



WHY IS THE PARCC TEST VALUABLE FOR MY CHILD? A GUIDE FOR TEACHER DISCUSSIONS

This document will help teachers answer parents' questions about the value and benefit of the PARCC tests. It is not a comprehensive list, but was designed to help teachers explain to parents why it is important for their child to participate in the annual assessment.

1. Why did students start taking the PARCC test?

- The PARCC test replaces the old state test in English language arts/literacy and math. This better, more accurate test was needed to measure the college- and career-ready standards that are guiding teachers' instruction in the classroom. These standards focus on the skills students need in the real world, like critical thinking, analyzing, and problem solving and the tests reflect the types of activities that students do in the classroom every day.

2. How is the test valuable? Why should my child take this test?

- The PARCC test helps parents understand how their child is progressing in math and English language arts and how he or she is performing in comparison to peers in the grade level, district and state. It is a valuable measure to ensure a student is making the progress he or she needs to be on track for the next grade level.
- The PARCC provides more detailed information about student learning than previous tests. The results show how well a student performed in different categories of skills in both subjects. It is important for students to take this the test because it allows teachers to provide more personalized learning to help students improve in the areas they need.

3. How can the test help students improve?

- Teachers can use the information from the test to guide their instruction. We use the data to inform where each student needs to improve, which allows for more effective and targeted support and remediation. We can also identify where students have mastered content and can be challenged by going deeper into a subject matter.
- Your child's teacher(s) have access to a range of instructional tools to help them measure whether students are on track at different points in the school year. These tools help teachers adjust whole-class instruction and differentiate instruction based on specific student needs so students make stronger gains throughout the year.

4. What kinds of questions are on the test? Is this test too stressful for students?

- The questions on the PARCC test mirror the activities that students perform in the classroom on a regular basis so they are familiar with the tasks. The PARCC includes performance-based tasks, which are complex, multi-step writing assignments that require students to apply their knowledge and skills to address real-world problems. In English language arts/literacy, students have to apply their research and writing skills, and in math, they will solve complex problems and then describe and defend their reasoning.
- To see a practice test, visit: <http://www.parcconline.org/assessments/practice-tests>

5. Why is it important for all students to take the PARCC test?

- Although these test scores do not affect a student’s report card grades, and they are only one measure of student achievement, they are still valuable. When a student does not take the test, parents and teachers lose valuable information about how that student is progressing and learning, making it more difficult to identify and address individual student learning gaps.
- The test is also an important tool that schools and district use to help identify achievement gaps. Results from the test ensure all students, including traditionally underserved students, such as low-income and those receiving special education and English language services, receive a high-quality education. When students do not participate in the test, these gaps cannot be accurately identified and addressed.

6. Why is my child’s score important?

- The scores on these tests are important because they serve as an ‘academic check-up’ and show how well students are progressing. Parents and teachers will be able to compare this second year of scores to last year’s score to measure the progress a student has made in English and math.

7. How much time do students spend on annual assessments?

Students spend less than 1 percent of their time in school on the annual assessments. Since the assessments are aligned to our state standards, all learning prepares students for these assessments. Good teaching will always be the best method of preparing students for success—whether that’s success on an assessment, a presentation, or to move on to the next grade.

8. How is student data protected?

- Protecting student data and privacy is a top priority. New Jersey retains control over student information, and federal law prohibits the creation of a federal database with students’ personally identifiable information. Any recommended data collection adheres to all federal and state privacy laws, including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- The information collected from the PARCC test is valuable for teachers, principals, and district leaders. Along with helping identify gaps in individual student learning, it also helps leaders more effectively distribute resources to the schools that need them the most. At the school level, it can also be one factor that is used in evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum and materials used in the classroom.

9. Where can parents go for more information?

- For more information about the test, and to see sample questions, visit www.understandthescore.org. For parent-friendly information about the test, including FAQs, videos and resources to use at home, visit <http://bealearninghero.org/classroom/parcc>. Also visit the New Jersey Department of Education’s resources online: <http://www.nj.gov/education/assessment>.