

BERNARDS TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

101 Peachtree Road
Basking Ridge, New Jersey 07920
www.bernardsboe.com

NICK MARKARIAN
Superintendent of Schools

Phone: 908-204-2600
Fax: 908-766-7641
e-mail: nmarkarian@bernardsboe.com

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

Next week we begin to administer the state's new standardized assessment, the PARCC test. Standardized tests are nothing new to us, we are simply replacing the old NJASK/HSPA with this new variety, the PARCC test. You have received communications from my office and the schools about how and when the testing will be done, what students need to bring for testing and a host of other information which is all maintained [here](#). For a variety of reasons the new PARCC test has struck a chord with some people who want to refuse the test. I hope to put your mind at ease with the information below which I have assembled in part through consultation with both NJ Department of Education officials and legal counsel.

- All students are expected to take the state test. Please see the excerpted state code which explains this issue as follows:
6A: 8-4.1(d) Pursuant to (b) and (c) above, all students at grade levels three through 12, and at any other grade(s) designated by the Commissioner pursuant to (a) above, shall take all appropriate Statewide assessments as scheduled.
- Because of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, schools need to have 95% of their eligible students participating in the state test (PARCC). Negative consequences for districts not meeting the 95% participation rate are possible, and I see no reason to take that risk for our district. Please refer to correspondence [here](#) and [here](#).
- With the old state tests we were not given any of the actual test items back after the testing was completed. For the new test we are supposed to get 40% of the items back, and the reporting of how students do on the test will be more robust. Better information means better reflection on teaching and a greater ability to help students. See a [sample](#).
- Earning a passing score on the PARCC test is one of several ways that students can meet the graduation requirement.
- Colleges may request student PARCC scores to determine college readiness, see this [link](#).
- The SAT and ACT are reportedly moving into alignment with the Common Core Standards and they (like many other tests our students will be taking) are going to be administered on computers in the very near future. The PARCC test offers a great opportunity for experience and practice.
- PARCC test results have no bearing on the grades the teachers issue each marking period and PARCC results won't be available until October of 2015 at the earliest, so they can't be used to make class placements for September.

In addition to the above there are also the practical considerations of running a school district. The orderly operation of a school requires adherence to school rules and the need for students to follow the direction of the adults. Teachers administering the state test are simply doing their job. It is very important for us to support the teachers and avoid creating confusing messages that can result if teachers direct one thing and a parent directs the opposite. Our solidarity and teamwork as parents and staff members, all pulling in the same direction, is requisite in achieving our most important mission: our children's success. Please support us in our work and send your child to school prepared for testing: well-rested, well-fed, and armed with a pair of ear buds/headphones.

In closing, rest assured that we will administer this new test to our students in the same professional manner in which we have always administered state standardized tests. We will encourage the students and staff to simply do their best and move on. Obviously for the reasons above, I encourage all students to test; however, in the event that you feel compelled to investigate the notion of test refusal please refer to the letter posted [here](#). If you are thinking of test refusal, I urge you to reconsider.

Sincerely,



Nick Markarian