



"Every Child Succeeds When We Join Hands"

Hopatcong Borough Schools

Providing Excellence in Education

Mrs. Cynthia M. Randina

Superintendent of Schools

P.O. Box 1029

2 Windsor Avenue

Hopatcong, New Jersey 07843

973-398-8801

FAX 973-398-1961

Message from the Superintendent

February 4, 2015

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I have received inquiries regarding the ability of parents to "opt out" or refuse to have their child participate in the new statewide assessment program known as the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). **It is the recommendation of the Administration that all students comply with NJDOE testing/program requirements as outlined in this letter and as such there is no "Opt Out" Option.** For those who are unaware, all New Jersey public school districts are mandated under N.J.A.C. N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-1 to administer the upcoming PARCC assessment. As stated by Commissioner of Education Hespe in his October 30, 2014 memo:

The Commissioner "...shall define the scope and level of student performance on Statewide assessments that demonstrate thorough understanding of the knowledge and skills delineated by the CCCS at grade levels three through 12." Subsection (c) further states that district boards of education "shall, according to a schedule prescribed by the Commissioner, administer the applicable Statewide assessments," and subsection (d) confirms that "all students at grade levels three through 12, and at any other grade(s) designated by the Commissioner...shall take appropriate Statewide assessments as scheduled."

"Furthermore, on February, 2014, the State Board passed a resolution confirming that District Boards of Education are obligated to implement the Core Curriculum Content Standards and to "ensure students meet the expectations and proficiency standards as measured by current and future State and local assessments."

"In accordance with the above, State law and regulations require all students to take State assessments. Since the PARCC assessment is part of the State required educational program, schools are not required to provide an alternative educational program for students who do not participate in the statewide assessment. We encourage all chief school administrators to review the district's discipline and attendance policies to ensure that they address situations that may arise during days that statewide assessments, such as PARCC, are being administered."

Since the NJ Department of Education has deferred to the local school districts to address situations in which parents refuse to allow their child to take the PARCC, we will implement a logical and respectful set of protocols.

Protocols for parents who refuse to allow their child to take the PARCC standardized assessment are as follows:

PARENTAL STATEMENT:

If a parent refuses to allow a student to take the PARCC, the parent is responsible for providing a letter with a signature to the building principal prior to the actual dates of the testing stating that it is their intention to refuse to allow their child to take the PARCC assessment. Please provide your letter prior to February 20, 2015 so that building principals can plan accordingly.

STUDENTS:

Students in grades 3 to 11 whose parent(s) have submitted a written statement of refusal and who attend school on a PARCC testing day will be marked present for the day. During the testing periods, those children will be located in a room separate from the "testing environment," and will be asked to read or work independently while supervised by a staff member.

ATTENDANCE:

Children whose parent(s) have NOT submitted a written statement of refusal and who are not present on the day of the assessment will be marked absent and will sit for the PARCC make-up test as scheduled. Similarly, children whose parent(s) have not submitted a written statement of refusal and who arrive at school after the testing is completed, will be marked as tardy for the day and absent for the test. Those children will be required to sit for the PARCC makeup test as scheduled.

Children whose parent(s) have submitted a written statement of refusal and who do not attend school during testing will be marked absent. Those children will NOT be required to sit for the PARCC makeup test. Similarly, children whose parent(s) have submitted a written statement of refusal and who arrive at school after the testing will be marked tardy. They will not be required to sit for the makeup PARCC test. Thus, even if you choose for your child not to take the PARCC tests, we encourage you to send your child to school on time on the testing days.

RECORDING AND REPORTING:

We have not yet heard from the Department of Education as to which recording procedures to use for students whose parents refuse to have their child take the PARCC. Please note that we will adhere to whatever record-keeping measures are required of the district by the NJ Department of Education.

As stated by Commissioner Hespe, "It is perhaps most important to outline the positive reasons that individual students should participate in the PARCC examinations. Throughout a student's educational career, the PARCC assessments will provide parents with important information about their child's progress toward meeting the goal of being college or career ready. The PARCC assessments will, for the first time, provide detailed diagnostic information about each individual student's performance that educators, parents and students can utilize to enhance foundational knowledge and student achievement. PARCC assessments will include item analysis which will clarify a student's level of knowledge and understanding of a particular subject or area of a subject. The data derived from the assessment will be utilized by teachers and administrators to pinpoint areas of difficulty and customize instruction accordingly. Such data can be assessed and utilized as a student progresses to successive school levels."

The goal of any assessment program is to help determine the knowledge and skills acquired by students as part of a thorough and efficient educational program. The Hopatcong Borough Schools utilize a variety of assessments to help plan curricular, programmatic and staffing decisions. This data is a valuable part of our annual review process and will further help us to evaluate our efforts to provide students with exemplary educational experiences.

In closing, I suggest you visit the PARCC website (www.parcconline.org) for more detailed information about PARCC. Our hope is to ensure that all families are appropriately informed about this assessment. If you would like to attend an informative session on PARCC, the District's Parent Academy will be held on February 18, 2015. All are invited! Please feel free to contact your building principal if you have any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Cynthia M. Randina
Superintendent of Schools