(Before beginning the Question-and-Answer Session, provide each parent with a Parent Resource Folder and an evaluation form.)

(Suggested script) You might say, “Thank you for attending our PARCC Primer: Technology and the Test event. I hope you gained some useful information and insight into the PARCC assessments. All parents should have a folder that is specific to the grade or grades their students are in and an evaluation form. These folders are for you to take home and read more closely when you have time. Before you leave, we would like to have your feedback on the evaluation form. If you would, just place it on the (insert location where evaluation forms will be collected). I would like to review some highlights from the documents in your folders and if you still have questions, feel free to ask them when I open the floor for questions.

The first document in your Parent Resource Folder is from the Illinois State Board of Education and is titled “FAQs PARCC ASSESSMENT.” Here are some highlights:

- First of all, PARCC stands for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers and is a group of states working together to develop high-quality assessments that give teachers, students and parents information they can use to improve instruction and meet the needs of individual students.
- The PARCC assessments will require slightly more testing time than the ISAT and PSAE. However, testing will be divided into two separate administrations in March and May and testing unit times will be scheduled for 90 minutes. Students will test for no more than two 90-minute sessions in a day. The testing windows are very generous in regard to time. Overall, students can anticipate spending four hours of testing time for English language arts and four hours for mathematics.
- Since this is the first year to fully administer the PARCC assessments, it is considered a baseline year, which means there are no consequences for schools or students based on results. Cut scores will be determined this year and growth will be measured in the years to come.
- (only applicable to high school) School districts have the choice to administer the ACT this year and the Illinois State Board of Education will fund it. If a district does not choose to administer the ACT, students who wish to take it will need to pay for the test on their own.
- The Illinois State Board of Education adopted the new Illinois Learning Standards in English language arts and math in 2010. Districts were free to begin reviewing and implementing the new standards, with the 2013-14 school year set as the deadline for full implementation prior to the PARCC assessments. According to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (also known as No Child Left Behind), all states receiving Title I funds must assess student learning.
- (only applicable to high school) The ACT is not enough for the new Illinois Learning Standards. The ACT is designed to adhere to its own college readiness standards, which differ from the K-12 Common Core Learning Standards. The PARCC assessment system is more comprehensive. It
invites students to think deeply and construct their own solutions to challenging tasks and situations that better reflect classroom lessons and experiences.

- **(only applicable to high school)** Institutions of higher education are working toward acceptance of PARCC assessment results as a way to show readiness for college-level work without remediation.
- Federal and state law does not provide an opt-out provision for PARCC assessments. In order to receive federal funding, schools have to test at least 95 percent of students in the district. If this target is not met, funding may be lost.
- Students with disabilities and English learners will also take the PARCC assessments and their needs will be accommodated. The PARCC assessments include a number of features to assist students with disabilities.

The second document in your Parent Resource Folder is titled “Stepping Up with PARCC.” Here are some highlights:

- Illinois needs a new assessment because we voluntarily adopted new learning standards in 2010. With the new standards, we need new tests. The new tests will help us personalize instruction to meet individual student needs.
- PARCC is a better test than previous tests because it includes activities that more closely mirror what students are learning in class. They provide a more accurate understanding of student knowledge than previous tests because they ask students to show and apply what they know, instead of picking the right answer to a multiple-choice question.
  - In English language arts/literacy, students must read texts and write about what they read, providing evidence from the reading to support their responses.
  - In math, students must reason mathematically, make sense of quantities and their relationships to solve real-world problems, and show their understanding.
- The PARCC assessments were created by classroom teachers and college professors from Illinois.
- More than half of the schools in Illinois will administer the PARCC assessments online this year. Some schools, due to technology infrastructure that will not withstand the demand placed on it by so many students testing at one time, will give the test on paper this year. The goal is for all schools in the state to eventually administer the assessment on a computer device. Students have had the opportunity to use the technology because they interacted with the PARCC Sample Items found on the parcconline.org website. Students can take the tutorial and practice tests on this same website.
- There are a number of things you can do to support your student.
  - You can talk with your student’s teacher to determine the skills that need reinforced at home.
  - Praise their progress.
  - Ask supportive questions about homework and projects done in school.
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- Productive struggle in learning new material is normal and healthy. However, if your student is struggling beyond reason, let his or her teacher know.
- Read with your students and discuss what you read.
- Encourage daily chats and help your student organize their thoughts so that they become effective communicators.

- The PARCC assessments will provide more detailed information on the specific skills students are expected to know and perform at their grade level and the report should be easier to understand than previous test reports.
- PARCC assessments are designed to measure what students truly know and are able to do at each grade level.
  - It takes students more time to answer the PARCC test items because students need time to think and reason.
  - Most students will spend about four hours each on the mathematics and English language arts/literacy portions of the test. Those will be broken down into small units that will take most students 40 to 60 minutes, though schools will schedule up to 90 minutes for each unit to make sure that all students have the time they need to show what they know and can do.
  - Students will only participate in testing for an hour or two at most in a day, and only on days during the testing window.

- The PARCC assessment does not look like previous standardized tests.
  - Previous tests look for the one right answer whereas the PARCC test is also looking for the evidence that supports the right answer.
  - The test is broken into two parts, given at two different times, and measures different kinds of knowledge and skills.
  - Students read passages from real stories and may watch videos or listen to audio and then write about what they’ve learned from the passages and multi-media.
  - Students solve multi-step math problems that require reasoning and address real-world situations.
  - Students and parents may take PARCC Practice Tests on the parcconline.org website listed on your handout.

- If you would like to get more familiar with what your student is learning in his or her current grade, the Illinois Learning Standards are available on the Illinois State Board of Education’s website at [http://www.isbe.net/ils/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/ils/default.htm).

The third document in your Parent Resource Folder is from the National PTA and is titled “Parent’s Guide to Student Success.”

- This guide is separated into grade levels and addresses standards in English language arts and mathematics. It shows you what your student will be working on in the classroom and how you can help them at home. Your folder should be labeled 6th, 7th or 8th grade and contain
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information from the PTA for that grade level. If you need different materials, please let one of
our staff know before you leave this evening.

At this point, I’ll open the floor to questions. You are welcome to write questions on your evaluation
form. Please include your email address to receive a response. If I don’t know the answer to your
question, I will find it. Thank you again for being a part of this event.”