



PARCC Test Score: Online vs Paper-Pencil

The previous edition of this Newsletter focused on the interpretation of the PARCC test score. Since then, school district officials presented students' 2015 PARCC test results data to the Board and public, and the State Board of Education released the official [results](#) of the inaugural PARCC tests. FHS students were part of the 5 million students across 10 states (at least 800,000 NJ students) and the District of Columbia who sat for the first official administration of the PARCC exams.

In a published [report](#) from *Education Week*, the validity of PARCC test results came into question as PARCC officials acknowledged that "students who took the 2014-15 PARCC exams via computer tended to score lower than those who took the exams with paper and pencil." According to the report, nearly 81 percent of the 5 million students took the exams by computer, and "the pattern of lower scores for students who took PARCC exams by computer is most pronounced in English/language arts and middle- and upper-grades math." In an interview with *Education Week*, PARCC's chief of assessment, Jeffrey Nellhaus, said that "it is true that this [pattern exists] on average, but that doesn't mean it occurred in every state, school, and district on every one of the tests."

As you are aware PARCC, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, is a multistate consortium of which New Jersey is a member. Illinois is also a prominent member state, and its board of education analyzed their students' test results and found that "43 percent of students there who took the PARCC English/language arts exam on paper scored proficient or above, compared to 36 percent of students who took the exam online." The analysis also shows differences by testing format in the percentages of Illinois students who demonstrated proficiency (by scoring a 4 or 5) on PARCC English/language arts exams across all tested grades. For example, of the 107,067 high school students who took the test online, 32 percent scored proficient, compared to 50 percent for the 17,726 high school students who took the paper version of the exam.

Maryland, another important PARCC state, found similar differences in its 111,000-student Baltimore County schools. Based on statistical techniques to isolate the impact of the test format (online vs paper), Maryland education officials "found a strong 'mode effect' in numerous grade-subject combinations: Baltimore County middle-grades students who took the paper-based version of the PARCC English/language arts exam, for example, scored almost 14 points higher than students who had equivalent demographic and academic backgrounds but took the computer-based test." Russell Brown, who is the Baltimore's chief accountability and performance-management officer, questions "the validity of the first year's results for PARCC" and said that "the differences are significant enough that it makes it hard to make meaningful comparisons between students and [schools] at some grade levels."

The stark differences seen in the online and paper test results may not be unique to PARCC. The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, which is the other Common Core-aligned assessment consortia, is "investigating possible mode effects in the results from its 2014-15 tests taken by roughly 6 million students." *Education Week* reports that Smarter Balanced officials are in the early stages of preparing technical reports on that issue.

References:

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2016/02/03/parcc-scores-lower-on-computer.html?intc=main-mpsmlvs>

Should parents (and educators) be concerned about the apparent 'mode effect' of PARCC scores? Since states and school districts are federally mandated to ensure their educational systems produce students who are prepared for higher education and career, it's imperative that standardized assessments issued by these entities accurately measure or gauge the success of state and local educational systems. Hence, in order to ensure that the mode of administration is not advantageous to students, assessment experts suggest adjusting the scores of all students who took the exam in a particular format (online v paper). In response to this suggestion, PARCC officials' asserts that "it will be up to district and state officials to determine the scope of any problem in their schools' test results, as well as what to do about it."

In the ongoing debate of accurately measuring students' achievement and college/work preparedness via standardized assessments, educators and policy-makers need to convince parents that these assessments reflect the classroom instructions delivered to students by their teachers, and their mode of administration is fair and unbiased. The era of high-stakes testing is upon us, and both teachers and students are impacted by the implementation and administration of these tests. Testing officials should be committed to providing necessary and timely information to parents and teachers in order for students to achieve their fullest potential.

In an attempt to address this issue a recent [study](#) by the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) concludes that the PARCC assessments "do a better job gauging the depth and complexity of important academic skills and knowledge than do the ACT Aspire, or Massachusetts' MCAS exam." The study, funded exclusively by Common Core advocates, is based on the "guiding framework elements of the Criteria for Procuring and Evaluating High Quality Assessments, which was developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the organization that set guidelines for how tests should reflect the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English/language arts. They researchers evaluated how well each of the four tests reflected key aspects of test quality, such as depth and complexity of content covered, and they assigned ratings of "excellent," "good," "limited/uneven" or "weak" to show how well the tests matched the CCSSO's criteria for good tests.

The key topics about the four assessments programs (PARCC – online Mode, The Smarter Balanced – Online mode, ACT Aspire – Online Mode & MCAS – Paper/Pencil) address by the study were:

1. Content – Are the assessment aligned with the CCSS by placing strong emphasis on the most important content of college and career readiness?
2. Depth – How well are the assessments measuring students' range of higher-order thinking skills, and in turn reflects the demands of college and career readiness?
3. Accessibility – Are the assessments accessible to all students, including English learners (ELs) and students with disabilities?

Based on these topics, the following are conclusions from the report:

1. PARCC out performed its counterparts in measuring students' mastery of English language arts
2. PARCC contained a heavier distribution of higher-order thinking skills than did the common standards
3. PARCC is limited in assessing/measuring students' speaking and listening communication skills

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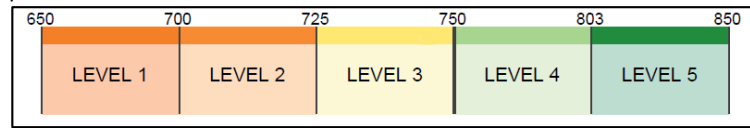
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PARCC Test Score: School District Data

PARCC uses five performance levels that delineate the knowledge, skills and practices that students are able to demonstrate:



Level 1 – Did not meet Expectations; Minimum command

Level 2 – Partially Met Expectations; Student demonstrate partial command

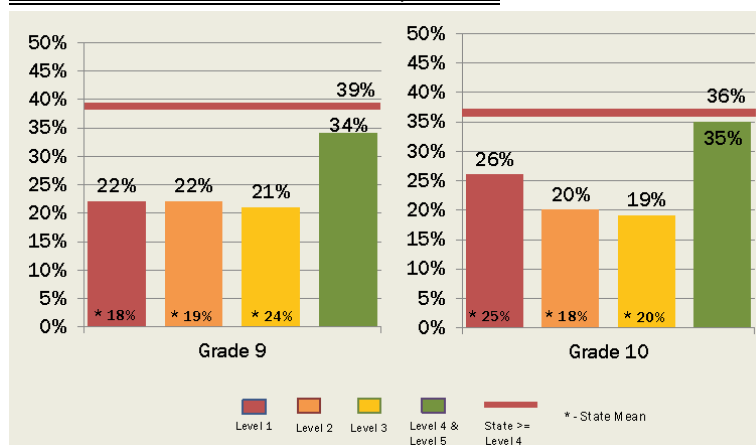
Level 3 – Approached Expectations; Demonstration of moderate command

Level 4 – Met Expectations; Student demonstrate strong command

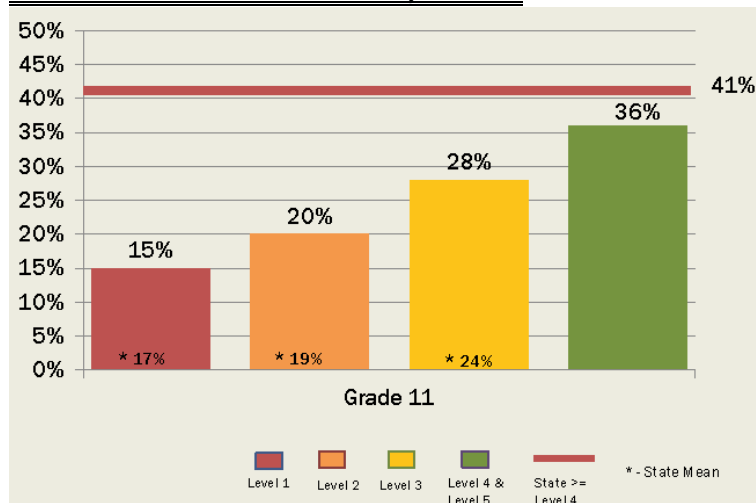
Level 5 – Exceeded Expectation; student show distinguished command

Data presented to the Board at the January 28th BOE Meeting are shown below; the data does not indicate what percentage of FHS students took the online and/or paper-pencil test. The Geometry data (20%) and Algebra II data (22%) shows that FHS students who demonstrated strong or distinguished command in these subjects were slightly below the state's average of 23% and 24%, respectively. Correspondingly the data for Algebra 1 students, majority of which are current freshman and sophomores, is much less promising. These students' scores are below the state's average for all five performance levels. Similar results are shown for the English Language Arts / Literacy data.

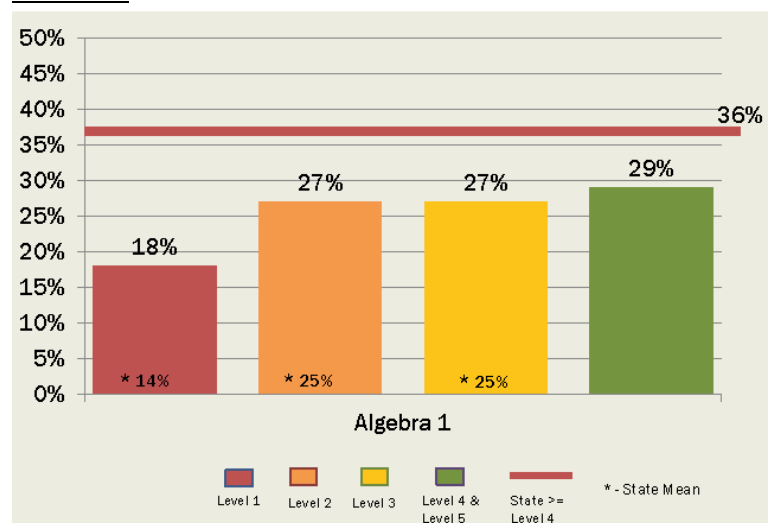
GRADES 9 & 10 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS / LITERACY



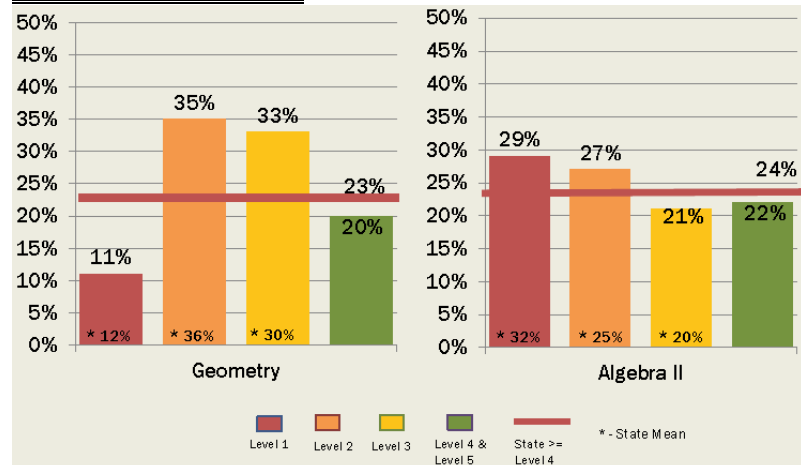
GRADES 11 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS / LITERACY



ALGEBRA 1



ALGEBRA II AND GEOMETRY



Source: <http://www.franklinboe.org/Page/12410>

Mark your Calendar

Feb 25	BOE Meeting; FMS Cafeteria, 7:30 PM
Mar 03	Minimum Session Day
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Mar 03	SAT @ FMS
Mar 08	FHS PTSO Meeting; FHS Library @ 7:00 PM
Mar 16	Art Recognition Ceremony; 6:00 PM
Mar 22	BOE Meeting; FMS Cafeteria, 7:30 PM
Mar 25 - 31	School Closed; Spring Break
Apr 01	School Closed; Spring Break
Apr 07	College and Career Night; 6:30 PM
Apr 08, 09	FHS Spring Musical; 7:30 PM
Apr 10, 17	FHS Spring Musical; 2:30 PM
Apr 12	FHS PTSO Meeting; FHS Library @ 7:00 PM
Apr 17	End of 3 rd Marking Period
Apr 22	School Closed
Apr 28	BOE Meeting; FMS Cafeteria, 7:30 PM