

PARCC panic premature

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Its here.

There is no denying that the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test has loomed large over the state for the past few years as the upcoming standardized testing tool that aligns with already controversial Common Core Standards that have been agitating the public since 2009.

But the fact of the matter is for all of rabble rousing and complaining and hand-wringing over a program that hasn't even been implemented yet, it is still coming in a few short weeks. And maybe it is time to take a deep breath, and see what happens.

Why not give this new system a chance?

Criticism of standardized tests is not new. Neither is the cry that the stress of these tests are having an impact on the students. The stress of all testing and all evaluations have an impact on students.

And they are supposed to.

Part of dealing with tests like mid-terms, finals and standardized testing is learning to deal with the stress of mid-terms, finals and standardized testing.

When students leave for college and are dealing with a full class load with exams, projects and homework and many times working while trying to handle their burgeoning responsibilities there is no recourse but to learn time management and how deal with the pressures they are facing.

Similarly, when facing the tasks given to them in a job, they won't be able to have their parents complain on their behalf that they feel anxiety about being evaluated and not measuring up.

PARCC didn't create the "teaching for the test" argument, it just trotted it out again in the social media era. For years, whether it was the old Iowa tests, or the High School Proficiency Assessment tests, they were criticized for impinging on academic freedom. Educators said that class work and "real learning" was suffering because they needed to cater to the needs of the test.

Well, striking that sort of balance is just the kind of thing that is applied at the college level and beyond. Aren't we really doing these students a disservice by telling them they can't handle the rigors of these tests? The notion is actually insulting.

The old saying is if you can't measure it, you can't manage it. So why are so many parents and teachers afraid of a new measuring stick? So worried about it that they are on the attack before the first test is even taken.

Wouldn't it be smarter to have some faith in the educators and faith in the students and give this assessment process a fair shake? Standardized testing, in all forms, isn't going away.

Parents assailing the boards of education around the state are misguided. First off, it is the wrong forum to overturn the implementation of PARCC. Also, those who are insisting on an opt-out are being short-sighted. The students have already spent the time and effort preparing, so why not let them take the test so we can get a sense of its effectiveness?

The smarter plan for dealing with the new PARCC assessment is to assist students in preparation and work diligently hand in hand with educators to monitor the results.

Some school districts, are assisting in the transition by removing some of the other tests that used to be required. Specifically eliminating mid-terms and finals to help restore the balance.

The panic over PARCC is premature. One of the positive features of PARCC is that it aims to encompass a unitary assessment for all member states in order to provide comparable results on student achievement and college and career readiness. With so many states aligning to Common Core State Standards, it is imperative that a unitary, research-based assessment paradigm is in place to evaluate these standards as related to students' college and career readiness. However, there has always been and will always be a debate over the effectiveness and credibility of a standardized test to truly measure all areas of students' ability. Only time will tell if PARCC is a step in the right direction.

But for now? Have faith in your teachers. Have faith in your administrators. Have faith in your kids.

And put the criticisms in park.