



**Montville Township
Public Schools
November 2015**

PARCC Scores from Spring 2015 to be Mailed Home to Parents in December

Information on PARCC Scores and Understanding the Individual Student Score Report to be Presented at the December 1, 2015 Board of Education Meeting



Dr. Casey Shorter, Assistant Superintendent, will be presenting the initial district results from the 2015 administration of the PARCC Assessment. It is hoped that Individual Student Score Reports will be received in the district in time to mail home to parents in December. The score reports will contain explanatory notes to help parents understand and interpret the results. Some important considerations in viewing these reports are:

- Your child's score may look lower this year because the tests measured more complex skills. A low score does not mean your child did not improve or learned less; instead, it means that the expectations have been raised for students.
- The first year's scores are a new baseline from which to progress from and measure against moving forward.
- It will take time. While teachers have been gearing up for the new standards for almost four years, the tests are new and they ask questions in different ways and require students to show their work. Just as what happens with new standardized tests, scores will start to improve as teachers and students become more familiar with the standards and acquire the skills and knowledge to meet them.
- Participation numbers at some grades in the Montville Township Schools were very small. Assessment results on a district level for these grades cannot be considered representative of the student body.

In PARCC, student outcomes are divided into five performance levels. Level One describes student work in the assessment that does not yet meeting the grade-level expectations or the course

expectations. Level Two describes student work that is partially meeting grade-level expectations. Level Three describes student work that is approaching grade-level expectations. Level Four describes work that meets grade-level expectations. Level Five describes work that exceeds grade-level expectations.

It's important to recognize, however, that while PARCC is a meaningful assessment of student learning that provides useful information about a student, that New Jersey has been and remains committed to using multiple metrics in assessing student progress and attainment. Decisions about student placement in the next grade level or course have always been made by school districts and should always be fully informed by multiple sources of information, including teacher recommendations and parent input. It is the district's intention to include the PARCC scores as one of the components of the selection criteria for course placement decisions beginning in the 2016-2017 school year.

STEM Program for 4th and 5 Grade Students

Students get "hands on" with Science, Technology, Engineering and Math

The fifth grade students in all five elementary schools have engaged in some intriguing lessons this fall. Engineering projects that students have completed include the "Marshmallow Tower" (pictured) which required students to sketch, design and construct the tallest tower possible using 20 pieces of spaghetti and a small amount of masking tape. A requirement of the tower design was that it needed to be able to hold a marshmallow on top. The most recent challenge completed was the "Sleeping Beauty Bridge." Students researched bridges and structures as background knowledge for developing their own bridge using only index cards and tape. Bridges were judged on their height and their load bearing capacity, as demonstrated by the number of pennies that could be piled on top.



While the students enjoy using their imagination to produce designs in response to the specific challenges of each project, they are also learning the critical skills of collaboration, coordination of activities, determining the best use of resources, problem solving and communication. Projects often involve limitations, such as only being able to use certain materials or tools. The "Save Fred" project required teams to place a gummy lifesaver around a gummy worm using only paper clips. Communication has also taken on new dimensions as that project required students to handle all communication without the use of words.

The district hopes to explore the expansion of this program to other grade levels in the future.

Bits and Pieces.....

The Montville Township Board of Education has begun the process to refund a portion of the bonds that were issued in September 2006.

Due to the favorable interest rates the Board expects the refunding will save the school district approximately \$50,000 in each of the next eight years.



During the week of December 7-13, 2015, the Montville Township Public Schools will be participating in the national "Week of Code."

The goal of this grassroots campaign is for tens of millions of students to try an Hour of Code in celebration of Computer Science Education Week. The belief behind this initiative is that every student should have the opportunity to learn computer science. It helps nurture problem-solving skills, logic and creativity. By starting early, students will have a foundation for success in any 21st-century career path. There are currently nearly 600,000 open computing jobs nationwide. Last year only 38,175 computer science students graduated into the workforce. Computer science jobs are currently growing a two times the national average. By the year 2020 it is expected that there will be 1,000,000 more jobs in computer science than students trained to fill them.

Students in Mrs. McLaughlin and Mrs. Amodeo's classes at William Mason School are applying skills as they use models made from Legos as springboards for descriptive writing paragraphs. Students are assigned to design a teaching machine to take over when the teacher is absent and then prepare a written piece describing their model. This activity was part of an original Governor's Teacher Grant entitled "Playwrite" which was written by Mrs. Amodeo. The project description was disseminated worldwide and can now be found as far away as the National Library of Australia.

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*"The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives."
~Robert Maynard Hutchins*

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