

5 ways PARCC testing will be different this year



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It's almost time for New Jersey students to take their annual state exams again.

While the standardized tests will be the same — the **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)** exams — some aspects of the testing experience have changed.

Here are five ways PARCC testing will be different in 2016:

1. One testing window

In the first year of PARCC testing the exams were administered in two separate testing windows, one throughout March and a second during late April and May.

So many days spent under a testing schedule **took a toll on some schools** and drew sharp criticism from parents and teachers.

This year, all exam sections will be given in a single testing window, with the exception of high school tests for students in block scheduling.

Elementary school testing can take place between April 4 and May 13. High school testing is allowed beginning April 11 and must end by May 20. Students in block scheduling will test between April 25 and June 3

Education Commissioner David Hespe has predicted that many schools will complete PARCC testing in just two weeks.

2. Shorter testing time

Along with the reduction of testing days for schools, students should spend fewer hours overall taking the math and English exams.

Allotted testing time — roughly 10-11 hours in 2015 depending on a student's grade level — will be shorter by about 90 minutes overall, 60 minutes fewer in math and 30 minutes fewer in English.



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3. Fewer test sections

In further **streamlining the test administration**, the PARCC states decided to cut some questions and consolidate test sections.

Students will take one, two or three fewer test sections depending on their grade. However, the sections they do take will be longer than last year.

4. Some 11th graders exempt

Tens of thousands of high school juniors sat out of PARCC in New Jersey last year, and some students in the Class of 2017 have another reason to skip the English test in 2016.

The state Department of Education has decided **to excuse juniors** who take Advanced Placement English tests or International Baccalaureate English tests in 11th grade from taking the PARCC English test for juniors.

State officials are comfortable that they can gauge the college and career readiness of those students without the PARCC exam, Hespe said.

5. Faster results

PARCC testing finished in May last year but students didn't get their results until around December, a seven-month delay

Critics of PARCC testing questioned how valuable the results could be after a student was already midway through the next school year.

This year, PARCC scores are expected to be returned more quickly. Hespe said the results should out by "early summer."

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