



NORWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES • JAMES R. SAVAGE EDUCATIONAL CENTER

P.O. BOX 67, 275 PROSPECT STREET, NORWOOD, MA 02062

TEL. (781) 762-6804 Ext. 5319

FAX (781) 762-0229

VOICE/TTY - Use Phone Relay



JAMES HAYDEN

Superintendent of Schools

ALEXANDER WYETH, Ed.D.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum,
Instruction & Assessment

February 12, 2014

Dear Parents/Guardians:

This spring Norwood will be participating in piloting new assessments of student learning that may replace the state's MCAS tests in 2016. What follows is a letter from Mitchell D. Chester, the Massachusetts Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, who explains the reasons for the new PARCC testing program:

"The best education in the country today is happening in Massachusetts. Our students are reading better and doing math better than a decade ago. Despite these accomplishments, we know that there are gaps in achievement, and not all students are enjoying the same level of success in kindergarten through grade 12 or when they advance to higher education and employment. We have to continue to invest in public education to ensure that the remarkable gains of the past decade are not lost.

That is why in classrooms across the state, we are upgrading curriculum and instruction to prepare all students for success after high school. In 2010, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new academic learning standards in English language arts and mathematics (the Common Core) to put all students on the pathway to college and career readiness. **To measure progress against those learning standards, we are now developing a new student testing program.**

The **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, or PARCC**, is a multi-state project to develop a next-generation, computer-based testing program aligned to our academic learning standards. PARCC will offer rich, performance-based tasks that will provide you with a better measure of our children's ability to write, think critically, and apply what they know. PARCC will also provide clearer signals to educators and parents about students' readiness for the next grade level and, in high school, for college and careers.

Later this spring, your child may be asked to participate in a "field test" of PARCC. The purpose of a field test is to allow schools and students to experience a new test before it counts. A field test is how we ensure that the test questions are fair, on grade level, and measure the intended skills. This process helps us to make sure the test is as good as it can be. The PARCC Field Test will be administered to over one million students across PARCC states. The Field Test will be conducted in a random selection of schools across PARCC states. The sample of students in the selected schools will represent the demographics of each state and PARCC as a whole. See the backside of this letter for more information.

If selected to participate in a PARCC test this year, your child will not receive a score or grade based on her or his performance on that test. Over the next two years, Massachusetts is piloting PARCC to see how well it measures the state's learning standards and whether it should replace MCAS, our current testing program. Thank you for your continued involvement in and support of your child's education. If you wish to learn more about PARCC, please visit <http://www.doe.mass.edu/parcc/> or send an email to parcc@doe.mass.edu. Also see: PARC's official website (<http://www.parcconline.org/field-test>).

In early March, all schools except Callahan and Oldham will be sending a follow up letter to those parents of students in 12 classrooms across the district who have been randomly selected to participate in the PARCC field/pilot testing program. Please know that the Norwood School Department has decided to have our students continue to take the MCAS tests for 2014. These MCAS tests will count as they have before and will be taken before the PARCC field tests to assure students every opportunity to do their best.

Sincerely,