

PARCC-ING PASS



Students statewide are going to switch from NECAP testing to computer-based PARCC testing in 2014-2015, and schools are adapting everything — from computer use and availability to new educational guidelines — to prepare students statewide for the switch.

Jessica Boisclair • Daily Times file

Tiogue Principal Louise Seitsinger moderates forum to educate parents on new Common Core standards

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COVENTRY—With the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) examination being implemented into the state's school districts next year, Tiogue Elementary School Principal Louise Seitsinger hosted a parent forum to bring them up to speed on the new test and common core standards.

Wednesday night, parents gathered in the Tiogue Library to learn about the test that their students will be responsible for taking during the 2014-2015 school year and how it aligns with the common core standards.

Seitsinger explained that the main piece of the PARCC testing is that it'll be done online, so parents and teachers need to ensure that students have the basic keyboarding skills needed to take the exam.

"We're only field testing right now in grade three," she said. "Part of it is online and part of the test will be performance based."

Because the test is so technology driven, she explained, the school district is trying to accommodate the needs of the various schools to ensure that the students have enough computers to take the exam by next school year.

"We have a computer lab here," Seitsinger added. "We have one in the front of the build-

ing and every classroom has six computers so we're in pretty good shape. And it looks like the wireless infrastructure, through a grant the state got, will be upgraded."

Although the state has implemented certain educational standards in the past, they were never consistent with other states.

The PARCC and common core standards will now ensure that all Rhode Island students can compete against other states and countries.

Seitsinger said that teachers and students at Tiogue have been transitioning into the new standards for a number of years, "but it's not a

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curriculum; it's a framework to follow and we have to build the curriculum."

Currently, she added, the school has a set of math standards completed called "math targets" and these standards align with the common core ones.

"There are certain things that kids have to get by every grade level," she said. "But you're not going to wait until the end of that grade level to assess the students so the PARCC will be given in the fall and spring; but also, within the year we have formative assessments."

These formative assessments are given by teachers within the school year to find out what subjects the students are grasping and what subjects still need to be taught.

She explained that under these new rigorous standards, teachers must teach a "deep, rich curriculum" and practice quality instruction, quality assessments and formative and summative assessments to ensure students receive the education they need.

The major difference between the new standards and former standards, she said, is the complexity and analytical



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Tiogue Elementary School Principal Louise Seitsinger reads to students before winter vacation. Wednesday night she hosted a forum at the school to inform parents about new Common Core educational standards.

thinking emphasized in the curriculum.

"In common core standards

it's not about the mathematical thinking now it's about the practices," she added. "There's

eight of them and as teachers are teaching these skills they'll have to push the students to explain their thinking and prove it. If you look at a kindergartener to first grader; if you look at what they're required to do, it's almost like it was in second and third grade a while ago."

English Language Arts (ELA) standards are just being transitioned into Tiogue's school day, she said, and teachers worked all summer to create templates for every grade level.

The templates explain what is required of the students in regards to reading, writing, speaking and listening.

"Each teacher should have a balanced literacy program which includes reading, writing, comprehension and decoding," she added. "We have focused on nonfiction because the common core standards are supposed to be 50/50 of nonfiction and fiction but there's been a real push for nonfiction and informational text."

She said the standards are requiring that students know how to research topics and read newspapers and text that would be read during college or their career.