

The Bridge

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A monthly newsletter for educators from the
New Jersey Department of Education



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In this Issue...

Once again, our country is faced with senseless tragedy as we try to come to grips with recent events in Boston. Our hearts and thoughts are with our friends to the north as the country bands together to support each other. Although we all wish that we did not have to have these conversations, you can find resources at

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/schools/SECURITY/> to help students cope with the trauma.

Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world," and there are few professionals who are more passionate, dedicated and hard-working than educators. May 6-10 is Teacher Appreciation Week, and the New Jersey Department of Education would like to say "thank you" to all of our educators for the work you do in serving our students. Your dedication often goes unrecognized as you help shape the young minds that will become tomorrow's leaders, and we are committed to supporting each of you as you meet your day-to-day challenges. This month we celebrate all of you and the work you do for our students every day.

Education is never static. If we want our students today to be prepared for tomorrow's careers which may not yet exist, we must ensure that they are prepared both with the skills they will need to be successful, and the capacity to master the necessary content. To this end, New Jersey has adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which focus on core conceptual understandings and procedures starting in the early grades, which gives teachers the time needed to teach core concepts and

procedures well—and students the opportunity to master them, ensuring that our students graduate ready for college and the challenges of a changing workforce.

In this issue of The Bridge, we look at how the CCSS will be measured through the PARCC assessments which will allow students to demonstrate proficiency through both a performance-based component and an end-of-year assessment. We will elaborate on how PARCC compares to NJ ASK, the technology needed for successful implementation, and the performance levels which will be used to give educators a better idea of their student's level of command.

This issue also contains updates on AchieveNJ, and the resources and materials available to help educators understand student growth measures and set Student Growth Objectives (SGOs). The evaluation team has been soliciting feedback from educators around the state in order to design effective materials, and the result has been a wealth of resources.

Our "Dear Ed" section returns this month with a question that addresses the concerns of accepting a student teacher into your classroom, and the implications of this in the context of the new evaluation system. Finally, we will share upcoming events and resources, and insights from our Teacher of the Year, who will be meeting President Obama during Teacher Appreciation Week. Enjoy!



New Jersey
Department of Education

Notes from the Road

This past year, one of the consistent "buzz words" in the world of education has been collaboration. I have experienced the power of collaboration both within my grade level, as we've worked together to create common assessments and analyze data, and at my school and district, as we have implemented professional learning communities and instructional rounds. I've fostered a collaborative dynamic in my classroom so that my students understand the importance of working together. As the New Jersey State Teacher of the Year, I have had the pleasure to speak and work with many groups of educators, including student teachers, about the importance of collaboration and creating that dynamic with their colleagues. Now, more than ever, articulation is a critical component to the success of our students.

Last week, I was invited by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) to attend the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) State Consortium for Educator Effectiveness (SCEE) in Louisville, Kentucky. The lens through which I view education, and all its intricacies, was widened because of this experience. During this conference I was able to speak to teachers, state board of education members and members of state education agencies throughout the country. Although the level of implementation of the Common Core State Standards and teacher evaluation systems differed, a common theme was the need for support every step of the way. There is a need to provide teachers with more training and exemplars so that they can effectively teach the Common Core to the level of depth and rigor in which it is supposed to be taught. There is a need to support administrators in the complexities of the Common Core and with the implementation of the new teacher evaluation systems. As educators, we have always known how important it is to work together because, though as individuals we may not have all the answers, together we can find solutions. In many cases, the resources we need are right next door or down the hall. The question I ask myself is: how do we expand the collaborative dynamic and ability to share ideas and best practices beyond the walls of our school to other districts around the state and with our Department of Education?

Lauren Marrocco, State Teacher of the Year

PARCC and Performance Levels

In late 2012, PARCC adopted a framework for reporting student achievement on the PARCC assessments using five performance levels (New Jersey currently uses three levels: Partially Proficient, Proficient and Advanced Proficient). Although no formal names for the levels have been adopted, the Performance Level Descriptor (PLD) will describe the level of command that a student demonstrates of the knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the Common Core State Standards assessed at their grade level, as follows:

- Level 5 Distinguished Command
- Level 4 Strong Command
- Level 3 Moderate Command
- Level 2 Partial Command
- Level 1 Minimal Command

In collaboration with its higher education partners who are members of the Advisory Committee on College Readiness (ACCR), PLD Level 4 has been adopted as the threshold score for earning the determination of college- and career-readiness (CCR).

It must be noted that, while the academic knowledge, skills and practices defined by the PARCC CCR determinations are an essential part of students' readiness for colleges and careers, they do not encompass the full range of knowledge, skills, and practices needed for success in postsecondary programs and careers. For example, skills and techniques such as persistence, motivation, and time management are critical elements of college and career readiness, along with other employability and technical skills and career awareness.

Several New Jersey school districts across the state are currently participating in research studies related to both the test and item development. During 2013-2014, PARCC will field test the assessments. More information about the PLDs and CCR Determinations can be found here:

http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCCCRDPolicyandPLDs_FINAL.pdf

http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/FAQforCCRDandPLD_Update_d11-1-12.pdf

PARCC: What it means for New Jersey

New Jersey educators have long been frustrated by the speed at which test scores are returned, the fact that the state does not release test items, the limited degree to which a given student's performance can be used in a diagnostic fashion and the difficulty of assessing the full range of state standards every year. In addition, though New Jersey's assessments include some writing and open-ended response questions, the assessments do not fully capture the critical thinking skills that are demanded by the Common Core State Standards and, more generally, the world that students will enter into after graduation from high school.

In 2011, New Jersey became a member of the Governing Board of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) to help to develop new assessments that would address these shortcomings. PARCC, a partnership of 22 states, has been working over the last several years to launch new assessments in English language arts and math, aligned to the Common Core, in the 2014-15 school year. These tests will replace our current statewide assessments – NJ ASK and HSPA.

PARCC will be separated into two components. This will allow for the test results to be returned in a more timely fashion so that both student placements and supports for ongoing school improvement and professional development can be developed. The first, a performance-based assessment (PBA) component will be administered after approximately 75% of the school year. The second, an end-of-year assessment (EOY), will be administered after approximately 90% of the school year.

The ELA/literacy PBAs at each grade level will include a research simulation, a literary analysis and a narrative task. For each task, students will be asked to read one or more texts, answer several short comprehension and vocabulary

questions and write an essay that requires them to draw evidence from the text(s). The EOYs at each grade level will include 4-5 texts, with a number of short-answer comprehension and vocabulary questions.

The mathematics PBAs at each grade level will include both short- and extended-response questions focused on conceptual knowledge and skills, and the mathematical practices of reasoning and modeling. The mathematics EOYs will be comprised primarily of short-answer questions focused on conceptual knowledge, skill and understanding.

While the number of testing sessions under PARCC will be higher than NJ ASK, the average duration of those individual sessions will be shorter, lasting about an hour each rather than a whole morning of testing. PARCC assessments will require an individual student to participate in a total of nine testing sessions throughout the year. At each grade level, the PBA component will require five sessions – three for ELA/literacy and two for mathematics. The EOY component at each grade level will require four sessions – two sessions for ELA/literacy and two sessions for mathematics.

While NJ ASK currently offers a 20-day window, PARCC will offer greater flexibility within its 20-day window during which districts can schedule various grade levels for the PBA component, and another 20-day window during which districts can schedule the EOY component.

More information about the PARCC blueprint, including the number, types, and values of the items that will appear in each component will be forthcoming this spring. PARCC items and task prototypes are currently available here: <http://www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes>.

PARCC and Technology

To assist schools in planning for an adequate number of devices for PARCC assessments, the "Rule of Thumb" guidance is provided in the table below. The table is divided between schools that will be testing three grade levels (e.g., K-5, 6-8, and 9-12) and those that will be testing six grades (e.g., K-8) and then further divided between the minimum number of devices that a school will need to administer the assessments in 20 or fewer days and the recommended number. The minimum number of devices assumes that schools will administer the test to half of one grade level in a morning session and to the other half in the afternoon, while the recommended number of devices would allow a school to administer the test simultaneously to all students in a particular grade level.

School type	Minimum number of devices	Recommended number of devices
For a school with three tested grades (K-5, 6-8, 9-12)	Two students per device for the largest tested grade. EX: if the largest tested grade has 100 students, then 50 devices will be necessary.	One student per device in the largest tested grade
For a school with six tested grades (K-8)	One student per device in the largest tested grade	One student per device for the two largest tested grades

PARCC is providing local educators with an Assessment Capacity Planning Tool, a spreadsheet that will allow schools to evaluate the extent to which their current computer inventory and bandwidth is sufficient to administer PARCC's computer-based assessments, as well as model what they could do with increased capacity. The Assessment Capacity Planning Tool and accompanying users' guide are posted at <http://www.parcconline.org/technology>

AchieveNJ UPDATE

Over the past two months, the Office of Evaluation has shared information about *AchieveNJ*, the new evaluation and support system rolling out across the state in 2013-14, with thousands of educators through a series of presentations and meetings. One of the hottest topics of conversation is around the use of measures of student growth in educator evaluations. During the April State Board meeting, the Department updated proposed regulations to specify that teachers of 4th – 8th-grade Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics (the “tested grades and subjects”) may not use the NJ ASK for their Student Growth Objectives (SGOs). This ensures that no teacher can have NJ ASK scores account for more than 30% of the total summative evaluation. In addition, the Department has released a detailed *SGO Guidebook* with examples and fillable forms to help teachers better understand and set effective SGOs.

During the May State Board meeting, the Department announced that in response to feedback from and discussions with educators, the regulations would be updated to change the weight of Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) from 35% to 30% of teachers of tested grades and subjects’ summative evaluation for 2013-14. For those teachers, teacher practice weights will increase from 50% to 55% and SGOs will remain at 15%. In future years, the

Department will post the weights of each evaluation component by April 15 for the following school year.

The recently posted *AchieveNJ Resources Guide* <http://www.state.nj.us/education/AchieveNJ/resources/AchieveNJResourcesGuide.pdf> is a succinct list of all of the materials distributed in the initial outreach effort and posted on the *AchieveNJ* website. As you will see, we have provided over twenty-five different resources describing aspects of the new evaluation and support system in a variety of mediums. Narrative overviews, presentation slides, and videos help explain everything from the basic policies for each category of employee, to detailed information on measures of student growth, to practical advice and examples from our evaluation pilot districts. Please use these resources to learn more about the system and share feedback and questions directly with the Department at educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us.

Although the initial outreach effort to explain *AchieveNJ* has concluded, this is only the beginning stage of support the Department will provide as districts implement new evaluations this fall. We will continue to provide published materials, meetings/forums for feedback, and other communications. We hope you will stay informed and continue to share your feedback.

Evaluation Q and A



Q: Will all New Jersey teachers be evaluated based on student achievement next year?

A: Yes, with some differences in the measures and weights. Teachers of 4th – 8th-grade Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics (the “tested grades and subjects”) will receive scores based on the growth of their students on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) over time as compared to their academic peers. In order to receive these Student Growth Percentile (SGP) scores, teachers must be instructing at least 20 students for at least 70% of the school year in these grades and subjects. SGP scores will count for 30% of the total evaluation score for those teachers. During the May State Board meeting, the Department announced that in response to feedback from and discussions with educators, the regulations would be updated to change the weight of Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) from 35% to 30% of teachers of tested grades and subjects’ summative evaluation for 2013-14. For those teachers, teacher practice weights will increase from 50% to 55% and SGOs will remain at 15%. In future years, the Department will post the weights of each evaluation component by April 15 for the following school year. In addition, ALL teachers – of tested and non-tested grades and subjects – will set their own Student Growth Objectives (SGOs) with their principal/supervisor at the beginning of the school year. Scores on those SGOs will count for 15% of all teachers’ evaluations next year – and teachers of tested grades and subjects may not use the NJ ASK for their SGOs. Please see comprehensive resources on both **SGPs** and **SGOs** on the [AchieveNJ website](http://www.achievethecore.org) for more information.



Common Core – What you need to know

Meeting the Demands of the Common Core through the Use of Text Dependent Questions

By now, teachers in New Jersey are using the Common Core State Standards in English language arts/literacy in classrooms from kindergarten through high school. A close look at these standards reveals the reliance on text dependent questions to deeply analyze and understand what is being read. But what is a text dependent question, and how can we ensure that we are asking those questions that “privilege the text”?

As the name suggests, a text dependent question relies on the text for a response or observation. It is a measure of what students can extract from the text. A well-constructed, meaningful text dependent question will often depend on the close reading of a phrase or sentence, sometimes a single word. The question begs to be asked and encourages the reader to see something worthwhile.

In their work on Common Core, Student Achievement Partners writes about the tasks that students may be asked to perform when answering a

question that depends on explicit reference to the text:

- Analyze paragraphs (sentence by sentence) and sentences (word by word) to determine the role of paragraphs, phrases or words
- Investigate how meaning can be altered by changes to words; why authors chose specific words
- Probe arguments in persuasive text, ideas in informational text and key details in literary text and observe how they build to a whole
- Examine shifts in the direction of an argument and the impact of those shifts
- Question why authors chose to begin and end where they do
- Note and assess patterns in writing and what they achieve
- Consider what the text leaves uncertain or unstated

For more information and for the guide to creating text dependent questions, please visit www.achievethecore.org

Contact Us!

Upcoming Events

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Subscribe here

Do you have ideas, information, or pictures you would like to submit? For comments, concerns, questions or feedback, contact us at: thebridge@doe.state.nj.us



The Office of Career and Technical Education extends an invitation to teachers, supervisors, school administrators and guidance counselors interested in the successful transition of students to postsecondary education and career to participate in a professional development event, **The Power of CTE: Propelling Students to College & Career Readiness.**

The conference will be held on Wednesday, May 22, 2013 at The College of New Jersey, 2000 Pennington Road, Ewing, NJ, 08628-0718 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with onsite registration beginning at 7:30 a.m. in the Brower Student Center. There is no registration fee, and luncheon will be provided at no cost to attendees.

Prospective attendees should register electronically by visiting the NJDOE website registration at: <http://www.nj.gov/education/cte/conf/>

If you have questions or comments, please contact Maria Constantin, planning associate, at 609-984-2599 or by email at maria.constantin@doe.state.nj.us.

Managing Life-threatening Food Allergies in the School Setting

In an effort to promote the safety of food-allergic students, the New Jersey State Legislature required the NJDOE to establish and disseminate guidelines for development of a policy for the management of food allergies in the school setting, and for the emergency administration of epinephrine to students who experience a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) (N.J.S.A. 18A:40-12.6a). The law also requires each board of education or chief school administrator of a nonpublic school to develop a policy in accordance with the NJDOE-established guidelines (N.J.S.A. 18A:40-12.5 and 12.6b). These guidelines may be found at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/health/services/allergies.pdf> and <http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/health/services/epi.pdf>. Among the key components to an effective policy for the management of food allergies in the school, or any setting, are the inclusion of strategies to prevent exposure to food allergens, and clear communication of the policy to all school employees, parents and students. Implementing an effective policy has already saved the lives of students in New Jersey.

Food Allergy Awareness Week is May 12-18, 2013. Information about activities schools may want to include during that week can be found at <http://www.foodallergy.org/food-allergy-awareness-week>

Please contact Christene DeWitt-Parker, coordinator for school health, Office of Student Support Services at schoolhealthservices@doe.state.nj.us if you need assistance with this or other health services policies.

Are there pressing questions about the NJDOE that you want to know? **Ask Ed!**

Dear Ed,

Q: I am concerned about accepting a student teacher this year because of their effect on my evaluation. What should I do?

A: District, school, and educator willingness to host student teachers is vital to guaranteeing a pipeline of effective educators. As in the past, hosting student teachers provides a substantial opportunity to add capacity and further support to educators and students. If implemented effectively, student teaching experiences should not negatively impact any element of a teacher's evaluation. Cooperating teachers can benefit from having a student teacher assist with small group instruction, one-on-one assistance, and other team teaching strategies. This extra support may help students better understand the content being taught and better demonstrate that knowledge on a variety of assessments.

Just remember that for all teachers, including those in tested and non-tested grades and subjects, teacher and principal-developed Student Growth Objectives (SGOs) account for a portion of the evaluation score. The initial SGO-setting and mid-year review conferences between a teacher and his/her supervisor offer the flexibility to consider the impact of a student teacher on a cooperating teacher's (SGOs), and make any necessary adjustments.



In the News....

Local, State and National Education News

Support for State Action in Camden – April 6, 2013

The New York Post called Governor Christie's Decision to pursue state intervention in Camden Public Schools “courageous” and supported the state's proposed approach to break the cycle of failure in the district. http://www.nypost.com/p/news/opinion/opedcolumnists/christie_tackles_school_reform_yig54RkB0U530Lw4YWbqcm

Clark Teacher Recognized for Innovative Work – April 18, 2013

A special education teacher from Clark has received an Innovation in Special Education Award from the New Jersey School Boards Association. The honored educator is Nicole Parlavocchio, a special education teacher at the Frank K. Hehnly School. http://www.nj.com/suburbannews/index.ssf/2013/04/hehnly_school_teacher_in_clark.html

PARCC Announces Draft Accommodations Policy – April 22, 2013

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) released a draft accommodations policy for English language learners and students with disabilities. http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2013/04/testing_consortium_releases_draft_accommodations_policy.html?cmp=ENL-EU-NEWS2

Regional District Aims to Increase AP Course Enrollment – April 22, 2013

The Freehold Regional High School District intends to recruit more students for its Advanced Placement classes. The district set the goal as a result of discussions held after the release of the state's school performance reports. http://www.app.com/article/20130422/NJNEWS/304220119/Freehold-Regional-High-School-District-aims-to-increase-Advanced-Placement-participation?nclck_check=1

Gloucester County High School Reaps Community Service Honor – April 24, 2013

Washington Township High School has won the Jefferson Award from the statewide Students in Action organization for its community service activities. http://www.nj.com/washington-township-times/index.ssf/2013/04/washington_township_high_school_43.html#incart_river

Paper Underscores Importance of First Year for New Teachers – April 26, 2013

A paper from TNTP, a national alternative preparation program, reports that the first year of teaching is a strong indicator of future performance and effectiveness. http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2013/04/post_1.html?cmp=ENL-EU-NEWS2