



March 2, 2017

Dear CPS Families,

We are writing to let you know that PARCC testing begins Monday, March 6, 2017.

The PARCC assessment is administered to students in grades 3-8 each spring to evaluate how well we are preparing CPS students for success in college and career. In previous years, high school students also took the PARCC exam; this school year the SAT will replace PARCC as the state-required test in high school.

We know there is some debate about the value of standardized tests, so we want to share why CPS believes this assessment is a critical component of your child's education.

PARCC was developed to align with the Common Core State Standards and more accurately gauge student understanding of the crucial concepts that students need in order to be successful in the 21st Century. In addition to assessing math and reading skills, PARCC also evaluates students' writing, problem-solving and critical thinking. According to five independent studies, PARCC is rigorous, grade-level appropriate and aligned to best practices in teaching.

In accordance with state requirements, PARCC testing is mandatory for CPS students in grades 3-8. Although you may hear people talk about not participating, please know that refusing to participate in PARCC may have a real impact on your child's school and the District as a whole. 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 from CPS. This could mean even fewer resources for the schools that need them most, which would be especially devastating given our already insufficient state funding.

As we near the beginning of testing, we want you to know there are resources online to provide you with additional information on the assessment and how it's used in our schools. For additional information, please visit our PARCC website at www.cps.edu/parcc and national-level resources at www.illinoistestguide.org and www.belearninghero.org.

As always, we thank you for your active involvement in your child's education. No assessment can fully capture the talents, skills and potential of your child, but by utilizing the best tools at our disposal we can shed new light on our students and schools to better understand their needs and advance the education of every child in Chicago.

Sincerely,

Dr. Janice K. Jackson
Chief Education Officer

