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David Fleishman  
Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Newton Families,

As most of you know, students in Massachusetts have been taking MCAS exams since 1998. MCAS was designed to assess students' progress towards meeting standards established through the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. I am writing to let you know that MCAS will very likely be phased out in a few years and replaced by a different type of assessment. These new assessments known as PARCC, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, align to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which were adopted as Massachusetts state standards by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in July 2011.

PARCC is a consortium of 18 states plus the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands working together to develop a common set of K-12 assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics. We have been told that the Massachusetts Board could consider adopting PARCC as our statewide assessment system (beginning in the 2015-2016 school year) at their October or November 2014 meeting. We have also been informed that 15 of our 21 schools in Newton (list attached) have been selected to participate in the 2014 PARCC field test.

Not all grade levels or classes in the 15 schools will be tested, and most students participating in the field test will only take one part of the whole assessment in one content area, in order to minimize testing burden on individual students and schools. Participating students in grades 3-11 will be assessed in English/Language Arts or Mathematics.

Following is a summary of some important information about this pilot program:

- The primary purposes of the field test are to: (1) examine the quality of items so that PARCC can build assessment forms for the 2014-2015 school year; (2) test assessment administration procedures; and (3) give schools and districts the opportunity to experience the administration of PARCC assessments.
- PARCC assessments have two components: *Performance-Based Assessments (PBA)* and *End-of-Year Assessments (EOY)*. PBAs will be administered between March 24th and April 11th, while EOYs are to take place between May 5th and June 6th.

- No student will participate in the entire PARCC assessment. A student will participate in one of the two following ways: (1) some students will take both the PBA and the EOY in one content area; or (2) some students will take either the PBA or the EOY in one content area. Students may not opt out of the PARCC assessment.
- Some students will try out the computer-based version of PARCC by taking it on-line, while others will take a paper/pencil version of the tests.
- The MA DESE is committed to ensure that all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, are able to participate in PARCC assessments “in a meaningful and appropriate manner.” Many of the present MCAS accommodations will be built into the computer-based PARCC.
- We will not receive student scores for this field test.
- All students will also participate in MCAS testing at their grade level, with scores reported to schools and parents as usual.

Obviously, this is a tremendous undertaking and will require a great deal of effort and communication with staff and parents. Despite the proliferation of state and federal testing, we will continue our focus on improving teaching and learning in the Newton Public Schools.

Please visit the PARCC website at <http://www.parcconline.org/> for more information about this initiative. In addition, you can view examples of assessment items at <http://www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes>.

Many thanks for your understanding and support. We will be sure to keep you well informed during this time of transition.

Sincerely,

David Fleishman  
Superintendent of Schools

DAF/mb

Attachment

**Newton Public Schools  
PARCC Field Test Participation  
Spring 2014**

School	Grade/Course	Subject	Number of Classes	Number of Sessions	Mode of Admin.	Component *
Angier	4	ELA	2	2	Paper	EOY
Bowen	3	Mathematics	2	2	Online	PBA
Bowen	5	ELA	2	5	Online	PBA & EOY
Burr	4	ELA	2	3	Paper	PBA
Burr	5	ELA	2	3	Paper	PBA
Cabot	4	Mathematics	2	2	Online	PBA
Horace Mann	4	ELA	2	2	Paper	EOY
Memorial-Spaulding	4	Mathematics	2	4	Online	PBA & EOY
Memorial-Spaulding	5	Mathematics	2	4	Online	PBA & EOY
Ward	5	ELA	2	2	Online	EOY
Williams	5	Mathematics	2	2	Paper	EOY
Zervas	5	ELA	2	3	Online	PBA
Bigelow	8	Mathematics	2	2	Online	PBA
Brown	7	ELA	2	2	Online	EOY
Brown	8	Mathematics	2	2	Online	EOY
Day	6	Mathematics	2	2	Paper	PBA
Day	8	ELA	2	5	Paper	PBA & EOY
Oak Hill	6	ELA	2	3	Online	PBA
Oak Hill	7	ELA	2	3	Online	PBA
Oak Hill	8	ELA	2	3	Online	PBA
North	Integrated Math 1	Mathematics	2	4	Paper	PBA & EOY
North	Integrated Math 3	Mathematics	6	2	Paper	PBA
South	Integrated Math 1	Mathematics	4	2	Online	PBA
South	Integrated Math 3	Mathematics	6	2	Online	PBA

\* Performance-Based Assessments (PBA) and End-of-Year Assessments (EOY)