

## Sample Agenda Points for PASS Classroom Discussions on PARCC

### Parent Academy for Student Success #2 Measure What Matters: Assessing Student Learning and The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers Assessment (PARCC)

*Teachers may want to consider using some of the points below when communicating with parents about the Common Core State Standards and PARCC Assessments.*

- Welcome to our PASS event to discuss the assessment of student learning and PARCC. PASS is designed to build and strengthen partnerships among parents and educators to meet the academic needs of our students – your children.
- I'm glad that you could join me in our classroom so that we can talk about the shifts in teaching, learning and assessing student progress.
- You know the needs of your child better than anyone else does, and as teachers and school leaders, we want to partner with you to be certain that your children gets the best preparation they need for a successful future.
- Tonight, as we look at our classrooms, I want to discuss examples of how teachers assess and measure the various types of work that students are already doing.

Tonight I ask that you keep one question at the center of our discussion:

**What was done in my child's classroom *before* CCSS and PARCC, and  
what is being done to measure student learning *now*?**

That question helps us see the important changes in student learning and performance. And how we can work together to ensure that your child is successfully learning with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and is prepared, and comfortable, with their skills to be successful on the PARCC assessment.

### The Principles of Assessment for Learning

- Students learn best when they know:
  - *What* they are going to learn (...student learning objectives provided at the beginning of each class)
  - *How* they are going to learn (...the Common Core State Standards)
  - *How* they will be assessed (...in-class assessments of assignments, projects, quizzes, tests, and PARCC at the end of the year)
  - *How* to meet the criteria for assessment (...learning about how they learn and how to apply their knowledge *and* skills)
- Assessment measures what students know and what they can do with what they know:
  - Assessment begins with identifying the information and skills that are important for students to know.
  - Assessment is the process of gathering, analyzing, measuring, and reflecting on the performance and evidence demonstrated by students.
  - Assessment results in improvement of student learning and educational programs.

## Teachers Use Assessments for Different Reasons

---

- Teachers in students' current and future grade levels use assessment and assessment results to:
  - Set goals for each student.
  - Verify that students can and are learning.
  - Tailor instruction to meet a student's needs.
  - Use evidence of student learning and test results to measure achievement against goals and standards.
  - Gain insight into the level of diversity/consistency when planning and developing lessons.
  - Consider the approach to instructing each student and each group of students.
  - Prepare students to move on to the next grade level, graduation, entry into college, and/or successful employment directly after graduation.
  - Use the information to ensure that educational programs are high quality.
  - Set professional goals.
  - Look for patterns of student learning outcomes, and work with other teachers and school leaders to review the strengths and weaknesses of grade-level instruction.
  - Educators and state Departments of Education use a summary of test results to ensure that education and assessment programs compare positively with those of other schools, districts, states, and nations.
  - Students also use assessment results to reflect on and monitor their own progress to inform their knowledge, skills, motivation to learn, and their future learning goals. These student self-reflection skills are called "self-regulated learning" and they help students become individuals who are life-long learners.

Assessment measures what students know and what they can do with what they know.

## "Teaching-To-The-Test"

---

- Teaching-to-the-test is an educational phrase that has, in the public's eye, become synonymous with poor teaching. While it definitely does not mean poor teaching, the term teach-to-the-test describes an instructional practice strictly limiting students' exposure to items on a test. The goal of teaching-to-the-test is to train students – not educate them - to score high marks on a specific test. This type of teaching can include narrow and excessive repetition of simple, isolated facts and skills, and prevent students from gaining a holistic understanding of the subject matter.

Outdated models of instruction and testing required students to recite facts from memorization, choose one answer from a multiple-choice list, and select a true/false answer linked to a very restrictive statement. Teaching-to-the-test could benefit students taking those types of tests. However, we now know that the old model of testing student knowledge does not help students apply their new knowledge to other situations in the next grade, after graduation, in college, or in the workplace.

PARCC is designed for students to demonstrate their understanding of a concept, apply that knowledge, and use their skills to produce a result. Since PARCC is a very different type of test – where students demonstrate and develop their own work - teachers really *can't* teach to the test.

The best way for students to prepare for PARCC assessments is to learn with the Common Core State Standards. Because PARCC is completely aligned with the Common Core State Standards, teaching that is standards-aligned is the best way to put students in the position to succeed. If students understand the concepts, they should do well on the PARCC tests.

## Classrooms Look Different

---

Standards such as the CCSS establish what students need to learn. But, standards do not tell teachers how to teach. Teachers tailor instruction that allows for continued flexibility and creativity to guide what and how your child learns. In every classroom, teachers have refocused instruction from recall to higher levels of thinking, and they help students read, write, listen, and speak in every subject area.

- Classroom instruction and operation reflect rapidly changing learning environments that may look different from the past:
  - Students are given a clear explanation on exactly what is being taught and why it is important. The explanation to students is called a Student Learning Objectives (SLO). The daily SLO is usually posted on the board for students to see so they can understand how they will use their new knowledge in the future.
  - If you visit your child's classroom, you may not see straight rows of desks facing the teacher who stands in the front of the room and does most of the talking. Instead, you might find that the room is arranged with tables and groups of chairs so that students can interact with each other and the teacher can move from table to table facilitating and assessing learning.
  - You might also see students moving around the room sharing information and asking questions. Unlike in the past, you may not see students memorizing lists of items, but rather using multiple methods to obtain and remember information.
  - Classroom operations foster students' curiosity, creativity, innovation, problem-solving, global literacy, communication and interpersonal skills. These new opportunities empower every student to take ownership of their own learning and the demonstration of that learning. Students are responsible to solve authentic, real-world problems.
  - You will see that teachers put an emphasis on assisting students in explaining their answers to problems and questions. The Common Core State Standards emphasize teaching students *how* to find information and analyze, apply and explain it just like in the workplace.
  - Teachers provide students with meaningful opportunities to understand and use technology to compare and combine information across academic subjects.
  - Of course, there are quiet times in the classroom, but there is significant interaction in a Common Core classroom. Students have discussion groups and perform team-based activities to discover and share information just like in college and the workplace.
  - Learning with the CCSS is personalized and promotes value for the differences that each student brings to the learning experience. You will see inclusive classrooms where students with special needs are working with their peers to solve problems in many different ways. You will notice benefits for all students.
  - Teachers are deliberate with their in-class questioning, assessments and feedback to check that students are achieving the lesson objectives. Teachers may also give students guidance about what their work should include. This tells students what they need to achieve to be successful as they learn.
  - Teachers are more creative as they instruct and assess learning in their classrooms. In my classroom, I also include\_\_\_\_\_.
  
- What is Old and what is new in my classroom?
  - Teacher's or Student's Examples:
  - Teacher's or Student's Outcomes:

- Teaching and learning in every classroom includes:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Creativity and innovation</li> <li>• Critical thinking and problem solving</li> <li>• Support for English language learners</li> <li>• Enrichment and support for diverse learners</li> <li>• Correct use of test terminology</li> <li>• Close attention to directions</li> <li>• Timely work completion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect for individual differences</li> <li>• Exploration of multiple perspectives</li> <li>• Technology use</li> <li>• Use of data to support learning</li> <li>• Academic engagement with families and communities</li> <li>• Discovery and use of clues, main ideas, and details</li> <li>• Note-taking, highlighting, and underlining key words</li> <li>• Development of critical thinking skills</li> </ul>
--	--

- Teachers use a variety of ways to help students acquire knowledge and practice their new skills. They also use a variety of ways to assess student learning. In addition to homework, projects, quizzes, and tests, some in-class examples of immediate learning assessments might be:
  - Thumbs Up
    - Students use their thumbs to show their own level of understanding. This is instant so teachers can provide extra help during a lesson to support those who need it.
  - Traffic Lights
    - Students show a card to show their level of understanding:
      - Green: “Got it!”
      - Amber: “Not quite there; I need more practice.”
      - Red: “I don’t understand this yet.”
    - Teachers get an immediate indication of students’ understanding and general confidence levels. Usually, students receive a set of cards that they keep for this purpose.
  - Individual whiteboards
    - Following a question from the teacher, all the students hold up their answer on an individual whiteboard. This allows the teacher to make a quick assessment of their progress and identify those who are ready to move on and those who may need extra help.
  - Exit tickets
    - At the end of a lesson, before students leave for their next class, recess, lunch, the end of the day, or are transitioning to another subject area, the teacher poses a question or posts it for all students to see. As students leave the room they hand the teacher a “ticket” filled out with an answer to a question, a solution to a problem, or a response to what they’ve learned. Exit Tickets help teachers assess if students have “caught what was taught” and plan for the next lesson or unit of instruction.
  - Peer Assessment
    - Another student, or group of students, share how successful your child’s learning has been when the work is done in a partnership. At the same time, your son or daughter will assess another student’s participation in the group work. Comments are usually preceded by “www” (what went well) and “ebi” (even better if). This helps students to learn about how their work is assessed and what they need to include to earn a higher mark.
  - Self-Assessment
    - Your child decides how successful he or she was at learning. They may use the in-class student learning objectives, personal learning plan, or the Common Core State Standards. They may be asked to set learning targets for their next piece of work.

---

As we wrap up the classroom portion of our discussions tonight, I want to tell you that when we return to the general session you will have the opportunity to ask questions that apply to all students in the school. Out of respect for your privacy, at the close of the program, we will have teachers available at tables around the \_\_\_\_\_ room so that you can ask more individualized questions. I encourage you to take notes and write down your ideas so that when you have conversations with your child's teacher(s) you can get the answers and share the information that you want and need.

As we close, I think it is fair in stating that education is moving toward teaching, learning, and assessment systems that are collaborative, digital and global in nature. Local input and information is highly valued. We know that we have an obligation to prepare our students for a future of learning and working in statewide, nation-wide, and global competition. Assessing our students' learning is intended to measure higher-order cognitive skills; critical thinking skills and abilities; problem-solving abilities; and, the application of internationally benchmarked performance standards.

The implementation ability of the state Departments of Education, districts, and schools is evolving along with the technology used as part of instructional practice to teach and assess college and career readiness skills and knowledge. I encourage you to support your child in their learning as well as the measurement of that learning. Also, know that after this first year of the PARCC assessments we will all learn more about the best ways we can help the children we share prepare for a successful future.

---

*PASS 2 documents and partnership supports are intended to complement information about the New Jersey Department of Education's Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) Assessments and provide resources, materials, and opportunities for parents and educators to work together in the best interest of New Jersey students.*

*For information on the NJDOE PASS model, the PASS #1 theme of **Student Learning with the Common Core State Standards** or the PASS #2 theme of **Measure What Matters: Assessing Student Learning and PARCC** go to: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/sca/toolkit/>. Send questions to: [informccss@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:informccss@doe.state.nj.us).*