

PCCS' Position on PARCC

Since the inception of *No Child Left Behind*, we have been adding to the number of standardized tests that our students must hurdle over.

We overuse and over-emphasize standardized tests. The perception is that PARCC adds to the problem, with lost classroom time, infrastructure costs necessary to take the PARCC test — and high-stakes pressure on both students and teachers alike.

We are concerned about the amount of instructional time it interferes with, the impact this has on students, and the usefulness of the results.

We recognize the need for assessments and accountability. PCCS remains committed to complying with State mandates, including the PARCC. However, our position is that this test continues the over-emphasis of standardized assessments as evaluation tools for students and schools. Our concerns are not unique. In 2010, 26 states committed to using PARCC. Today only 10 states, including Illinois, remain in the consortium.

Effective/Excellent teaching is aligned to the individual learning needs of students, and it is out of kilter to have to teach to the expectations of a standardized test. This is not PCCS' way; we will continue to provide a personalized education to each child and will not begin teaching to the test.

These sterile and impersonal tests stand in stark contrast to the rich and varied learning experiences we provide in our classrooms.

Through a continued emphasis on standardized testing, we see the potential of curriculum narrowing, creation of a false definition of educational success, and the appreciation of school and life-long learning possibly diminishing.

In the early grades, the tests end up being as much a test of keyboarding skills as of attainment in English Language Arts or Math. We agree with others that the online testing format is entirely inappropriate for third grade.

Currently, teachers and students cannot see the tests to find out what students may have gotten wrong and why. So the tests, as they are administered today, have little to no instructional value to PCCS for the students and teachers.

By its own admission, PARCC is an intentionally much more difficult test that will increase students' anxiety and feelings of inadequacy.

PARCC is frustrating to our children because it is entirely online, creating additional test-taking challenges not related to the test content. Especially in 3rd and 4th grade, where keyboarding is not a typical skill needed, students unfamiliar with keyboarding are at a distinct disadvantage.

The State aims to use high cut scores for the test, which would result in nearly 20% of our students labeled below standards or not achieving.

Cut scores are not an objective measure. It is a “One size fits all” judgment call, shaped by assumptions that can be manipulated to make scores appear higher or lower.

On average, each class spends over 15 hours of instructional time just to take the test. This number does not include transition time, make-up exams and missed class time for those absent, etc.

In previous assessments, PCCS students averaged over 24% higher than the state average and above our competing districts. With PARCC, although the bar and scale has moved, here at PCCS those results continue to be the same.

We stand by the academic excellence this School has been known and nationally recognized for over the last 15 years.

FAQs

Why do schools administer standardized tests?

Assessments like PARCC are state mandated tests. We recognize the need for assessments and accountability. It is important, however, to remember that any standardized test is just one snapshot into the academic life of a student. Teachers use a variety of formative and summative evaluations in order to achieve a more robust academic picture of the individual student.

We are concerned about the amount of instructional time it interferes with, the impact this has on students, and the usefulness of the results. At PCCS, over 15 hours per class were expended in preparing and taking the PARCC test this year.

Our position is that this test continues the over-emphasis of standardized assessments as evaluation tools for students and schools. Our concerns are not unique. In 2010, 26 states committed to using PARCC. Today only 10 states, including Illinois, remain in the consortium.

How will PARCC influence how my child learns at PCCS?

Effective/Excellent teaching is aligned to the individual learning needs of students, and it is out of kilter to have to teach to the expectations of a standardized test. This is not PCCS' way; we will continue to provide a personalized education to each child and will not begin teaching to the test.

Why not teach to the test?:

- These sterile and impersonal tests stand in stark contrast to the rich and varied learning experiences we provide in our classrooms.
- Through a continued emphasis on standardized testing, we see the potential of curriculum narrowing, creation of a false definition of educational success, and the appreciation of school and life-long learning possibly diminishing.
- In the early grades, the tests end up being as much a test of keyboarding skills as of attainment in English Language Arts or Math. We agree with others that the online testing format is entirely inappropriate for third grade.
- The tests, as they are administered today, have little instructional value for the students and teachers. Currently, teachers and students cannot see the tests to find out what students may have gotten wrong and why.
- By its own admission, PARCC is an intentionally much more difficult test that we feel may increase students' anxiety and feelings of inadequacy.

What challenges do our children face with this new testing structure?

PARCC is frustrating to our children because it is entirely online, creating additional test-taking challenges not related to the test content. Especially in 3rd and 4th grade, where keyboarding is not a typical skill needed, students unfamiliar with keyboarding are at a distinct disadvantage.

The State aims to use high cut scores for the test, which would result in nearly 20% of our students labeled below standards or not achieving.

Cut scores are not an objective measure. It is a “One size fits all” judgment call, shaped by assumptions that can be manipulated to make scores appear higher or lower.

On average, each class spends 15 hours of instructional time just to take the test. This number does not include transition time, make-up exams and missed class time for those absent, etc. This equates to 2 days of lost opportunity to teach our own curriculum.

How do PCCS students perform compared to the state average?

In previous assessments, PCCS students averaged over 24% higher than the state average and above our competing districts. With PARCC, although the bar and scale has moved, here at PCCS those results continue to be the same with PCCS scoring 24.3% above the State average.