

January 25, 2019

Dear Parents, Guardians and Students:

The end of January usually marks a time when we receive a flood of correspondence from parents regarding their desire to **not** have their children participate in the New Jersey Department of Education standardized testing program. With the 2015 transition to a computer-based testing program (PARCC) and the resulting skepticism over the use and sharing of student data, the widespread unpopularity of the Common Core State Standards and other state-mandated reforms, and a host of other problems too numerous to list, parents and students had many reasons to be concerned.

Further complicating matters is the fact that there was a December 2018 [court decision](#) regarding how certain PARCC tests can no longer be used as a graduation requirement. Many parents and students have questions about standardized testing and there is considerable misinformation being shared about what will be happening this year. My hope is that this letter provides some clarity on this important issue. Below, you will find a number of important facts related to standardized testing including changes we believe most parents will view as good news:

1. After considering public feedback from parents, students, and educators, the current NJDOE administration worked to ensure a more meaningful and less disruptive assessment schedule for the 2018-2019 school year. The goal is to accurately assess students in order to provide information on growth without causing significant disruption to instructional time.
2. Testing time has been significantly reduced for the 2019 assessments in all grade levels. Time spent testing has been reduced for all grades by approximately 25 percent.
3. The name for the assessment has changed. We will no longer administer PARCC assessments. The new assessments are called the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments and will have fewer testing questions, sections, and time for English Language Arts, Math, and Science.
4. Despite the name change, the computer-based format of the assessments will remain the same, and content will continue to be aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

5. The district continues to monitor the ongoing discussion at the NJDOE and in the court system regarding graduation requirements and will provide more guidance as it is available.

With these positive changes, we are hoping there might be some reconsideration regarding the state's standardized testing program. We also ask that you consider some other factors when making your decision about testing because test refusal does have implications for Wayne educators. Teachers and principals with students in tested areas continue to be evaluated based on student standardized test performance. Although less emphasis has been placed on standardized testing when compared to prior years, a low score or no score (test refusal) unfairly weighs against teachers and principals.

Another fact to consider is that every organization that ranks our school district uses our results on state-administered standardized tests as a basis for comparison and ranking. Last year, we had 287 cases of test refusal plus many additional cases where we suspect students made a minimal effort. Wayne is accustomed to having a highly ranked school system and you can easily see how hundreds of cases of test refusal would negatively influence our rankings when compared to other school districts.

Should you have any questions or comments, please feel free to e-mail me at mtoback@wayneschools.com.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Toback". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark Toback
Superintendent of Schools