



Dr. Janice K. Jackson, *Chief Education Officer*
Chicago Public Schools
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Chicago, IL 60602

Dear CPS Families,

We are writing to let you know that the testing window for PARCC, which helps us assess how well we're preparing your children for success in college and career, begins on March 28, 2016. There is a lot of debate these days about the value of standardized tests, so we want you to understand how CPS uses PARCC and why we believe it is critical to your child's education.

PARCC is an annual exam that tests the content and skills taught in your student(s) classroom every day. It is aligned to the Common Core State Standards, and will not only provide crucial data to principals and teachers on Math and Literacy skills, but also on problem-solving and critical thinking skills - all of which will be crucial to their success in college, and in whatever career they choose.

This year's test will also see a format that uses each student's time more wisely. Based on feedback from last year's test takers, PARCC will be consolidated into one testing window instead of two, and can be administered in less overall time.

The data from the exam is a huge help to our teachers and principals, as the results provide a path to increase student growth. For those children who are struggling, PARCC data provides guidance on the areas where they need extra support, and helps teachers know which students are ready for a greater challenge. It's also a powerful tool in revealing achievement gaps, with results serving as the basis for providing all students with the equal resources they deserve.

CPS views PARCC as a necessary tool for making sure students stay on track and receive the supports they need. PARCC testing is mandatory for CPS students. As our testing window gets closer, you may hear people talk about not participating. Please know that refusing to participate in PARCC may have big implications that are important for parents to understand. Student refusal is damaging in two ways: not only does it mean less significant results for principals and teachers to utilize as they develop curriculum, but it incurs a financial consequence for our district. If 95% of CPS students do not take the exam, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the U.S. Department of Education can withhold millions of dollars in funding. This is particularly challenging given our current financial condition - and will mean even fewer resources dedicated to teaching and support positions, as well as programs that support student learning.

As you prepare your student(s) for their PARCC exam, know that there are a wealth of resources online to help guide you. From information on our own site (www.cps.edu/parcc) to resources at the national level (www.illinoistestguide.org and www.bealearninghero.org), we encourage you to explore and use as needed.

We firmly believe in PARCC as a tool that empowers our principals and teachers. The data provided to our district from the test allows for more accurate analysis and adjustment, in turn allowing them to better support and prepare our students.

As always, we thank you for your active involvement in your child's education, as well as our district - and look forward to sharing the next round of PARCC results later this year.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janice K. Jackson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Janice K. Jackson, Ed.D
Chief Education Officer