

Rhode Island Department of Education
Commissioner Wagner's message to families and educators on PARCC assessments

As we prepare for the administration of 2016 PARCC assessments, I wanted to reach out to share a few thoughts about why it is important to use a small amount of our instructional time for the administration of a statewide assessment.

First, a statewide assessment is the only way, using a common measure, to determine whether all students are making progress on our grade-level learning expectations.

Our learning standards have been designed to prepare students for the next grade, culminating in readiness for postsecondary education and meaningful careers in a 21st-century economy. Our statewide assessment provides parents and families with objective information about whether their children are academically on track. The assessment helps educators benchmark the performance of their students against those across the state, and it gives the public a common statewide measure of how schools are doing at improving learning for all students. For these reasons, federal law requires annual statewide assessments, and federal law also holds schools and districts accountable for attaining at least 95-percent student participation.

Second, assessments provide us with just one measure – a snapshot in time – of student achievement. Although we should never make important decisions about students or teachers based on one measure alone, a comprehensive picture of student progress emerges from different kinds of measures over time. So we are taking another look at our diploma system to ensure that our graduation requirements are meaningful but fair and that they support multiple measures and multiple ways for students to express their knowledge and skills, building upon their strengths and interests.

Third, PARCC offers a set of high-quality assessments that align with our expectations for students at each grade level, the work students do in class every day, and the skills students will need for success beyond high school: problem-solving, critical thinking, and analysis of writing selections. Three recent studies from independent nonprofit organizations have confirmed the high quality of PARCC assessments; [one](#) from the Thomas B. Fordham

Foundation: <http://edexcellence.net/publications/evaluating-the-content-and-quality-of-next-generation-assessments>, and [another](#) from the National Network of State Teachers of the

Year: <http://www.nnstoy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Right-Trajectory-FINAL.pdf>, and a [third](#) from the American Institutes for Research: <http://www.air.org/resource/national-benchmarks-stas5106111/Ey6TET/30610>

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The bottom line: Results on the PARCC test can be useful to students, their families, and teachers by revealing areas of student strength and the knowledge and skills that need additional support.

Finally, we've learned a lot from our first year of PARCC implementation. This year, there will be only one testing period for PARCC, the testing time will be shorter, and we will receive results

much sooner –before the start of the next school year. For those who are curious about the

Departamento de Educación de Rhode Island

