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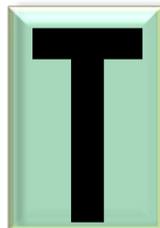
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*During the test in North Brunswick, NJ*

## SBAC and PARCC Tests: What to Expect



The SBAC and PARCC are the tests your child is being introduced to this spring. Millions of students across the country will take these challenging tests, designed to assess the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). These aren't your grandmother's standardized tests. Whereas the previous standards included basic knowledge and comprehension, the CCSS include problem-solving skills, reasoning, synthesizing, and collaboration—and so do the new tests. Everyone accustomed to multiple-choice, pencil-and-paper questions is in for a surprise.

The states that adopted the CCSS belong to one of two organizations, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) or the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). In 2010, these two organizations received federal funding to develop

assessments for the 2014-2015 school year that are based on the CCSS. Because there are currently CCSS for the areas of English Language Arts (ELA) and Math, these are the only two areas that will be assessed. The organizations tout the new tests as giving a more accurate picture of a student's true learning and of a student's readiness for college and career. Additionally, because the tests are given across multiple states, there is the opportunity to gauge students' performance from a national perspective.

A strong departure from fill-in-the-bubble tests, these new assessments are taken on a computer. Students will need to be familiar with basic computer skills such as drag and drop, using drop-down menus, clicking, scrolling, highlighting, and of course, typing. The tests include the following types of questions:

- Selected Response (SR) – students select one or more responses from a given set of

*(continued on page 3)*

**JEI Math Olympiad**  
**Winners to be announced**  
**on April 6<sup>th</sup>**

See page 4 for more information

# 3 Ways to Activate Bodies and Minds during Summer

By Julie Cline

“An object at rest remains at rest”—Newton’s law of inertia. The same applies to children when their break is marked by inactivity. Most of you will probably enroll your child in an academic program this summer. However, the way children move in and explore their environments is a strong predictor of academic success. Here are three activities sure to get them moving—during vacation and beyond.

**1. Drawing from Life.** The simplest way to occupy idle hands is to give them a sketchpad and a pencil. Though small, the act of observing and drawing nature is instrumental in healthy cognitive development. And there’s no better time than summer, when everything is bathed in sunlight, for your child to begin a journal of nature sketches. Whether it’s birds, insects, or trees, one sketch per day can tune a child in to the subtle details of the outdoors.

**2. Gardening.** If observing nature is beneficial, getting one’s hands dirty is even more so: planting seeds and caring for them can transform a child’s relationship to the world. Consider growing seedlings in hollowed-out eggshells, eventually planting the biodegradable “pots” in your yard. Alternatively, community gardens are sprouting up in the most urban of settings. Find one to join, and you will find the experience will boost your child’s curiosity—as well as his sense of self within the larger community.

**3. Indoor Rock Climbing.** This is the fastest-growing sport in the United States today, and children as young as 5 are participating. Most indoor climbing gyms—made up of artificial rock walls and safety mats below—specialize in kids’ parties and equipment rentals for large groups. It’s the perfect opportunity to harness that natural desire for monkeying around and use it to develop problem-solving skills. What’s more, navigating the different colored



Julie Cline, R&D Coordinator at JEI Learning Centers

routes will enhance a child’s spatial intelligence.

As Maria Montessori wrote in *The Secret of Childhood* in 1936, “Movement is an essential factor in intellectual growth, which depends upon the impressions received from the outside.” In 2015, directing our attention outwards is all the more necessary. Children spend far too much time on phones or iPads, missing out on the rich experience of hands-on learning. As we look around at the landscape bursting forth with color in the months ahead, let’s make sure our children are also blossoming.

## Spring Ahead with JEI this Summer

[www.jeilearning.com](http://www.jeilearning.com)

**FREE**  
Enrollment  
June 1-30\*

\* May vary by center

# BRIEFS

## School Chefs

Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health is looking into the correlation between how healthy foods are presented in school cafeterias and how much of the food is actually being consumed. Focusing on the eating habits of students in schools with and without a chef, the study reveals that having a chef on hand greatly increases the amount of fruits and vegetables eaten (rather than discarded).

(www.thejournal.com, 3/2015)

## Reading Scores Defined by CCSS

The Brookings Institution has released its 2015 Brown Center Report on the Efficiency of American Education, measuring the effectiveness of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards. Its findings suggest that schools implementing the CCSS score higher on the National Assessment of Educational Progress’s scale than schools that do not.

(www.educationsnews.org, 3/2015)

## Can Sleep Heighten Interest in Science?

Researchers at The University of Arizona are wondering whether better-rested kids might be more interested in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math than their fatigued peers. Funded by the National Science Foundation, “Sleep Education Program To Improve STEM Education in Elementary School” will observe the sleep patterns of 500 fourth- and fifth-grade students over a period of three years. The subjects, all from the Catalina Foothills School District, will be given tablets on which to complete STEM-related assignments. The devices will simultaneously track data about sleep habits and send it to researchers in real-time. The hope is that just by participating in the study these children will develop a greater interest in STEM.

(www.educationworld.com, 3/2015)

*(What to Expect When Testing for the Common Core continued from page 1)*

options; similar to multiple choice questions, but there may be more than one right answer

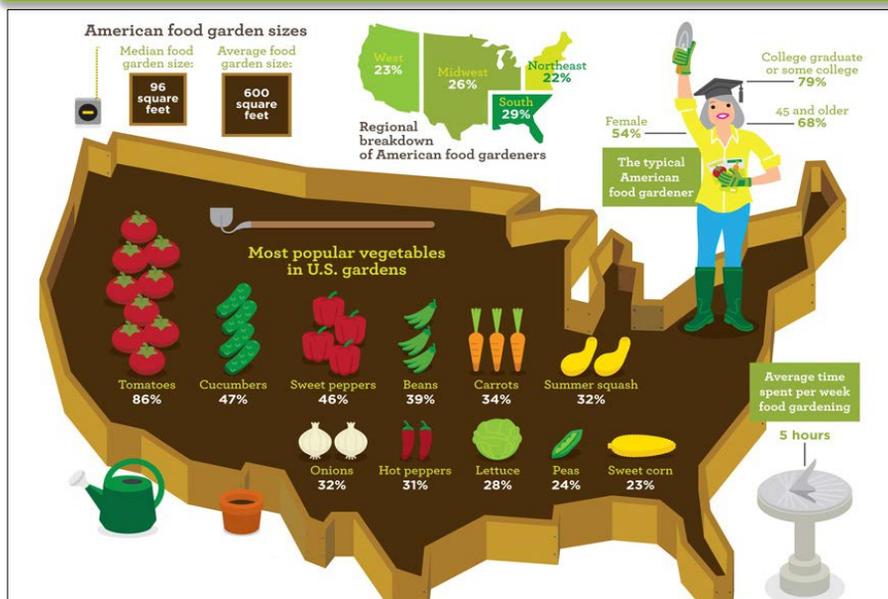
- Constructed Response (CR) – students write brief, open responses to a given question to explain how they solved a math problem or what evidence a text provided for an answer they gave
- Extended Response (ER) – students write an extended response to explain their reasoning
- Performance Task (PT) – contains multiple parts including conducting research through various forms such as reading or video clips, then completing a task such as writing an essay; includes a teacher-directed activity in the classroom as well as a computer-based task
- Technology Enhanced (TE) and Technology Enabled (TE) – students use multi-media and interactive elements such as drawing and editing tools

Students taking the SBAC (in twenty states including California and North Carolina) will be asked to complete both a standards test and performance test during spring. Students taking the PARCC (including those in New York, New Jersey, and Maryland) will take a performance-based component in early spring and an end-of-year component just before summer.

This year’s scores will not count against students, so the tests might be thought of as a practice run for them and as a resource for teachers and educators. In fact, both organizations’ websites include practice tests that you can look over with your child at home. As with anything new, there will be growing pains. All we can do is hope for the best—and be prepared.

*Please visit [smarterbalanced.org](http://smarterbalanced.org) and [parcc.pearson.com](http://parcc.pearson.com) for more information.*

# HOME GARDENING



## 2015 JEI Math Olympiad

More than 700 students throughout the US and Canada competed in the annual JEI Math Olympiad, held on Saturday March 14th at select locations.

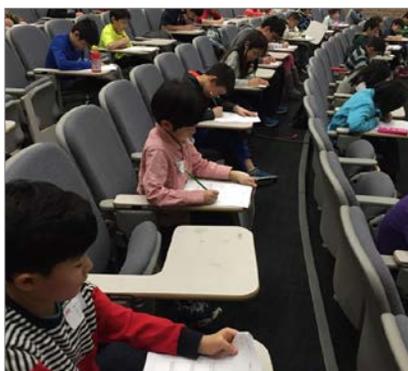
Many parents stayed for the JEI Parent Seminar, where they learned how JEI is working to help students make a smooth transition into the Common Core era. At the end of the event, everyone received a JEI Medal for participating.

The winner of the nationwide Grand Prize will receive a \$1,000 college scholarship and a Samsung Galaxy Tab. For each grade level in the eastern and western regions, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd-place winners will receive a Galaxy Tab, a \$100 Amazon gift card, and a \$50 Amazon gift card, respectively.

The winners will be announced on Monday, April 6th on [www.jeilearning.com](http://www.jeilearning.com), where participants will also be able to view their test results.



Los Angeles, CA



Bayside, NY



San Diego, CA

## Outstanding Student Award



Congratulations to Michelle Lee! Michelle is a student at JEI Learning Center Coquitlam in British Columbia, Canada. Since joining JEI, she has done incredibly well in school and has made her way through all of the JEI English workbooks. She is also currently completing the final level in math. For demonstrating excellence throughout her time at JEI, we commend her. Michelle will receive a \$50 Amazon gift card.

[www.jeilearning.com](http://www.jeilearning.com)

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