

## Information for Parents: Students with IEPs and State Assessment

New Jersey Department of Education

Both the new *Every Student Succeeds Act* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* require that all students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) participate in state assessments. The purpose of inclusion in these assessments is to ensure that schools are held accountable for the achievement of **every student** and that the results of **all students** are used for curriculum development and other decisions about instruction.

The vast majority of students with IEPs participate in the **PARCC assessments** which were developed using the principles of Universal Design for Learning to enable all students to participate. Accessibility features that can be used by all students, as well as a broad array of accommodations available to students with IEPs, enable all students to fully participate in the assessments. A small number of students with the most significant intellectual disabilities participate in the **Dynamic Learning Maps assessment**.

Although participation of all students with IEPs in state assessments is critical to improving instruction for every student, it is important to remember that state assessments are only one measure of student achievement. They measure whether students have achieved what is expected for their grade and should be used in conjunction with the many other forms of assessment used by your child's teachers in the classroom to get a full picture of what your child has learned and his/her progress in academic areas, as well as in other areas of need.

The IEP team, which includes you as the parent, decides which state assessment is appropriate for each student with an IEP based on specific criteria. For students taking the PARCC, accommodations are also selected by the IEP team. Parents are integral participants in the development of the IEP and in making decisions about state assessment participation. The following resources will assist you with preparing for the IEP meeting and in determining what the assessment results mean for your child. Remember that your child's participation in state assessments ensures inclusion in decisions about instruction at the local, state and national levels.

For information on the PARCC including test items, accessibility features and accommodation, and understanding score reports go to:  
[www.parcconline.org](http://www.parcconline.org)

Information about **Universal Design for Learning** is available at: [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org)

The criteria IEP teams use to select PARCC or DLM is at: [www.dynamiclearningmaps.org/newjersey](http://www.dynamiclearningmaps.org/newjersey)

Read more about the DLM including how the test was designed & understanding score reports at:  
[www.dynamiclearningmaps.org](http://www.dynamiclearningmaps.org)

Information about the **Essential Elements**, the basis for the DLM, is available at: <http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/content/essential-elements>

General information about New Jersey's assessments, results and the testing schedule is available at: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/assessment/>

# Students with IEPs and New Jersey State Assessments: Information for Parents and Families

## **1. What is the PARCC Assessment?**

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is a group of 12 states and the District of Columbia working together to develop a common set of computer-based assessments for students in English language arts/Literacy (ELA) and Mathematics linked to the new, more rigorous Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The PARCC assessments will replace the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA).

For more information visit: <http://www.parcconline.org/>

## **2. Which grades are assessed through PARCC?**

Students in grades 3-8 will be administered the PARCC assessments every year for ELA and math. High school students in grades 9, 10 and 11 will be administered PARCC ELA assessments. Students in grades 9, 10 and 11 who are enrolled in Algebra I, Algebra II, or Geometry will be administered a PARCC math assessment in that subject.

## **3. What is the DLM?**

The Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessment is an alternate state assessment administered to students with the most significant intellectual disabilities. Students in grades 3-8 and 11 who meet specific eligibility criteria, will be administered the DLM assessment for ELA and math instead of the PARCC assessments.

For more information on DLM visit: <http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/newjersey> .

## **4. Why do states need new assessments?**

New Jersey is one of forty-six states that voluntarily adopted the CCSS in 2010 and 2011. The PARCC and DLM assessments were developed to assess how well students are learning the CCSS. The new tests were also developed in response to the longstanding concerns of educators, parents and employers who want assessments that better measure students' critical-thinking and problem-solving skills as well as their ability to communicate clearly.

The DLM assessment is being developed to measure knowledge and skills in the CCSS for a small group of students with significant intellectual disabilities to ensure that these students receive instruction on skills aligned with the CCSS, and are included in states' accountability for preparing students for positive outcomes after high school.

## **5. Are students with disabilities who have IEPs required to take the PARCC or DLM assessments?**

Both the No Child Left Behind Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 require that all students participate in statewide assessments in the grades and subjects tested. The purpose is to ensure that achievement of the CCSS is measured for all students. The vast majority of students with IEPs will take the PARCC assessments. These students will be able to participate with appropriate accommodations, approved by

PARCC, and listed in their IEPs. The PARCC assessments also include a variety of “accessibility features” that all students can access during assessments.

Students with the most significant intellectual disabilities who meet specific eligibility criteria will take the DLM assessment instead of the PARCC assessment. The IEP team determines if a student will take the PARCC or the DLM. For more information visit:

[http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/sites/default/files/documents/dlm\\_participation\\_guidelines.pdf](http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/sites/default/files/documents/dlm_participation_guidelines.pdf).

#### ***6. How is science assessed?***

Students in grades 4 and 8 will be assessed in science through the NJASK. High school students will complete the NJ Biology Competency Test (NJBCT) the year they are enrolled in biology. Students with IEPs will take the NJBCT with the accommodations listed in their IEPs. Students with disabilities who meet criteria for an alternate assessment for science will participate in the Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA) in grades 4, 8 and 11.

#### ***7. How does the PARCC impact graduation requirements?***

Students in the 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 graduating classes do not have to pass the high school PARCC assessments to graduate with a diploma. Beginning with the graduating class of 2019, students must score proficient or advance proficient on the high school PARCC assessments in order to meet graduation requirements. Although it is expected that the majority of students with disabilities will be required to obtain proficient scores on the PARCC assessments beginning in 2019, as with the HSPA, an individual student’s IEP team may determine that a student whose IEP reflects significant modification to the content of a tested course, must participate in the PARCC assessment, but would not be required to achieve a proficient score in order to obtain a diploma. If exempted from passing one or more of the high school PARCC assessments, the IEP team must list the alternate proficiencies the student must achieve as determined by the IEP team. A student may only be exempted from obtaining a proficient score in a high school PARCC assessment if in a particular content area: 1) the instruction in any of the knowledge and skills measured by the PARCC is not being provided to the student because of the nature and severity of the student’s disability, and 2) the student cannot complete any of the types of questions in the assessment in such content area(s) even with accommodations and modifications. See N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(e)9 and 6A:14-4.10.

Students who participate in the DLM will not be required to take the PARCC assessments and will not be required to receive a proficient score on the DLM in order to obtain a diploma. The IEPs of DLM participants must also reflect the alternate proficiencies the student would be required to achieve in order to graduate with a diploma.

For more information regarding graduation requirements visit:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/assessment/parcc/TransitioningtoPARCCFAQ2.pdf>.

#### ***8. Who decides how a student with an IEP will participate in state assessments?***

The IEP team, which includes the student’s parents, determines whether a student with an IEP will participate in the general assessment (PARCC) with accommodations or the alternate assessment (DLM). The IEP team also determines whether a student with an IEP will take the general assessment for science (NJASK or NJBCT) or the APA for science. The IEP team will identify accommodations the student will need to participate in the PARCC assessment and the science assessment, when appropriate. Teachers, child study team members, and parents must become familiar with the content and types of questions on the assessments and the approved accommodations and accessibility features for the PARCC assessment and the accommodations for the NJBCT.

The IEP team must ensure that each student's IEP includes decisions about which assessments a student will take and what accommodations will be provided during the assessments. Please refer to the Office of Special Education Program's sample IEP form which lists the sections of the IEP that must be completed regarding participation in state assessments at: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/form/> .

**9. How does the IEP team know what accommodations will be appropriate for PARCC? What are accessibility features?**

The [PARCC Accessibility Features and Accommodations Manual](#) provides educators and families with information on the available accommodations and how to select them. **Accessibility features** are options that **all** students will have during the PARCC assessments to improve their access to test items. There are some features that students can 'turn on' during the assessment and some that need to be activated prior to the assessment. The IEP team should discuss accessibility features during the IEP team meeting; however, inclusion of accessibility features in an IEP is optional since they are available to all students. For more information visit: <http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-accessibility-features-and-accommodations-manual> .

**10. What can parents and families do to prepare students with disabilities for the new assessments?**

Parents, families and students are encouraged to learn more about the PARCC assessments and the DLM and to be active participants in IEP meetings in making decisions about state assessments and accommodations. Beginning at age 14, or younger, if appropriate, students must be invited to their IEP meetings. Engaging students in conversation, at home and in school, about the PARCC assessments, the DLM assessment (where appropriate), the science assessments, when appropriate, accommodations, and accessibility features will facilitate their involvement in identifying their own testing needs. Here are some other strategies for families:

- √ Visit the PARCC and DLM websites and read about the assessments. Visit the sites every few weeks as new information is continually added, including documents and videos to help educators and families become more familiar with the assessment content and accommodations;
- √ Read through the **Accessibility Feature and Accommodations Manual** to learn about what accommodations are available to students with IEPs. The tables in the manual clearly define each accommodation and accessibility feature. Appendices provide additional details and information on how decisions can be made and procedures for administering accommodations;
- √ On the PARCC website, review the sample tests. For children who will be taking the PARCC, sit with your child, try the items for his or her grade and discuss what accessibility features would be helpful. Talk about what accommodations he/she uses effectively in school for similar tasks that should be considered for inclusion in the IEP for the PARCC;
- √ If your child will take the DLM, visit the web site and read the "essential elements" which define how the test will measure the CCSS in a way that makes more sense for your child. Review the eligibility criteria.
- √ Make a list of questions you have about the PARCC or DLM and schedule a call with your child's teacher or case manager to learn the answers;
- √ Attend any school or district parent meetings on state assessments. Talk to your **Special Education Parent Advisory Group** about scheduling an information session for parents on the new assessments;
- √ Schedule a call with your child's teacher or case manager prior to the assessment dates to ensure that all accommodations and accessibility features will be in place during assessment; and
- √ Once you receive assessment results, review the report and contact your case manager with questions you have about how the school will use these test results.

**11. Where can I find more information on New Jersey statewide assessments and the Common Core State Standards?**

*Visit any of the following*

NJDOE Common Core Toolkit: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/sca/toolkit/>

NJDOE Office of Assessment: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/assessment/>

NJDOE Office of Special Education Programs: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/>

NJDOE Innovatenj: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/innovateNJ/>

PARCC website: <http://www.parcconline.org/>

DLM website: <http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/>