



A Community of Learners

Informational Memo: PARCC and STAR Assessment Update

TO: School Board
Trisha Kocanda, Superintendent

FROM: Alison Hawley, *Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment*

March 24, 2015

Overview & Background

The District initiated the inaugural implementation of the Performance Based Assessment (PBA) segment of the Partnership Assessment for Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) on Monday, March 2, 2015, for grades 3-8. The PARCC assessment has replaced the Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT) and is being implemented for the first time by the State of Illinois. The second segment of the PARCC, the End-of-Year (EOY) assessment will be given to grades 3-8 from April 27 - May 22, 2015.

The District has invested a significant amount of time preparing for the transition to the PARCC, which has included, but is not limited to, conducting two all-District information sessions for certified staff, a parent education session at each building, and training for school administrators. Test proctors and test administrators were also trained at the building level. Additionally, teachers conducted three half-hour sessions with their students to help familiarize them with the assessment technology platform. The overarching goal was to make an effective transition from ISAT to PARCC.

PARCC Assessment Update

As of this writing, the District has completed its second week of the PARCC testing window. Overall, the technology has been reliable. Technology related issues have been minor and were resolved quickly. The time students are spending to take the assessment varies by age, content, and session.

Additionally, observations have surfaced regarding the student testing experience:

- Some students rushed through the assessment and finished too quickly to produce a reliable result,
- Technology tools were difficult for some younger students to navigate,
- Some younger students are producing a single sentence for their essay responses, and
- Student fatigue (varies by age)

The Illinois Board of Education (ISBE) Assessment Division has been notified of any testing irregularities, and the District has filed the appropriate paperwork with the State according to ISBE policy and procedures.

It is also important to note that the District will not meet the State's threshold of 95% student participation for state required standardized assessment administration. At this point, the State is unclear on how they will address the participation rate. The District has complied with all procedures and guidelines related to handling student refusals. The table below shares information for refusals and participants. The District has been in regular communication with the ISBE Assessment Division to clarify student refusal policy and procedures to ensure implementation.

School	Grade Level	Number of Students Refusing	Percentage of Students Refusing (as of 3/17/15)
Crow Island	3	15	18.8%
	4	21	26.3%
Greeley	3	24	35.8%
	4	8	13.6%
Hubbard Woods	3	12	24%
	4	28	50.9%
Skokie	5	44	19.9%
	6	54	24.7%
Washburne	7	74	33.3%
	8	121	56.5%

As a public institution, the fiduciary responsibility of the District is to present each student with each session of the PBA during the assessment window. The administrative team met several times to devise common procedures across all buildings, and revised procedures to reflect the most recent iteration of ISBE policy regarding student refusal. Parents were notified that the State of Illinois does not have a parent opt-out clause and therefore, the District could not accommodate parent requests to opt students out of testing. Parent notifications were sent via e-mail, principal communications, and the PARCC Frequently Asked Questions posted on the District website. In the event that a student refused to take the PARCC, the student was allowed to remain in the testing environment and read quietly for the duration of the assessment. The District is not providing an alternative activity or environment for students who refuse the assessment.

The District has also been in frequent contact with ISBE to alert the Assessment Division of the student refusal rate, and all phone calls to ISBE have been documented by the Curriculum Office. The State has indicated that they will audit all Districts below the 95% participation rate to ensure all protocols and procedures were followed. The District has kept detailed records of communications and internal procedures. We will continue to communicate closely with the State.

Next Steps

The administrative team will debrief the March PARCC assessment process and procedures to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the PARCC implementation across all five buildings. This feedback will inform planning and scheduling for the administration of the End-of-Year (EOY) assessment in May. The organization of the spring testing will be done in consultation with the ISBE to ensure that we follow all policies, procedures, and protocols appropriately. Above all, it is essential that we provide a testing environment that creates conditions conducive to a comfortable and seamless testing experience for students.

STAR Assessment Update and Recommendation

At the February 24, 2015, School Board meeting, the discussion regarding the reinstatement of the spring STAR assessment ended with the agreement that a decision would be made at the March 24, 2015, School Board meeting. The decision will be informed by the student experience with the PARCC assessment.

The District recommends that the spring STAR window be reestablished for grades 3- 8. It is unclear when PARCC data will be made available to the District and what information will be included in the reports. In addition, we will not have a nationally normed data point for many students due to the PARCC participation rate. STAR offers the only other nationally normed data point the District has to monitor the growth and achievement of our students for math and reading.

Additionally, the current STAR timeline (only fall and winter testing) offers a limited opportunity to measure student growth for the full academic year. STAR plays an important role in building-level data meetings when results are triangulated with classroom assessments to support instructional decisions for all students. For this reason, it is important to have fall to spring data that will reflect a full year of instruction as well as student growth and achievement.