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Why PARCC?

Parents are now beginning to receive reports on their child's PARCC test scores, or other feedback from their local schools.

While families are becoming accustomed to the new assessment, some might wonder why New Jersey needed a new exam to assess students' competency. 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."

For more perspective on education in New Jersey, read Commissioner Hespe's latest [Message to Parents](#).

PARCC Resources

Parents should know that beginning in mid-November, districts started receiving their child's PARCC [score reports](#), which districts have been distributing to parents.

There are many helpful websites that bring clarity to PARCC results. Parents needing help to understand the scores can visit [UnderstandTheScore.org](#), and Parconline.org offers extensive [resources](#) for parents.

The national nonprofit GreatSchools, in collaboration with leading educators and PARCC assessment designers, created [GreatKids New Jersey Test Guide for Parents](#). This free, online tool is organized by grade and subject to help parents use their state test scores to support their kids at home.

What Others Are Saying About PARCC

A recent report by Teachers of the Year said New Jersey had a good test with NJASK, and now has an even better assessment with PARCC. The [report](#), released by the National Network of State Teachers of the Year, looked at PARCC as compared to the previous tests used in a number of states, including New Jersey. The report says PARCC better reflects the range of reading and math knowledge and skills that all students should master. Want to see the evaluation specifically for New Jersey? For information specifically about New Jersey's assessments, check this [presentation](#) from Katherine Bassett, executive director and CEO of the National Network of State Teachers of the Year, provided to the New Jersey State Board of Education.

A [Fordham Institute study](#) on comparing PARCC to Massachusetts's statewide test found that PARCC better assesses preparation of students for college and career, it better assesses mathematics content knowledge, and is considered more accessible for students with disabilities.

Religious Holidays

Given that there is such a rich, diverse population of citizens in the state of New Jersey, the state has established certain days that children are allowed to be absent without it affecting the student's attendance record. See the Department's [list](#) of Religious Holidays Permitting Pupil Absence from School.

Safety First

Parents should be aware of the many factors regarding school safety. Families play a huge role in helping their children remain safe. When it comes to safety concerns, there is much to consider. For example, maintaining good student health, creating and sustaining a safe and positive learning environment, and reinforcing positive student behavior can all be supported by parental involvement. [Find out more](#) about these and many other factors that can keep kids safe in our schools.

A Learning Resource for Parents and Educators

Did you know that Learning Resource Centers are located throughout the state of New Jersey and are available to parents? Parents can take advantage of Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) to help their children on their journey to success. The local LRC can help children with learning projects, parents who want to research how to help their child at home or creating learning aids to use at home. Here is some [additional information](#).

Two Milken Award Winners in New Jersey

[Milken Educator Award recipients](#) are distinguished educators from around the country who are honored for excellence in education. Each Milken Award recipient receives \$25,000 for their use with no restrictions. This year, New Jersey had two recipients of the esteemed award:

- The first Milken Award winner is [Kimberley Moreno](#), a science teacher at Union City High School, who has developed a health-related program in partnership with Rutgers University Medical School for Health-Related Professions. The program gives students the opportunity to pursue careers in the Allied Health fields by offering them college credit courses and a premedical honors program. Moreno was honored because she not only has the ability to inspire students, but she is also adept at encouraging many of them to pursue careers in health.
- The second winner is [Allison Cuttler](#), who teaches high school math and computer science at North Star Academy Charter School of Newark. Cuttler is an advocate for STEM education and project-based learning, but she was nervous about starting a new AP Computer Science course in the school when none of the students had ever had any experience coding. Her commitment to building a culture of computer science at the school paid off. In that first course, students achieved a 67% pass rate, tied with the national average. In addition, they have averaged over 600 on the SAT math section, posting some of the highest results in the school's history. The trailblazing teacher also founded an afterschool "Girls Who Code" club, which has become one of the school's most popular organizations.

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