



VERONA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

PARCC (**P**artnership for **A**ssessment of **R**eadiness for **C**ollege and **C**areer) is a new State standardized assessment in English language arts and mathematics in grades 3 to 11. PARCC is a multi-state consortium that includes New Jersey, working together to develop a common set of computer-based assessments linked to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that were adopted in 2010 by the New Jersey State Board of Education. State assessments are one measure of important information about a student's progress. The State's new testing program replaces the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) in grades 3-8 and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) in grade 11. PARCC is designed to measure students' mastery of content, applied knowledge, and analytical skills by assessing the full range of the Common Core Standards in language arts and mathematics. The assessments are comprised of constructed response items, performance-based tasks, and computer-scored items.

The Verona Public Schools has been committed to preparing our students for more rigorous standards and assessments through revised curriculum aligned to the Common Core State Standards and high quality instruction in our classrooms. Verona will be hosting several evening sessions in an effort to ensure our parents have an opportunity to receive accurate information. The purpose of these sessions is for parents to gain a better understanding of Common Core, PARCC, and the administration of upcoming assessments. Additional information on PARCC parent sessions may be found in this document. Finally, we have compiled a list of frequently asked questions to address parent concerns and hope you find it helpful and informative.

Sincerely,

Rui Dionisio
Superintendent of Schools

PARCC Frequently Asked Questions

What is PARCC?

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is a computer-based assessment of Mathematics and English Language Arts/Literacy Skills that measures whether students are on track to be successful in college and their careers and if students are meeting the new common core standards. PARCC is intended to assess student mastery of Common Core Standards. The PARCC assessments are designed to replace the NJASK in grades 3-8 in Language Arts and Mathematics and the HSPA in grade 11. The PARCC assessments will be administered to students beginning in March 2015.

What is Common Core?

Common Core State Standards are a “set of clear college and career-ready standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts/literacy and mathematics.” The New Jersey State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010. Read more about Common Core at <http://www.corestandards.org/>

What are the benefits of assessments?

The goal and intent of PARCC assessments is for students to have clear information about whether they are working at expected levels and whether they are on track for postsecondary success; for teachers to receive more timely and useful data to help inform instruction; for parents to have clear and timely information about the progress their children are making; and for member states to have comparable results with the intent of better preparing our youth for success beyond school.

Are public school districts required to administer the test?

Yes. New Jersey public school districts, pursuant to State law and regulations, are required to administer state testing in accordance with the Department of Education requirements.

How will my child benefit from taking the PARCC tests?

The NJ Department of Education has shared that PARCC tests are designed to more thoroughly measure students’ understanding of English language arts and mathematics and will provide details on how each student performed on specific test items, which will tell parents and school officials about each student’s strengths and weaknesses. Test data will also better inform our instructional program, as results will indicate where our schools are successful and where we can make improvements to our programs.

How will the district inform parents and students of all scheduled testing dates?

The schedules have been designed to enable the district to most effectively administer PARCC to tested students while continuing with high level classroom instruction for the rest of the student population who is not testing on a specific day. The schedule has been posted on the main page of the district website under *News*. Parents may access the schedule by visiting www.veronaschools.org

How has the Verona Public Schools instructionally prepared for PARCC?

The district has aligned curricula with the Common Core State Standards over the past several years, has provided professional development for our staff on increasing rigor through depth of knowledge, and our staff has engaged in the collaborative development of common assessments. PARCC is intended to assess the high quality work that students are doing in the classroom throughout the entire year. Students will be provided opportunities to become familiar with computer devices and the PARCC tutorial prior to the

regular testing date. Students may also be engaged in computer activities throughout the year that incorporate higher-level thinking through computer-based learning activities.

What steps has the district taken to address the technology requirements for PARCC?

The district has improved network infrastructure and wireless access throughout the entire district. Expansion of computers will also enable the district to have sufficient devices for students to administer PARCC. High school and middle school students will take the assessments on Chromebooks. Elementary students will utilize the computer lab in their schools and Chromebooks. A focus on technology improvements was important to the district in an effort to provide students with the technology opportunities that have already been in existence in other districts for many years. This progress will enable the district to utilize technology to further improve teaching and learning for all students.

Will the PARCC assessment be used for academic placement for the 2015-2016 school year?

No. The district will not use PARCC results for placement next year but will review our progress and use the data to better inform instruction.

When will the PARCC be administered?

The PARCC assessment is comprised of two parts, the Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) or long answer questions and the End-of-Year (EOY) component or short answer questions. The PBA requires 5 sessions (2 Math, 3 Language Arts) and will be administered to all students in grades 3 through 11 in March 2015. The EOY portion requires 4 exam sessions (2 Math, 2 Language Arts) and will be administered to all students in grades 3 through 11 beginning at the end of April-May 2015. Although the testing window will occur over several weeks, each student will only test during his or her specific testing sessions. Verona students will only be scheduled to participate in one test session per day.

How can parents learn more?

Verona Public Schools will be providing three parent information sessions specific to elementary, middle, and high school for parents to learn more about the Common Core State Standards and the PARCC assessments. Parents may attend any of the following sessions. However, each session will be specifically targeted to each age group. It is not necessary to attend more than one session since sessions are similar in context. Sessions are as follows:

- Middle School PARCC Parent Night @HBW on Tuesday, February 10, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the cafeteria
- High School PARCC Parent Night @VHS on Wednesday, February 11, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the cafeteria
- Elementary PARCC Parent Night @VHS on Thursday, February 19, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the cafeteria

Are there sample PARCC assessments available?

Yes. The district will be reviewing some of these during the PARCC Parent Information Nights. PARCC released practice tests may be accessed at the following website: <http://www.parcconline.org/take-the-test>

Is the PARCC assessment a requirement for graduation?

The NJ DOE has stated that students can satisfy the high school graduation requirement by passing one of each PARCC language arts and mathematics for the graduating class of 2016, 2017, and 2018. Students may also satisfy the graduation requirement if they do not pass PARCC by demonstrating proficiency via the SAT, ACT, Accuplacer, ASVAB, and long-standing portfolio appeal process.

Does my middle school child who is taking Algebra I or Geometry have to take the Algebra I or Geometry PARCC assessment?

Yes. Middle school students enrolled in Algebra I or Geometry will be administered the PARCC Algebra I or Geometry assessment.

Will the Performance Based Assessment (PBA) and the End-of-Year (EOY) Assessment be scored separately?

No. Both the PBA and EOY will be calculated as one single score report.

When does Verona expect PARCC results to be available?

The NJ DOE has indicated that test results can be expected by October 2015. In subsequent years, the results of the test will be available sooner for districts to have more timely feedback.

Are testing accommodations available for students?

Yes. Students who are eligible to receive accommodations will receive them as has been done with prior assessments.

Will the Verona Board of Education be adopting an opt-out policy for parents who do not want their child to take PARCC?

The New Jersey Department of Education, pursuant to State law and regulations, requires all students to take State assessments as scheduled. There is no provision for a student to opt-out of statewide assessments. Therefore, the Board requires all students to take statewide assessments and the Board cannot grant permission to a parent for their child to opt-out of required statewide assessments. Opt-out is only legally permitted in New Jersey in areas such as sex education, animal dissection, and religious holidays. Districts have been informed that these exceptions do not apply to testing.

What is the impact to the Verona Public Schools if students do not take the PARCC assessment?

The State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education authorized the administration of PARCC for grades 3-11. Testing has been a requirement under No Child Left Behind since 2001 and is a federal and state requirement by law. The New Jersey Department of Education monitoring system also requires that public school districts meet at least 95% student participation on testing to achieve our annual progress goals. These results are measured and published by the DOE. We have been informed by the Department of Education that not attaining 95% student participation may result in the State imposing a remedial action plan for Verona.

What should a parent do who wants to refuse having their child from taking the PARCC?

The district is obligated by state regulations to administer the PARCC exam to all students and the district will not adopt a test refusal option. The district does not endorse PARCC refusal. The district does recognize some parents have expressed they will refuse to have their child participate in the PARCC assessment. However, the district knows the overwhelming majority of students will be taking the test as scheduled and the district needs to effectively administer the testing schedule with limited disruption.

Therefore, the district has established protocols and encourages parents who refuse to notify the building principal of the parent refusal. Parents should complete the form at the end of this document and submit to the building principal **no later than 5 days prior to the testing session for their child**. During PARCC testing, Verona will not be offering alternate learning activities or planned activities. Students present in school on testing day who refuse to take the PARCC assessment will be scheduled to sit and read a book

quietly in the testing location without disruption. Students scheduled on test day who are not present in school will be marked absent. A student's absence from school because the parent refuses for the child to participate in a statewide assessment is an unexcused absence in accordance with the district's attendance policy. This will be the protocol implemented in the Verona Public Schools for a parent to refuse to have their child participate in statewide assessments unless the school district is otherwise informed by the New Jersey Department of Education.

How can I find out more information about PARCC assessments?

The PARCC website may be accessed at:

<http://www.parcconline.org/>

The New Jersey Department of Education has a website with information about PARCC at:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/sca/parcc/>

NJ DOE PARCC FAQ

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/assessment/PARCCFAQ.pdf>

Information on the NJ DOE commission study on the use of assessments may be found at:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/studycommission/>

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Parent Request to Not Participate in Statewide Assessment

Student Name (please print): _____

School: _____

I, _____, request that my child not participate
(print parent name)

in the PARCC assessment on _____ . I understand
(testing dates)

that the district is obligated by state regulations to administer the PARCC exam to all students and the district will not adopt a test refusal option. I further understand the school district does not endorse PARCC refusal. The district recognizes some parents have expressed they will refuse to have their child participate in the PARCC assessment. However, the district knows the overwhelming majority of students will be taking the test as scheduled and the district needs to effectively administer the testing schedule with limited disruption.

During PARCC testing, Verona will not be offering alternate learning or planned activities. Students present in school on testing day who refuse to take the PARCC assessment will be scheduled to sit and read a book quietly in the testing location without disruption. Students scheduled on test day who are not present in school will be marked absent. A student's absence from school because the parent refuses for the child to participate in a statewide assessment is an unexcused absence in accordance with the district's attendance policy. This will be the protocol implemented in the Verona Public Schools for a parent to refuse to have their child participate in statewide assessments unless the school district is otherwise informed by the New Jersey Department of Education. Parents should complete this form and submit to the building principal **no later than 5 days prior to the testing session for their child.**

Parent Name (please print): _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____