FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FROM COMMON CORE/PARCC PARENT INFORMATION NIGHT

NOTE: Questions that were similar in nature were combined into a single question and answer. Questions were organized into similar categories. The District encourages parents and concerned citizens to refer to the links included in the elementary and secondary presentations reprinted below at the end of the list of FAQs. If you have questions that were not addressed in this Q&A, please send them via email to commoncore@edison.k12.nj.us.

PLACEMENT

1. Will PARCC results be used as placement criteria (Advanced Honors, Honors, Accelerated, Level 1, and Level 2) at the middle and high schools grades (6 through 12)?
   a. PARCC will NOT be used to determine placement since it is a new and unproven test.

PARCC

2. Why have some states dropped out of PARCC?
   a. Some states have opted out referencing the testing as an "unfunded mandate" others opted out once the results from the early adoption states were published.
3. Is the same PARCC test given to all levels (Honors, Level 1 and Level 2)?
   a. Students take the same grade level PARCC regardless of whether they are in Honors, Level 1 or Level 2 in the actual course.
4. Will the Performance Based Assessment (PBA) of PARCC include the entire curriculum?
   a. The PBA is designed to cover roughly 75% of the curriculum for the grade. The assessment is task-oriented and based on how students apply skills and knowledge, rather than a cumulative assessment of all knowledge and skills students are expected to know by the end of that grade level.
5. What percentage of special education students will be exempt from PARCC?
   a. The NJDOE expects all students, including those with special needs, to take the PARCC on-line assessments. However, students who were previously identified to take the Alternative Proficiency Assessment (APA) will now take an assessment called a Dynamic Learning Map rather than the PARCC. These students are identified by the Child Study Team.
6. What math test do middle school students in Algebra 1 and Geometry take?
   a. Middle school students in Algebra 1 will take the Algebra 1 PARCC, not the grade 7 or grade 8 math. Those in Geometry will take the Geometry PARCC, not the grade 8 math.
7. Are there any books for PARCC preparation?
   a. While there are publishers who claim to have books that prepare students for PARCC, these are unproven. PARCC is administered on line and a workbook is not a reliable substitute. Parents can view sample PARCC questions at www.parcconline.org.

8. Are the 3 units of the English language Arts PBA and 2 units of math PBA taken on the same day?
   a. Students will take a different unit each day. The district has a 20 day testing cycle to administer the assessment to all students.
9. What happens if students have eye problems looking at the screen? Can they stop the test and complete it the next day?
   a. PARCC has not yet published a proctor's guide, so we do not know if stopping and restarting will be permitted. Based on what we have read so far, students must complete each unit in one, single sitting. However, there are accommodations built in to the PARCC assessment platform that address different accessibility needs including students who need large print or other accessibility aids.
10. When will parents get the results of PARCC tests?
    a. The NJDOE advised districts on September 30, 2014 that results will not be available until late September or early October, 2015.
11. How can we get students typing practice?
    a. Based on the PARCC pilot in which the district participated last spring in grades 3, 5, 6 and 10 our students had no difficulty with the typing required for PARCC.
    b. In the elementary schools, grades 3-5 students are authentically practicing typing every day through the different tasks and activities that they are completing via the Chromebooks. This ongoing and repeated practice will continue to develop typing skills. However, additional time is also built into the PARCC assessment platform to account for variations in typing abilities.
12. Were there any questions raised by the district representatives about the scores for PARCC coming in late September?
    a. The NJDOE just released the late September date for results on September 30th. Districts throughout the state had expected a much earlier result since that was part of the rationale behind on-line testing rather than paper-pencil. We are currently reviewing a list of concerns to address with the NJDOE, this being one of them.
13. With testing on line, do we still have to concentrate on students' handwriting?
    a. While students will always be taught to write, there has been less emphasis on cursive writing over the past decade. In addition, handwriting is not a standard that is included in the Common Core State Standards. The expanding use of on-line assessments will continue that de-emphasis. However, teachers still try to incorporate practice as much as possible.
14. What can be done by our Board of Education to influence a reduction in testing time as it is too lengthy? Students can be assessed in a shorter time.
    a. The testing time has been mandated by the NJDOE so that all public schools which are required to administer PARCC use the same time frames. Based on parent feedback the Board of Education will be discussing possible options.

15. What happens if there is a technology glitch while students are taking test?
    a. Based on the pilot administration, the PARCC help desk either fixes the glitch while the testing is ongoing, or has the student close out and the student continues the test the next day. Based on published PARCC documentation, there was no loss of student data during the field testing conducted across grade levels and school districts this past spring.
16. Is PARCC being administered at the same time as AP Testing?
    a. The End of Course test window overlaps with the AP Testing. The High School PARCC window is April 20 through May 15. The AP testing is May 4th through May 15.
17. For some math problems students need to write out the steps to get the answer.   How is this done on the computer?
    a. Students will have scrap paper during the math test, but if it is required that they show work, they will need to type in their calculations.
18. What are other states doing if not PARCC?
    a. Several states are using another similar test called Smarter Balance. Other Common Core States are not using either.
19. Does i-Ready prepare students for PARCC?
    a. I-Ready is Common Core aligned in terms of content and student achievement levels. It is also "PARCC-Like" in terms of the technology it uses.
20. How does STAR prepare students for PARCC?
    a. All assessments including STAR and Study Island assessments are Common Core aligned. The STAR and Study Island assessments are "PARCC-like" because of the amount of technology enhanced responses.
21. Will Science be included in PARCC test?
    a. PARCC testing is only in Language Arts and Mathematics. Students in grades 4 and 8 will still take the NJASK Science assessment scheduled for late May.
22. Will students be given extra time if computer locks during testing?
    a. When this happened during the pilot, the test was unlocked and the student was permitted time to finish the work.
23. Typing speed may be slow. In what way will this affect the student's test results?
    a. The Unit Time given for each test is much longer than the actual time the majority of students need. This should allow for various typing speeds. Students are scored based on the content of their response, not the amount of time in which they completed the problem.
24. How will students answer a geometry problem where they need to use a protractor, etc.?
    a. All required mathematical tools will be supplied on-line.
25. How are open-ended response answers graded?
    a. These will be graded by people, not by computer.
26. It was mentioned that students will be encouraged to go "back to the text" when answering questions. Will that mean that children will have open book test as part of PARCC?
    a. Students will be able to scroll back to the reading passage in order to reference specific textual evidence.

27. Will testing be done on Chromebooks?
    a. Our elementary students in grades 3 through 5 will test on the Chromebooks they have been given.
28. What will be the general expectation on the amount of time that an average student in 6th grade would need based on the new standards? How do we detect that it's taking "too long?"
    a. We are told that the vast majority of students will complete the PARCC in 25 to 30 minutes less time than what is set for the Unit Test.
29. Are PARCC exams given locally or will they be taken in a different place?
    a. The exams will be given in our schools.
30. Will students get on line PARCC practice at school?
    a. We hope to have students practice the on-line testing prior to the first PBA. In all grade levels, the district has begun to put more of the local assessments including STAR, i-Ready, Study Island benchmarks, and various classroom assignments online in order to give the students continued practice.
31. Can students take PARCC paper/pencil if they prefer?
    a. This is not an option according to the NJDOE.
32. What are the consequences if a student doesn't do well on PARCC?
    a. There are no consequences through grade 8. However, on September 30th the NJDOE announced that students must pass at least one PARCC Language Arts and Math assessment to graduate from high school. There are alternate assessments if a student does not receive a passing PARCC score. In addition, the NJDOE has implemented a growth model. Students are evaluated on a rate of growth that is consistent with previous scoring data and in comparison to peers across the state of NJ. However, clear scoring parameters have still not been announced by the NJDOE.
33. Does the PARCC take into account that this is the first year students are using Common Core curriculum.
    a. For grades K-5 and 9-12, the mandate for the implementation of Common Core was September of 2012. Therefore, these grade levels have been working towards the Common Core since 2012. Grades 6-8 also began working towards the Common Core in English language arts in 2012 and math was implemented in 2013.However, there is no consideration of the transition according to what the NJDOE has stated.
34. Is Study Island good preparation for PARCC?
    a. There is no proven preparation for PARCC at this time. However, Study Island and other technology based programs are good practice for applying skills and concepts on a higher level and to practice basic concepts and skills regularly. All learning will help students practice and obtain the knowledge and skills required by the Common Core.
35. Can we opt out of PARCC?
    a. NJ does not allow for student opt out of standardized assessments. A student can refuse to take the PARCC assessment, however, the school is obligated to count the student's attendance and score as part of the district reporting and at this time are not mandated to provide and alternative activity.

COMMON CORE

36. How does the Common Core compare to the existing curriculum in North Edison?
    a. There is only one District-wide curriculum. In the past two years, secondary English and Math curricula have all been revised to align with the Common Core. At the Elementary level, reading, writing, and math curricula have all been aligned to the Common Core. There is only one District-wide curriculum plan and there is no difference between North and South Edison.
37. Is there Common Core for Science or other subjects?
    a. At this time, the Common Core standards only pertain to math and English language arts. Other subject areas are being reviewed. However, many of the math and English language arts standards are interwoven into other subject areas because of the emphasis on reading, writing, and problem-solving.
38. Are i-Ready and STAR assessments Common Core compliant? Do the teachers really use i-Ready in planning lessons? How do teachers use STAR assessments?
    a. I-Ready is new to our middle schools. It was selected because it is Common Core aligned for student expectations and "PARCC-like" in terms of technology. Teachers use the results and the individual reports for each student to identify specific areas of weakness. Students also have 24/7 on-line access to specific lessons designed to improve their skills.
    b. STAR assessments are one assessment that the elementary schools use to obtain data on student's skill levels in reading and math. The STAR assessment is aligned to the Common Core and is an online assessment. The assessment provides specific areas of strength and concern according to the different standards within reading and math. In addition, STAR assesses the students' Lexile scores and gives feedback on individualized instructional plans and goal setting.
39. How would the NCLB mesh with the rigor of CCSS?
    a. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was a federal law and did not speak to actual curriculum standards. The Common Core Standards was an initiative by National Council of Governors and Chief School Administrators. It is not a federal law, but a set of standards voluntarily adopted by 46 states.
40. Are middle schools getting Chromebooks?
    a. Budget depending, it is planned to provide Chromebooks to middle school students in the 2015-16 school year.
41. How is the Common Core aligned with standardized tests?
    a. The College Board announced a major change in SAT to take place in 2016 which will align it more to the Common Core.
    b. The PARCC assessment is the standardized test that measures the implementation of the Common Core.

42. How do teachers manage different levels of students in one class?
    a. Teachers have received increased professional development on differentiated instruction strategies so that they may adjust their teaching methods to the varied ways the students in their class learn. Students are more actively involved in their classwork.
43. Will levels (Honors, Level 1, and Level 2) go away with Common Core?
    a. At this time there is no plan to eliminate the levels of instruction in our secondary schools.
44. Do these changes apply to Grades k – 5 or middle and high school also?
    a. The Common Core State Standards apply to all grade levels, K – 12.
45. Does the move to textual evidence and non-fiction mean take away from student creativity?
    a. Students will still have the opportunities to write creatively, but they will be increasing their writings that require textual evidence.
46. Is more computer based/web based instruction coming in?
    a. We will be expanding our use of computer and web based instruction to better prepare our students for the world in which they will be living.
47. How do we bring upper elementary, middle/high school students up to speed with the Common Core since this is the first year and they are being tested?
    a. Our teachers are using curricula and resources that are Common Core aligned as well as instruction practices that involve more student engagement. The role of the teacher is changing.
48. How can we help students adjust to this new system?
    a. Your help depends on the grade of your child.   The NJDOE has a page with links to numerous parent resources. That link is:
       http://www.state.nj.us/education/sca/resources/parents.htm
49. Should parents focus on Lexile level in reading?
    a. Parents can help their children select books based on the appropriate lexile level. A good resource is https://lexile.com/fab/ which will recommend books that fall within a particular grade level. The Common Core does require students to read at higher lexile ranges. A comparison of the old to the new appears in b. below:
    b.

Grade Band	Old Lexile Range	CCSS Lexile Range
2 – 3	450-725	450-790
4 – 5	645-845	770-980
6-8	860-1010	955-1155
9-10	960-1115	1080-1305
11 – CCR	1070-1220	1215-1355

    c. The STAR assessments provide students with a lexile score.
50. Why is the change in English Language Arts better?
    a. The Common Core Standards for English are more aligned to the type of reading and writing required in both college and in most careers/professions. It also includes a level of reading by 12th grade that is closer to that of freshmen college material.

51. Have the teachers in elementary and middle school been trained to teach the new Common Core?
    a. Teachers have been receiving professional development for the past two years. This continues on a regular basis.   All new curriculum and resources are aligned to the Common Core.
52. Some math skills require repetition to learn the pattern. When will the kids practice?
    a. Homework will reinforce what is being taught in the classroom, giving students the opportunity to practice. In addition, there is ongoing practice and application during class time.
53. Won't our younger kids be more prepared for college than our older kids? Is this fair?
    a. Our younger students will have more years of Common Core instruction than our older students, therefore will benefit from the higher level of rigor for a longer period of time.
54. Will high school change their reading material to bridge the gap between high school and college?
    a. The high school curriculum has been updated and new materials included. As we have purchased new textbooks, we have considered the reading level as part of the decision regarding which book to implement.
55. Why is the timeline so aggressive? Why did the District agree to this?
    a. The decision to adopt the Common Core and to choose the PARCC assessment was made by the NJDOE. In addition, the NJDOE sets the timelines for implementation and assessment. As a NJ Public School, the District has no control over the implementation of standards or state assessments and must comply with what the NJDOE mandates.

LINKS TO RESOURCES

http://www.corestandards.org/

http://www.state.nj.us/education/

www.achievethecore.org

www.pta.org/4446.htm

http://www.cgcs.org/Domain/36

http://www.commoncoreworks.org/domain/114

http://www.commoncoreworks.org/domain/149

http://parcconline.org