TO: Chief School Administrator
Charter School Lead Person
District and School Test Coordinator

FROM: Bari Anhalt Erlichson, Ph.D.
Assistant Commissioner

RE: *REVISED* Testing Calendar for 2015-2016 School Year

This memo is to inform districts of changes to the 2015-2016 school year testing calendar for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC); New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) Science (Grade 4 & 8); New Biology Competency Test (NJBCT); Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA) Science; and Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM).

Recently, PARCC’s Governing Board voted to revise the testing blueprint by shortening the length of the assessment and reducing the number of testing windows from two to one. This decision was based on analysis of the data from the 2014 field tests and early information from the 2014-2015 administration of PARCC. Immediately after the field tests last year, as you recall, we were able to shorten the length of the English Language Arts tests for grades 3 – 5 from five test sessions to four. As we continued the analyses and incorporated data from 2014-2015, we have found that we can further reduce the number of test items in both English Language Arts and Math without reducing our commitment to constructed response questions or the quality of the data that we will provide.

Revised testing windows. Attached is the revised PARCC testing window for when districts must administer the PARCC assessments in 2016. The testing window is 30 business days in length. It is expected that schools will create their own testing schedule based on their technology capabilities and school calendars in order to administer the assessments. Schools can administer multiple units per day and can test in the morning and the afternoon. Although schools can schedule multiple units per day, individual students should not take more than 2 units per day. Also attached, please find updated information about the testing unit session times for 2016.

High Schools with a Fall Block Schedule. The new testing blueprint will not be available in time for the fall block schedule in 2015-2016. Please see the attached that describes the testing windows for high schools that will administer end-of-course assessments as part of the fall block.

English Language Arts Field Test. As you are aware, field testing items has long been a part of our assessment programs. It is standard practice in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the assessment. A benefit of being part of the PARCC consortium is that we in New Jersey can reduce the count of students participating in field testing of new test questions for future assessments. However, given our commitment to release test questions, including text passages sets, we cannot eliminate our
completely as we will need to continually refresh our item bank with questions. In the upcoming months, we will draw a representative sample of students to participate in field testing an entire ELA test session. For planning purposes, schools should anticipate participating in one additional ELA test session with one grade level. The Department will provide districts and schools more information in the next few months so that districts and schools will have adequate notification which grade level is selected.

The Department appreciates the feedback it receives regarding assessment scheduling. If you should have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Office of Assessments, at 609-984-6311 or email assessment@doe.state.nj.us.

Thank you.

BAE/JBH/2015-16testingcalendarmemo
Attachments
c: Members, State Board of Education
  Commissioner David C. Hespe
  Senior Staff
  Jeffrey B. Hauger
  Mary Jane Kurabinski
  Meghan Snow
  Peggy McDonald
  Lori Ramella
  Office of Assessments
  Executive County Superintendents
  Executive Directors for Regional Achievement Centers
  Executive County Business Officials
  County Test Coordinators
  District Test Coordinators
  Bilingual/ESL Coordinators
  Directors of Approved Private Schools for the Disabled
  Directors of College-Operated Programs
  Directors of a State Facility
  NJ LEE Group
  Garden State Coalition of Schools