GENERAL TALKING POINTS ABOUT
THE PARCC ASSESSMENT

• The new PARCC state assessments set a new baseline for student achievement that will show us the progress students are making toward meeting Maryland’s college-and-career-ready standards.

• The scores cannot be compared to scores on any other tests students have taken previously — both because this is a brand new test and because it was just given for the first time last spring.

• PARCC differs from tests our state has given in the past. We’re not asking students to repeat what they’ve memorized, but rather to demonstrate what they’ve learned in math, reading, and writing—and how that information can be applied.

• PARCC will allow us, for the first time, to see how well students learned specific skills, such as interpreting a passage they read, or explaining how they found the solution to a math problem.

• The results will help students and schools in several ways, by
  o showing if students are ready for the next grade, or for college-level work;
  o indicating who needs additional instructional support;
  o helping teachers to fine-tune their instruction;
  o helping principals plan ahead for the coming year; and
  o informing where we need to address gaps and disparities around the state.

• Maryland has been administering an annual assessment to students for decades.

• With each passing decade, we’ve raised the bar for our children to help them graduate more prepared to succeed on their chosen path.

• Maryland’s new “college and career ready” academic standards are more challenging — but we expect students to rise to the challenge, just as they have in years past.

• Think of it this way: A child who is learning to play basketball starts with a low hoop. As he/she gets better, the hoop is raised to make the game more challenging. The child is probably going to score fewer baskets at first, but will get better—even as the goal is raised.

• Finally, it’s important to remember that a good assessment is just one tool among many to measure progress. Teacher observation, school work, student behavior, attendance, and other factors are also important in painting the big picture for any student.

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