

Board Statement- PARCC

Only a short time ago a park was a place where one might go to take a walk, to relax, or to relieve stress. Now the word PARCC creates anxiety and stress for students, parents, teachers, administrators, and yes, even board of education members.

The Township of Union Board of Education empathizes with parents, students, and teachers and acknowledges the mixed feelings they may have concerning the upcoming test. During the school year, the district has scheduled a number of PARCC information sessions to review PARCC content and provide guidance on PARCC requirements and practice testing information. The district, although prepared with student testing devices and district broadband requirements, continues to have concerns with the unforeseen issues that may occur such as site interruptions or connectivity issues beyond the district's control. In addition, the district is justifiably concerned about the stress incurred by students and staff from a standardized test of this magnitude. In order to alleviate some of these concerns a PARCC information session concentrating on test procedures and logistics has been scheduled for January 22, 2015, 7:00 P.M. at Union High School library. Interested parents are welcome to ask questions concerning the district's readiness for the test and general scheduling concerns. Answers to content based questions are available on the district website under the PARCC tab.

The Township of Union Board of Education is obligated by law to follow the directives of the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education which were spelled out in a memo sent on October 30th by Commissioner Hesper.

In order to accomplish this, a number of initiatives were undertaken. Our school district has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars to ensure that we have enough bandwidth to cover the requirements of the testing and that each school has enough computers to facilitate the administering of the PARCC. In addition, district students have prepared for testing during computer classes and regularly scheduled computer lab time. As required by the state, our district curriculum at each grade level has been aligned to the common core standards. Also, general classroom instruction focusing on necessary skills in each content area has been on-going as required.

The Board is aware of the time constraints needed for administering PARCC. Each school principal has created a schedule based on school size to help facilitate the most efficient use of time and resources with the least impact on instructional time.

District teachers have prepared for the administration of the test through professional development and information sessions beginning in 2013. Recently, Dr. Lishak, Assistant Superintendent attended a state run workshop on test administration; and on January 27th, she will attend another state run workshop along with a member of the IT department which will focus on the technology requirement of PARCC.

Recently, we have received several requests for information regarding the procedure for parents to follow who are refusing to allow their child to participate in the state testing. It must be stated first that the state of New Jersey does not recognize "opting out." Some states have this option, but New Jersey does not. It is not a legally permissible alternative which was also made clear in Commissioner Hespe's memo of October 30th. However, if a parent refuses to allow his or her child to participate in the PARCC, a letter must be sent to the principal of the child's school requesting that the child NOT participate in the PARCC. Children who are not participating in testing will not be excluded from attending school on testing days; however, during scheduled testing time these individuals will be placed in a supervised area and these individuals will be permitted to work on previously given assignments or to read a book brought by the student. No electronic devices will be allowed. The instructional program planned during the time of the administration of the PARCC is the PARCC assessment no alternative instructional program will be provided during PARCC administration.

The district has adjusted the criteria for entrance into various programs, such as, honors classes, AP courses, or G&T programs. Standardized test results will not be used for inclusion into district programs or as an exclusionary factor. Additional PARCC information can be found on the district website under the PARCC tab.

The Board of Education is as concerned as parents, staff, administrators, and most of all, our children. Maybe in the near future PARCC can once again return to its original meaning of a stress free place.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Arminio". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "A".

David Arminio

Township of Union Board of Education President