



## PARCC Fact Sheet

**About PARCC.** The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) represents a fundamental shift in how we think about testing, state to state. PARCC is based on the core belief that assessment should not be a process to penalize educators and districts, but rather a tool for enhancing teaching and learning. The PARCC assessments in English Language Arts (ELA/Literacy) and Mathematics are carefully crafted to give teachers, schools, students and parents better and more useful information on how we're preparing our kids for careers and college — and life. Looking ahead, PARCC will be:

- **A useful tool for teachers.** Computer-based assessments deliver real-time information on student knowledge that teachers can use to help inform instruction. No longer will teachers, students and families be waiting for results that don't arrive until it's too late to use the information to help kids.
- **More engaging for students.** Times have changed. In the digital age, students process and relate information differently than they did in the past. It's time to retire the old pencil-and-paper bubble tests and replace them with online tools that will accelerate and enhance student learning.
- **An economic opportunity for states.** For the first time, states and local communities will know how their students stack up against their peers in neighboring states and cities. This is a crucial shift that gives educators, policymakers and community leaders, better information on how to plan for and develop the workforce of the future

**What.** The [Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers \(PARCC\)](#) is a group of 20 states voluntarily working together to develop a common set of K-12 assessments in English language arts/literacy and mathematics anchored in what it takes to be ready for college and careers. PARCC is one of two state consortia developing assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) through the federal Race to the Top Assessment grant.

**Who.** PARCC is currently made up of [20 states](#), all committed to implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Collectively, the states in PARCC educate about 22 million students and include 15 of the 19 Race to the Top winners. These states have also committed to participate in item research and try outs starting in spring 2013 and to field test the assessment system components in spring 2014.

**When.** The PARCC performance-based and end-of-year assessments will be ready for full implementation in the 2014-15 school year.

**Why?** Forty-six states and the District of Columbia adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and these states will need aligned assessments to measure higher-order skills outlined in the new standards, such as critical thinking, communicating effectively, and problem solving. States also need a system that provides actionable and timely information for educators, parents and students – and one that truly reflects the knowledge and skills students need to be prepared for success in college, careers and life.

**Funding.** PARCC's work is funded through a \$186 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's [Race to the Top assessment competition](#). The grant was awarded for September 2010 through September 2014.



**Traditional Assessments vs. PARCC.** PARCC assessments are tests worth taking and are the type of new generation assessment that teachers have requested for years. They include texts worth reading and problems worth solving.

- In ELA/literacy, the PARCC assessments will look much deeper at student writing abilities and critical-thinking skills, for example. In some instances, states will be adding a writing component that isn't currently part of their state tests.
- In math, students will have to solve complex problems, show their work, and demonstrate how they solved the problem. Unlike pencil-and-paper bubble tests, these new assessments will more closely resemble high-quality classroom work. PARCC will measure what children are learning, in a more meaningful way.
- PARCC's estimated testing time is reasonable and reflects the shift from traditional multiple choice tests to performance-based assessments. The new assessments are designed to measure the full range of knowledge and skills students need to be career and college ready or on track toward that goal, through performance based tasks. The assessments will be innovative in design and more engaging for students.
- PARCC assessments will measure the full range of student performance, including the performance of high- and low-achieving students. Too often, now, tests don't adequately measure the skills and knowledge of students working significantly beyond or below their grade level. The new assessments will add additional time for testing in some states; however, they will produce a clearer and more accurate picture of student achievement. States will have flexibility around the number of testing days and windows within a maximum consortium-wide window of 20 days.

**Development.** The PARCC states have contracted with two groups of vendors to develop the range of items and tasks that will make up the PARCC mid-year, performance-based and end-of-year assessments in English language arts/literacy and mathematics for grade 3 through high school. These include prime contractors Pearson and Educational Testing Services (ETS), each working with a set of subcontractors.

**Assessment Quality.** The PARCC states are conducting a multi-state review process to ensure the items developed by PARCC's item development contractors are acceptable for use in field testing and the operational test administration. The items must be closely aligned to the Common Core State Standards, of sufficient quality and rigor, and fair and free from bias. K-12 and postsecondary educators, content specialists, assessment experts and members of the community from across the PARCC states are participating in the review of the test items, tasks and reading passages.

## Additional Frequently Asked Questions

**How many and what kind of computers/devices will schools need to administer the assessments online?**

- The optimal device-to-tester ratio will be determined in part based on the number of testing windows that PARCC determines are necessary and the amount of time needed to administer the assessment. Results from the Technology Readiness Tool and from item tryouts and field testing will help PARCC refine its technology guidance for schools and districts.
- PARCC has released guidance for schools and districts about the minimum specifications for devices, software and operating systems so that districts buying instructional technology now can determine



whether those devices meet the specifications for PARCC (see [here](#)). This also includes additional recommendations on bandwidth specifications.

- PARCC is working to keep the tests “device-neutral”, so that districts won’t need to purchase specific devices to administer the tests. The PARCC proposed minimum specifications for hardware can apply to a range of devices.
- PARCC will continue to update the technology specifications for schools and districts leading up to administration in 2014-15.

### What is the Technology Readiness Tool? When is it available? Will results be made public?

- The Technology Readiness Tool was developed as a tool to support states’ planning as they transition to next-generation assessments to be launched in 2014-15. It is an open source tool that assesses districts’ current capacity and compares that to the technology that will be needed to administer the new online assessments in four areas – devices, device-to-tester ratio, network infrastructure, and staff and personnel.
- The tool rolled out in March 2012, and there are five data collection windows – one every spring and fall until 2014. The first window, which provides only an inventory of current capacity, closed at the end of June 2012. Many states worked with a set of pilot districts to test out the tool for March and April, then rolled it out for use statewide.
- The tool requests that districts provide a certain amount of information via survey about their network capacity, devices and specifications, staff and personnel knowledge, and testing configuration at each school. After each data collection window, the results will be shared with each state and a high-level report will be prepared for the PARCC consortium as a whole.
- States and districts will need to collaborate to determine the best approach for preparing to administer the assessments online. In March 2013, PARCC released an Assessment Administration Planning Tool that is designed to support school budgeting and planning decisions as they prepare for computer-based administration of PARCC in 2014-15. The tool can be found [here](#).

### What is the timeline for the rollout of all the resources leading up to the PARCC? Are there any hard deadlines that schools can count on?

- The most updated information about the PARCC timeline is available [here](#). Major milestones include:
  - Small-scale item research in spring 2013
  - Field-testing in spring 2014
  - Full-scale implementation of summative assessments in 2014-2015 school year

### Are sample items and blueprints available?

- **Sample Items.** An early set of item and task prototypes for math and ELA/literacy were released by PARCC in August 2012 and a new set of sample items was released in August 2013. You can find the item and task prototypes – along with a range of supplementary materials and additional resources, [here](#).
- **Blueprints.** The PARCC procurement for field testing – which was released in fall 2012 – includes draft assessment specifications for each grade level in ELA/literacy [here](#) and mathematics [here](#). Additional information on the PARCC blueprints was shared by PARCC in spring 2013 and can be found [here](#).

### Will schools / LEAs have access to practice tests and will students have opportunities to practice?



- Yes. The goal is to create an assessment that models the kind of work students are already doing in classrooms. In essence, “practice” should be occurring throughout the school year. Additionally, a practice test consisting of representative items at each grade level will be constructed and made available to all students in all PARCC states in computer-administered mode as a practice test in spring 2014.
- PARCC will also release items to help teachers ensure that students can be familiar with the format of the assessment and with the technology expected on the operational assessment.
- PARCC released a first set of item and task prototypes, [here](#), in summer 2012. In addition, PARCC will continue to release annotated sample items that include student work and assessment rubrics in periodically through the assessment development period.

### Will retakes be allowed on PARCC?

- Some PARCC states include student results on high school tests in graduation decisions (or other state policies) and will need some retake opportunities for those students. PARCC states will have access to retests once per year for grades 3-8 ELA/literacy and mathematics and three times per year for each high school end-of-course assessment.
- Individual PARCC states will determine whether to offer retests, at which grade levels/courses, and how many times per year to offer them.

### Will the PARCC tests be used as a graduation requirement for high school students?

- This is a state decision.

### How is PARCC engaging teachers and what resources will PARCC have available for teachers, school leaders, and others?

- The PARCC [Educator Leader Cadres](#) are groups of 24 educators from across each PARCC state who are experts in the CCSS and PARCC and work to help their colleagues understand the CCSS and the PARCC assessments. The Educator Leader Cadres launched in July 2012.
- PARCC is planning to develop professional development modules to help teachers and administrators prepare to administer and use data from the assessments.
- PARCC will also develop an online resource center that can serve as a one-stop shop for all PARCC resources, including assessment data, annotated released items, exemplary student work, and the professional development modules. The K-2 formative assessments and optional diagnostic assessments will also serve as excellent resources for teachers.

### How quickly will performance-based assessment data be returned to teachers?

- PARCC tests will yield results in a timely manner rather than requiring students and teachers to wait months or well into the next school year for results. The new assessments will improve instruction and accountability in our schools by helping school leaders and policymakers have better data about what students know and can do. PARCC’s goal is to have data from the performance-based assessment returned before the end of the school year.

### What sort of data/reporting will teachers receive based on the PARCC assessments?

- The PARCC states are working to develop more detailed descriptors of student performance at each performance level on the PARCC assessments in all grades and subjects. [Policy-level descriptors](#) were



adopted in October 2012, while grade- and subject- specific content descriptors were released in spring 2013 for public comment. The final grade- and subject-specific content descriptors can be found [here](#).

- Results of the ELA/Literacy assessments will be reported in three major categories: (1) ELA/Literacy; (2) reading and comprehending a range of sufficiently complex texts independently (reading) and (3) writing effectively when using and/or analyzing sources (writing). ELA/Literacy results will be based on a composite of students' reading and writing scores.
- In mathematics, the PARCC assessments will provide data on student performance on the priority standards for each grade level or course, as well as an overall mathematics score.
- In both content areas, the PARCC score will include the results from both the performance-based assessment (PBA) and end-of-year (EOY) assessment components.

### **What types of accommodations will be allowed for students with disabilities for both the performance-based assessments and the end-of-year tests?**

- Specific accommodations policies for students with disabilities have been drafted by PARCC state experts with support from national leaders and will be shared with the public for review in April 2013. Based on public feedback, the draft policies were revised and finalized in summer 2013. The accommodations manual can be found [here](#).

### **What types of accommodations will be allowed for English language learners (ELL) for both the performance-based assessments and the end-of-year tests?**

- Specific accommodations policies for English language learners are under development by PARCC state experts with support from national leaders and will be shared with the public for review in April 2013. Based on public feedback, the draft policies were revised and finalized in summer 2013. The accommodations manual can be found [here](#).

### **How will the tests be accessible to students with disabilities?**

- The intent is for the PARCC assessments to be administered to all students, except those with the most significant cognitive disabilities for whom individual states will administer a modified or alternate assessment. Some PARCC states are working with other consortia to develop assessments for these students and other states are working to develop their own assessments.

### **Additional Questions**

- If you have general questions about PARCC, please use the [contact form](#) on the PARCC website to submit a question.
- If you have a question regarding PARCC in your state, you may also use [the PARCC state pages](#) on the PARCC website to identify the K-12 or higher education lead.