



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

PO Box 500

TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

DAVID C. HESPE
Acting Commissioner

December 2, 2014

TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons
School Principals
District and School Test Coordinators
District and School Technology Coordinators

FROM: Bari Anhalt Erlichson, Ph.D.
Assistant Commissioner/Chief Performance Officer

RE: Just released: *PARCC Field Test: Lessons Learned*

Over the past few years, the schools in New Jersey have undergone a remarkable transformation in readiness to administer computer-based testing (CBT). When we began our work with the Partnership for the Assessment of College and Career Readiness (PARCC) consortium approximately four years ago, the idea of delivering the next generation of assessments as computer-based tests seemed like an insurmountable challenge! And yet today, New Jersey is on the cusp of doing just that. And to you and your staff, I offer you my thanks for your hard work.

As many of you have become aware through looking at the PARCC practice exams and participating in the field tests, CBT offers many advantages to standard paper-based tests. For instance, CBT can formulate test questions as constructed response questions where paper-based tests would have offered multiple choice responses. Having students demonstrate their work through constructed response answers reduces 'test besting' strategizing often associated with multiple choice responses and thus the assessments become better measures of what students know and are able to do. Beginning in 2016, CBT and the structure of the PARCC assessments will allow test results to be delivered close to the end of the school year giving educators more time to plan specific supports and activities for instructional alignment. Also, paper-based tests require extensive protocols related to the physical security of the test booklets, their handling, and shipping that will not be needed with CBT. Additionally, preparing our students to participate in PARCC CBT will also benefit them in other assessments programs as well, as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), ACT, and the College Board have announced plans to deliver their assessments via computer in the upcoming years.

For the past several years, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has been collecting data directly from schools and districts to gauge the state's readiness and to direct our resources to support and help those that needed assistance. Our data is now indicating a high degree of readiness across the state. If you feel that the data that you've submitted to NJTrax is in error or if you'd like to request NJDOE assistance because you feel that you are not able to administer the PARCC CBT assessments, please reach out to me directly as soon as possible.

Finally, I'd like to make you aware of the recently released report *PARCC Field Test: Lessons Learned*. A full copy of the report can be found here: <http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/field-test-lessons-learned.pdf>

The entire report is worth your attention, but I'd like to draw your attention to a few specific topics:

- For those of you who have expressed interest in how a test question becomes a test question, please read through the life cycle of a test item, page 6. At every step of the process, educators from across the PARCC states are participating in reviewing items, reviewing data from the field testing, and making decisions about next steps. Approximately 89% of the math items and 78% of the English language arts (ELA) items were approved from our field tests to be made part of the operational assessment this spring.
- Responses from the student surveys administered at the end of the field test begin on page 8. Highlights include:
 - 94% of students either finished the CBT ELA field test very early or on time and 87% did so for mathematics (p. 9).
 - Approximately 90% of the students in the PARCC CBT understood the directions read by test administrators (p. 10).
 - Students found the mathematics assessment more challenging than the ELA assessments overall regardless of whether the student took the field test via computer or paper (p. 11).
 - Approximately 90% of students who participated in the ELA CBT and 65% of students who participated in the mathematics CBT reported that it was easy to type their answers (p. 15).
- In terms of technology preparation, only 60% of test coordinators and administrators used proctor caching during the field test. Based on New Jersey's field test experience and the ability for proctor caching to reduce or even eliminate difficulties related to bandwidth, it is highly recommended that all schools utilize proctor-caching software (p. 17).

PARCC has begun to incorporate many of the findings in our efforts already such as the revision of test administrator manuals and training modules, adding flexibility for test session makeup scheduling, creating simplified administration checklists, and improving functionality of the 'equation editor' in mathematics.

Beginning in January 2015, NJDOE will host regional training sessions for test and tech coordinators to review administration manuals. A memo will be released as soon as dates and locations have been finalized.

BAE/st

c: Members, State Board of Education
Senior Staff
Executive County Superintendents
Executive Directors for Regional Achievement Centers
Executive County Business Officials
NJ LEE Group
Garden State Coalition of Schools