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BERGENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education News

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

This special edition of the Bergenfield Public School District Newsletter will introduce you to impending changes involving New Jersey's transition from state standards-based curriculum to the national Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In the following pages, you will be familiarized with what changes our students should expect, why the changes are being made, and how these changes will better prepare our students for college and career readiness.

The 2013-14 school year will mark the first year where these new curriculum standards are introduced into all schools within New Jersey, alongside 44 additional states across the nation. The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy.

Following these changes, the New Jersey Department of Education has adopted the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College & Careers (PARCC) assessment to measure student learning. The PARCC assessment will replace NJASK in the 2014-15 school year as the next-generation assessment for measuring growth and proficiency in English and mathematics. PARCC assessments will be administered online, enabling quicker turn around of the results to those who need it most—the teachers. With this powerful, readily available data, teachers can better monitor student achievement and adjust lesson plans to assure all of our students are successful.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### ***What are educational standards?***

Educational standards help teachers ensure their students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful by providing clear goals for student learning.

#### ***What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative?***

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort that established a single set of clear educational standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts and mathematics that states voluntarily adopt. The standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to enter credit bearing entry courses in two or four year college programs or enter the workforce. The standards are clear and concise to ensure that parents, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of the expectations in reading, writing, speaking and listening, language and mathematics in school.

#### ***Who leads the Common Core State Standards Initiative?***

The nation's governors and education commissioners, through their representative organizations the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) led the development of the Common Core State Standards and continue to lead the initiative. Teachers, parents, school administrators and experts from across the country together with state leaders provided input into the development of the standards.

#### ***Why is the Common Core State Standards Initiative important?***

High standards that are consistent across states provide teachers, parents, and students with a set of clear expectations that are aligned to the expectations in college and careers. The standards promote equity by ensuring all students, no matter where they live, are well prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to collaborate and compete with their peers

in the United States and abroad.. Unlike previous state standards, which were unique to every state in the country, the Common Core State Standards enable collaboration between states on a range of tools and policies, including:

- the development of textbooks, digital media, and other teaching materials aligned to the standards
- the development and implementation of common comprehensive assessment systems to measure student performance annually that will replace existing state testing systems
- changes needed to help support educators and schools in teaching to the new standards

***What guidance do the Common Core State Standards provide to teachers?***

The Common Core State Standards are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for the knowledge and skills students need in English language arts and mathematics at each grade level to ultimately be prepared to graduate college and career ready. The standards establish what students need to learn, but they do not dictate how teachers should teach. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.

***Were teachers involved in the creation of the standards?***

Yes. Teachers have been a critical voice in the development of the standards. The Common Core State Standards drafting process relied on teachers and standards experts from across the country. The National Education Association (NEA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), among other organizations were instrumental in bringing together teachers to provide specific, constructive feedback on the standards.

***What grade levels are included in the Common Core State Standards?***

The English language arts and math standards are for grades K-12. Research from the early childhood and higher education communities also informed the development of the standards.

***What does this work mean for students with disabilities and English language learners?***

The Common Core State Standards give states the opportunity to share experiences and best practices, which can lead to an improved ability to serve young people with disabilities and English language learners. Additionally, the standards include information on application of the standards for these groups of students.

***Why are the Common Core State Standards for just English language arts and math?***

English language arts and math were the subjects chosen for the Common Core State Standards because they are areas upon which students build skill sets which are used in other subjects. They are also the subjects most frequently assessed for accountability purposes.

***What do the Common Core State Standards mean for students?***

The standards provide clarity and consistency in what is expected of student learning across the country. This initiative helps provide all students with an equal opportunity for an education, regardless of where they live. The Common Core State Standards will not prevent different levels of achievement among students, but they will ensure more consistent exposure to materials and learning experiences through curriculum, instruction, and teacher preparation among other supports for student learning.

***What type of texts are recommended for the English language arts standards?***

The Common Core State Standards require certain critical content for all students. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening. English teachers will still teach their students literature as well as literary non-fiction. However, because college and career readiness overwhelming focuses on complex texts outside of literature, these standards also ensure students are being prepared to read, write, and research across the curriculum, including in history and science.

***Do the math standards cover all the key math topics in the proper sequence?***

The mathematical progressions presented in the Common Core State Standards are coherent and based on evidence.

## Please review the 6 shifts in both language arts/literacy and mathematics below to help understand how your children will be better prepared for success:

### 6 SHIFTS IN LANGUAGE ARTS/LITERACY

**PK-5, Balancing Informational & Literary Texts:** Students read a true balance of informational and literary texts. Elementary school classrooms are, therefore, places where students access the world – science, social studies, the arts and literature – through text. At least 50% of what students read is informational.

**6-12, Knowledge in the Disciplines:** Content area teachers outside of the ELA classroom emphasize literacy experiences in their planning and instruction. Students learn through domain-specific texts in science and social studies classrooms – rather than referring to the text, they are expected to learn from what they read.

**Text-based Answers:** Students have rich and rigorous conversations which are dependent on a common text. Teachers insist that classroom experiences stay deeply connected to the text on the page and that students develop habits for making evidentiary arguments both in conversation, as well as in writing to assess comprehension of a text.

**Writing from Sources:** Writing needs to emphasize use of evidence to inform or make an argument rather than the personal narrative and other forms of decontextualized prompts. While the narrative still has an important role, students develop skills through written arguments that respond to the ideas, events, facts, and arguments presented in the texts they read.

**Staircase of Complexity:** In order to prepare students for the complexity of college and career ready texts, each grade level requires a “step” of growth on the “staircase”. Students read the central, grade appropriate text around which instruction is centered. Teachers are patient, create more time and space in the curriculum for this close and careful reading, and provide appropriate and necessary scaffolding and supports so that it is possible for students reading below grade level.

**Academic Vocabulary:** Students constantly build the vocabulary they need to access grade level complex texts. By focusing strategically on comprehension of pivotal and commonly found words (such as “discourse,” “generation,” “theory,” and “principled”) and less on esoteric literary terms (such as “onomatopoeia” or “homonym”), teachers constantly build students’ ability to access more complex texts across the content areas.

### 6 SHIFTS IN MATHEMATIC

**Focus:** Teachers use the power of the eraser and significantly narrow and deepen the scope of how time and energy is spent in the math classroom. They do so in order to focus deeply on only the concepts that are prioritized in the standards so that students reach strong foundational knowledge and deep conceptual understanding and are able to transfer mathematical skills and understanding across concepts and grades.

**Coherence:** Principals and teachers carefully connect the learning within and across grades so that, for example, fractions or multiplication spiral across grade levels and students can build new understanding onto foundations built in previous years. Teachers can begin to count on deep conceptual understanding of core content and build on it. Each standard is not a new event, but an extension of previous learning.

**Fluency:** Students are expected to have speed and accuracy with simple calculations; teachers structure class time and/or homework time for students to memorize, through repetition, core functions (found in the attached list of fluencies) such as multiplication tables so that they are more able to understand and manipulate more complex concepts.

**Deep Understanding:** Teachers teach more than “how to get the answer” and instead support students’ ability to access concepts from a number of perspectives so that students are able to see math as more than a set of mnemonics or discrete procedures. Students demonstrate deep conceptual understanding of core math concepts by applying them to new situations as well as writing and speaking about their understanding.

**Application:** Students are expected to use math and choose the appropriate concept for application even when they are not prompted to do so. Teachers provide opportunities at all grade levels for students to apply math concepts in “real world” situations. Teachers in content areas outside of math, particularly science, ensure that students are using math – at all grade levels – to make meaning of and access content.

**Dual Intensity:** Students are practicing and understanding. There is more than a balance between these two things in the classroom – both are occurring with intensity. Teachers create opportunities for students to participate in “drills” and make use of those skills through extended application of math concepts. The amount of time and energy spent practicing and understanding learning environments is driven by the specific mathematical concept and therefore, varies throughout the given school year.

ANCHORED IN COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

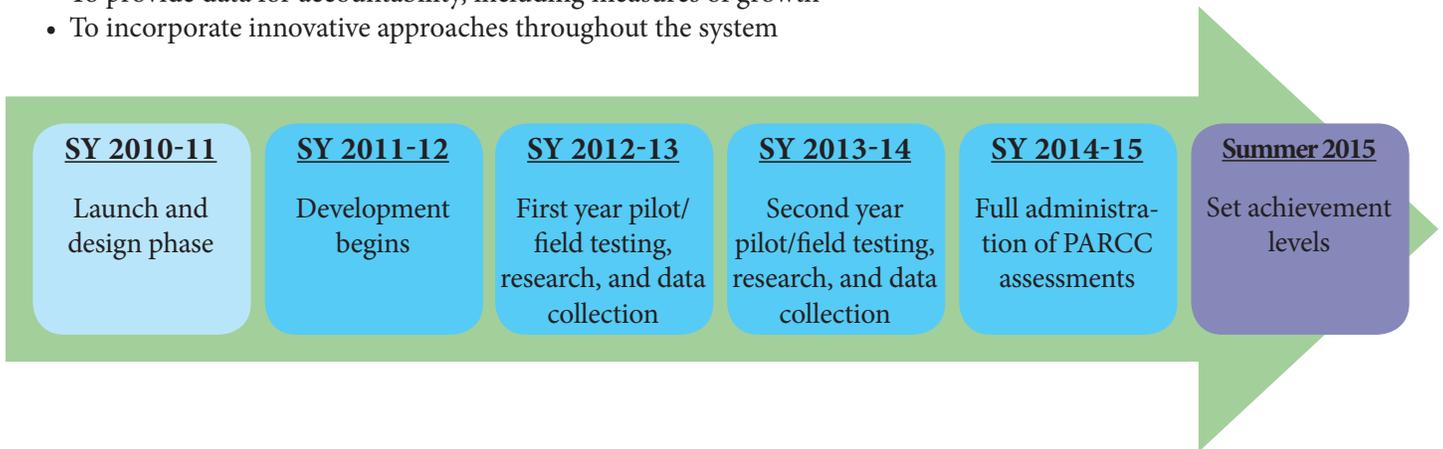
## THE PARTNERSHIP FOR ASSESSMENT OF READINESS FOR COLLEGE & CAREERS (PARCC)

### *What is PARCC?*

PARCC is an organization made up of representatives from 22 states (including New Jersey) plus the US Virgin Islands, businesses, and institutes of higher education. PARCC's goal is to create a series of common assessments that will determine students' college and career readiness. PARCC assessments are being created from the Common Core State Standards, which our teachers are now instructing. The timeline for implementation can be viewed in the graphic below.

### *What is the purpose of the PARCC Assessment?*

- To determine whether students are college- and career-ready or on track
- To assess the full range of the Common Core Standards, including standards that are difficult to measure
- To measure the full range of student performance, including the performance high and low performing students
- To provide data during the academic year to inform instruction, interventions and professional development
- To provide data for accountability, including measures of growth
- To incorporate innovative approaches throughout the system



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