

Concord Public Schools and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District are committed to educating all students to become independent lifelong learners, creative thinkers, caring citizens, and responsible contributors to our increasingly diverse global society. The core values and beliefs include academic excellence, an empathic and respectful community, professional collaboration, educational equity, and continuous improvement.

The School Committees and Superintendent are dedicated to achieving these goals while maintaining a transparent public process related to policy decisions. This article is one in a series that is intended to update and inform the residents of Concord and Carlisle about the districts' on-going activities, initiatives and policies.

Common Core State Standards and the PARCC

Massachusetts is one of forty-five states that adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that were developed to prepare all students to succeed post high school. Adopted in 2011 by Massachusetts, the new standards represent a hybrid of the current Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the CCSS with a focus on knowledge and skills necessary for college and career readiness.

The transition to CCSS includes replacing the MCAS with the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment tool. PARCC is a multi-state consortium working together to develop a common set of K-12 assessments in English and math that are anchored in requirements for college and careers. The assessment system is designed to achieve many goals including: building a pathway to college and career readiness for all students; creating high-quality assessments that measure the full range of the CCSS; supporting educators in the classroom; making better use of technology in assessments, and advancing accountability at all levels.

PARCC will differ from MCAS in a number of key areas including grade level participation, use of technology, use of assessment results, and collaboration with other states. PARCC will test students in grades 3-11 and will assess writing at all grade levels while MCAS currently tests students in grades 3-8 and 10 with writing assessments in grades 4, 7, and 10. PARCC will be a computer-based test that will deliver innovative technology-based items and performance-based tasks that are intended to improve how students are measured on range of skills required for college and careers. As part of the transition, a paper-and-pencil version will be available at the outset; MCAS is exclusively a paper-and-pencil test.

In terms of assessments, PARCC will report five levels of student performance in a timelier manner than MCAS and that will assist educators in planning and tailoring instruction for students. The collaboration with other states on PARCC will allow us to compare student performance in Massachusetts to student performance in other states that also take PARCC; MCAS is a custom test that only Massachusetts students take. Working with the other states brings the potential to reduce the costs for the testing program by taking advantage of the work across states.

The PARCC assessments will be ready for participating states to administer during the 2014-2015 school year. The School Committees and Superintendent have been planning for this transition since 2011 through budget allocations and professional development funds and time for teachers and staff. Pilot assessments will be administered by all school districts this spring to help prepare for next year. The pilot assessments will take place at Thoreau, CMS, and CCHS. These pilot tests will take place for two years and the state plans to decide on a full implementation procedure in the fall of 2015.

Contact Information

The School Committees and Superintendent are committed to on-going public dialogue and to ensuring that residents of Carlisle and Concord are informed. School Committee meetings are open to the public and the public is encouraged to attend. The meetings are broadcast on CCTV and are available on demand at www.concordtv.org. The district web site (www.concordpublicschools.net) contains updated information on meetings and interested individuals can contact the Concord School Committee via email at concordschoolcommittee@colonial.netmailto: and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee at concordcarliseschoolcommittee@colonial.net. Individuals can also follow the Superintendent on twitter, @Concord_Super.