Top 10 Things Parents Need to Know about Testing in Maryland

This school year, Maryland implemented new, higher standards for student learning in all schools across the State. The Maryland College and Career Ready Standards are based on the Common Core State Standards, which have been adopted by Maryland and over 40 other states, and provide students with the relevant, real world knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers. In order to measure student mastery of the new standards, next year Maryland will implement new statewide tests – the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments – which will replace the current statewide tests, the Maryland School Assessment (MSA). The MSA in reading/English Language Arts (ELA) and math will be given for the last time this spring and, as we begin the transition to the PARCC assessments, the Maryland State Department of Education has compiled a list of the ten most important things parents need to know about testing.

#1 The Maryland School Assessment (MSA) will be given in reading/ELA and math in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 in March 2014.

Students in grades 5 and 8 will also take the MSA in science in late March or early April of this year. The 2013-14 school year is the last year that the MSA in reading/English Language Arts (ELA) and math will be given. It will be replaced next year by the new PARCC assessments in those subject areas.

#2 A small number of students in every school (at least one class in one subject) will take the field test of Maryland's new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments.

Next year, Maryland will implement new statewide assessments that are aligned to the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards. To prepare for these new tests, at least one class in every school will be randomly selected to take the field test of the PARCC assessments in either reading/ELA or math. The field test is an opportunity to "test the test" - to see how well the test works, determine the quality of test questions, and make any necessary adjustments before it is given to all students in school year 2014-15.

#3 Students who take the PARCC field test in one subject area (either reading/ELA or math) will take the MSA in the other tested area.

All students in grades 3-8 must be tested every year in reading and math by federal law. Children who take the PARCC field test in math are not required by the State to take the MSA in math. However, they will still be required to take the MSA in reading/ELA. Local school systems may also require additional testing.

#4 Parents will continue to receive individual student reports on their child's MSA scores.

You will receive your child's MSA scores from your local school system, most likely over the summer. The score reports show each student's performance on the MSA as well as overall test results for the school, the local school system, and the State.

Maryland State Department of Education
Preparing World-Class Students

MarylandPublicSchools.org

The contents of this flyer were developed under a grant from the U. S. Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

#5 Parents will not receive individual scores on their child's performance on the PARCC field test.

Field tests are not formal tests. Students' responses will be used to evaluate the quality of the test questions and will not be scored or reported. However, parents will continue to receive reports on the MSA subject(s) their child takes.

#6 Federal law requires that all Maryland students take an annual statewide assessment or the State risks losing millions of dollars in funding.

Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), all students in grades 3-8 must be tested every year in reading and math. Annual testing is important to help ensure that all students are making progress.

#7 Next year (school year 2014-15), all Maryland students in grades 3-8 will take the PARCC assessments in reading/ELA and math.

The PARCC assessments are aligned to Maryland's College and Career Ready Standards and will measure the essential critical thinking and problem solving skills that students need to be successful in college and careers. The computer-based tests will provide accurate and timely information about what individual students are learning and whether they are on track or need extra help.

#8 Although new academic standards have been implemented this year, the MSA continues to provide teachers, parents, and students with valuable information.

Annual assessments show where students are academically and the progress they are making each year. Teachers can also continue using MSA results to help inform their teaching practices and tailor instruction to the needs of their students.

#9 Information from the PARCC field test will be used to refine and improve the assessments before they are given to all students next year.

Test-makers will specifically look at whether test questions actually measure the knowledge and skills that they were designed to measure and if the questions are valid, reliable, and fair. The field test will also provide an opportunity for students, schools, and local school systems to become familiar with the new assessments before they are fully implemented in school year 2014-15.

#10 If you have additional questions about testing, ask your child's teacher or principal.

These educators and administrators will have the most accurate information about what is happening in your child's classroom and school. They can also share ideas on what you can do at home to help your child succeed.

For additional information and resources, please visit:

The Maryland State Department of Education:
www.marylandpublicschools.org

General MSA Information:
www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde/testing/msa

Maryland School, District, and State Scores:
www.mdreportcard.org

Information About the PARCC Field Test:
www.parcconline.org/field-test

PARCC Website:
www.parcconline.org

PARCC Sample Test Questions:
www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes