a strong supporter of rigorous academic standards and aligned assessments to ensure that all students are college- and career-ready," she said. "We support the state's efforts to upgrade its accountability system so teachers and parents can identify gaps in student learning and help ensure that all students will be ready for the demands of post-secondary education and available jobs."

"It is extremely important that our 20,000 member companies can hire career-ready employees to fill available positions," said Michele Siekerka, president and CEO of the New Jersey Business and Industry Association. "We must ensure we are educating our future workforce for the jobs of tomorrow, and the way to determine this is through a rigorous assessment process. Today's data provides a benchmark from which we can work to ensure that all students are career ready when they graduate from high school."

"Today, we reiterate our support of the implementation of PARCC assessments," said Dr. Lawrence A. Nespoli, president, New Jersey Council of County Colleges. He identified areas where PARCC assessments can benefit high school students, noting that "students who do well on the PARCC assessments in 11th grade will be considered college-ready, and will not need to take any additional college placement exams if they choose to enroll at a New Jersey community college." He also said students who demonstrate college-readiness have the opportunity to enroll in dual-enrollment courses that will allow them to earn college credit while still in high school. He also noted that students who are not yet college- or career-ready can take part in summer programming and bridge courses offered by New Jersey's community colleges in partnership with high schools throughout the state.

Commissioner Hesse praised teachers and local school leaders throughout the state for their hard work and preparation that led to a successful first administration of the PARCC exam. "Now that the statewide results are in," he said, "I know our school leaders are taking the steps necessary, such as making adjustments to their curricula, targeting professional learning activities for teachers, and engaging parents and communities to ensure that all New Jersey students receive a world-class education."

For more information about the new assessments, parents should visit the Department of Education's [assessments web page](#).