

PARCC Update: NJ to Consider Eliminating Opt-Out Option for PARCC Standardized Test
Dept. of Education Might Make Taking PARCC Mandatory For High School Graduation

Daniel Munoz, New Brunswick Today

TRENTON, NJ--Students in New Jersey might no longer have the option to opt out of the controversial PARCC standardized testing, after a panel handpicked by Governor Christie released the results of a six month study on standardized testing and Common Core.

The most notable of the 49 recommendations laid out by the panel is the use of PARCC testing as a high school graduation requirement starting with the Class of 2020. Students in the Class of 2020, who are currently eighth graders, will be required to take but not pass PARCC tests if they wanted to use other test results, such as the SAT, PSAT or ACT to satisfy graduation requirements.

But students in the Class of 2021 would be required to pass the Algebra 1 and English Language Arts 10 portions of PARCC before being able to graduate high school. NJ students who would be finishing high school between 2016 and 2019 are not required to pass or take PARCC.

"The State Board of Education will establish the minimum levels of proficiency for the two tests," reads the report summary. The board also indicated it would reassess the requirements in the future after the full implementation in 2021.

The Study Commission was formed in May 2015 after [Governor Christie announced abruptly that he would be pulling the state out of the Common Core curriculum](#) while keeping it in the PARCC consortium. The Study Commission put in place by the Governor to transition out of Common Core standards consisted of the committee proper, as well as a K-2, 3-12 English language arts and 3-12 math subcommittee.

Critics slammed the Governor at the time for contradicting himself in the same speech, standing up for one set of education standards while putting down another.

New Jersey Education Association President Wendell Steinhauer said at the time that it was "illogical" for Christie to pull New Jersey out of the Common Core, yet show his vigorous support for "PARCC" standardized testing in the same speech. Weeks after the move, state education officials announced that the new standards would bear a minimal difference from those spelled out under Common Core.

"We will not be tearing down and starting over," Assistant Education Commissioner Kim Harrington said at a summer NJ Board of Education meeting. "We will be improving on what exists today and not starting from scratch," Harrington added.

Currently, the Study Commission is recommending 232 changes to the state's 1,427 academic standards on math and English, as well as 49 recommendations on how to implement PARCC testing. One recommendation made by the panel includes the clarification that non-fiction literature is not held as more important than fictional literature.

Regarding PARCC, other recommendations made by the panel include using the test scores for university course placement and dual-credit enrollment programs

New Jersey's council of 19 community colleges agreed last March that PARCC's assessment on math, reading and writing [will be used as a new form of course placement in community colleges.](#)

The panel also recommends that there be changes to the weight that PARCC test results might have in teacher evaluations.