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~Important Information about Upcoming PARCC Assessment for Students in Grades 3-8~

Dear Fair Haven Families,

It is that time of year again! As you know, each spring, students in grades 3-12 take part in the New Jersey Department of Education's annual administration of the PARCC assessment.

I realize that there has been some controversy regarding the PARCC Assessment over the past few years. While I understand the concerns, I find it important to share with you my personal and professional philosophy regarding this assessment in my first year as your Superintendent.

My heart and background is grounded in developmentally appropriate practice and in building upon all of our children's strengths while also helping them to improve in their areas of weakness. Despite the various arguments that may be made regarding the validity of standardized testing for students of certain grade levels, I find myself excited for our students to have this opportunity to show the State of New Jersey what they know.

While I do truly believe there are many ways by which we should measure our students' proficiency and mastery of skills, the fact remains that PARCC does represent our most public data points. Beyond that fact, it is important to note that PARCC truly does give us much more useful information than standardized assessments of the past. However, we also recognize that this information is only valuable to us if it truly reflects the abilities of our students as it relates to the standards.

As we have been discussing at some of our curriculum coffee chats, we are planning to offer multiple course pathways for math beginning in the 2017-18 school year. One of the data points that will determine which class a child is eligible to enroll in will be the PARCC assessment. As you may also be aware, passing scores on certain PARCC assessments, including Algebra 1, are now a high school graduation requirement.

With this in mind, I am very happy to announce that we have changed our testing schedule to provide our students with a much more developmentally appropriate testing experience that we feel will lessen the anxiety of our students, as well as allay any negative feelings that our community may have felt regarding this assessment in the past. In past years, students took multiple sections of the test in a single day. Upon review, I felt we could, and should, do better by our children. This year, our students will only take one section per day so as not to overwhelm anyone with a testing experience that is not developmentally appropriate. We have also designed the testing dates to be conducive to our students putting forth their best effort by eliminating testing on Mondays so that they may enjoy a day of test-free schooling to start their week during the testing window.

My message to the students is simple and is one I ask them to apply across all aspects of their lives each day; *If you are going to put your name on something, give it your best effort.* There is no pressure to perform to a certain level on this year's PARCC. Instead, our expectation is that our students approach the test seriously and view it as an opportunity to put forth their best effort in what essentially amounts to our most public data points. Our students are extraordinary, and after seeing them in action for almost a full year, it is clear to me that our children absolutely perform much higher than our past PARCC results might suggest to the outside observer. Our pledge to you and your families is that we have created a schedule to administer the test in way that is fair, relaxed, and appropriate for your child. We ask in return that you support us in requesting your children take pride in this opportunity to show what the students of Fair Haven are capable of by giving their best effort.

The 2017 Spring PARCC testing schedule is as follows:

<p><u>Math PARCC grades 3 & 6-8:</u> Tuesday, May 2nd -Thursday May 4th</p>
<p><u>Math PARCC grades 4-5:</u> Tuesday, May 2nd - Friday, May 5th</p>
<p><u>ELA PARCC grades 3-8:</u> Tuesday, May 9th - Thursday May, 11th</p>
<p><u>Makeup PARCC (as necessary):</u> Open Dates between May 5th - Friday, May 19th</p>

All PARCC testing will begin in the morning on the dates listed above and all students will only take one section per day. We anticipate most classes will complete their testing section by 11:00am each day. The testing dates are also listed on the school calendars found on our website for your convenience.

Thank you all for your continued support as we look forward to an improved testing experience for all of our students.

Sincerely,

Sean McNeil
Superintendent