MEASURING STUDENT LEARNING IN 2021: What will be Different in The District of Columbia?

Since COVID-19 first led to sudden school closures in 2020, families have stepped up in unprecedented ways to support learning at home as students began learning remotely. Teachers and leaders have worked hard to put plans in place to ensure students are safe, offering students across the District of Columbia different learning models—remote, hybrid and in-person, with some school districts transitioning between them as circumstances demanded. But the unprecedented changes in learning have impacted students in many ways, from their relationships with peers and social emotional growth to academics.

This year, it is more important than ever to measure student learning to understand the impact that COVID-19 and different learning models have had on students. This is especially important for families, who need objective information about how well their child learned grade-level skills so they can better support learning at home. While state tests are only one of many ways to measure student learning, families, schools and leaders need the objective and actionable information they provide to identify any learning gaps to best support students and fully recover from the pandemic. Although District of Columbia students may not take the PARCC test this spring, families should talk with teachers before summer to discuss results from other measures that may be available and whether their child met the expectations of the grade level.

How will State Tests be Different in 2021?

Knowing that the pandemic has deeply affected students, teachers and schools, the PARCC tests will be different than in the past. The District of Columbia has asked the U.S. Department of Education to cancel the PARCC tests for 2021. If this is not approved, students will be required to take the tests. As of March 2021, the following changes have been made:

- Since many students across the District of Columbia are still learning remotely, districts will have the option for students to take the test remotely.
- Schools that give the test in-person may have plans to test students learning remotely separately from classmates learning in person. They may also use staggered schedules or test in areas outside the classroom, such as gyms or cafeterias, to allow for more social distance.

For the most recent information on the 2021 PARCC tests, visit OSSE.DC.gov/Assessments