

# New tests linked to the Common Core

## What are the new tests that will be used with the Common Core?

The new standardized assessments are known as the PARCC assessments. PARCC stands for Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers. These new assessments are a set of computer-based tests aligned to the Common Core State Standards. The PARCC assessments will allow school leaders, parents and teachers to see if students are reaching important academic goals and help determine if students are on track to be college and career ready by the end of high school.<sup>1</sup>

## Are these new tests in addition to our existing standardized tests in New Jersey?

No. In New Jersey, the PARCC assessments will replace the NJASK English-language arts and mathematics tests for 3rd-8th grade. The 9th-11th grade PARCC assessments will replace the HSPA, the current High School Proficiency Assessment given in 11th grade. The PARCC assessments will be given during the 2014-2015 school year.<sup>2</sup>

## Why do we need new tests?

The new tests will assess different skills that are emphasized in the Common Core. The tests are designed to test critical thinking skills, which were not previously emphasized on the NJASK and HSPA. For example, on the new tests there will be a mixture of open-ended questions and multiple-choice questions. In some cases questions will have more than one correct answer. Students will have to think carefully and show their work to select the right answer and get full credit.

This is important because our previous assessments did not provide teachers, parents and students an adequate measure of student learning. For example, the HSPA failed to fully measure students' English-language arts literacy and math knowledge at the 11th and 12th grade levels. In fact, proficiency on HSPA was actually more closely related to content that should have been mastered at the 8th-10th grade level and was not a good measure of what students should know by 11th grade.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the HSPA did not accurately signal to families and students whether students were prepared to take on college level coursework or enter the workforce, despite the high passage rates.

The new assessments are also administered online, which will allow for faster scoring. This method will give school leaders, teachers and parents more timely access to the results, which can help drive and improve instruction moving forward.

<sup>1</sup> "The PARCC Assessment," PARCC, accessed July 26, 2014, <http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-assessment>.

<sup>2</sup> "PARCC Assessment," New Jersey State Department of Education, accessed July 26, 2014, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/sca/parcc/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Final Report of the New Jersey Department of Education College and Career Readiness Task Force," accessed July 26, 2014, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/readiness.pdf>.

## How quickly will teachers get feedback on the new test results?

The current plan is to have test results returned to teachers before the end of the school year. As more information becomes available during the winter and spring of 2015, JerseyCAN will share updates on these timelines.<sup>4</sup>

## How will these new tests impact graduation requirements in New Jersey?

For the first few years of the new tests, students in high school will not be required to pass the new assessments as a requirement for graduation. The New Jersey Department of Education is developing a plan to phase in the new assessments as a requirement for graduation over the next several years.<sup>5</sup>

## Does New Jersey have the technology necessary to administer these assessments next year?

Since 2010, when New Jersey first adopted the Common Core State Standards, the New Jersey Department of Education has worked with districts and school leaders to ramp up for the new standards and assessments. This required assessing Internet capabilities at schools as well as completing audits of the technology already available.

Based on the state's assessment to date, 70 percent of districts have the technology in place to adequately administer the exams.<sup>6</sup> This summer, the NJDOE is working closely with the remaining districts to ensure they are prepared to implement the assessments.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "PARCC Frequently Asked Questions: Updated September 2013," PARCC, accessed July 26, 2014, [http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCCFAQ\\_9-18-2013.pdf](http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCCFAQ_9-18-2013.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> "Superintendent Convocation," New Jersey State Department of Education, accessed July 26, 2014, <http://assets.njspotlight.com/assets/13/0919/2249>.

<sup>6</sup> "Assembly Budget Committee Hears from Acting Commissioner Hesper," New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, accessed July 25, 2014, <http://www.njpsa.org/?q=content/assembly-budget-committee-hears-acting-commissioner>.

<sup>7</sup> "Update PARCC Field Testing," New Jersey State Department of Education, accessed July 26, 2014, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/sboe/meetings/2014/May/public/Update%20on%20PARCC%20Field%20Testing.pdf>.