



Illinois State Board of Education

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Frequently Asked Questions: PARCC

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Division of Public Information, Illinois State Board of Education

1. Q: What is PARCC?

A: The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is a group of 19 states working together to develop a common set of computer-based K–12 assessments in English language arts/Literacy and math linked to the new, more rigorous Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

2. Q: Is PARCC replacing my state's current assessments?

A: The PARCC assessments are being designed to replace current state assessments for English language arts/literacy and mathematics in grades 3–11.

3. Q: Why do we need new assessments?

A: The new tests are being developed in response to the long standing concerns of educators, parents and employers who want assessments that better measure students' critical-thinking and problem-solving skills and their ability to communicate clearly. They will provide more meaningful and timely information for educators, parents and students.

4. Q: When will the PARCC assessments be ready?

A: PARCC is on track to deliver the new tests in the 2014–15 school year.

5. Q: What are the benefits of the PARCC assessments?

A: In ELA/literacy, many states don't assess writing and few assess critical-thinking skills. PARCC will do both. In math, most current assessments are fill-in-the-blank bubble tests. PARCC will give students a chance to solve real problems. Plus, they'll not only have to solve complex problems, but explain how they solved them.

6. Q: How many PARCC assessments will be administered?

A: The PARCC assessment system contains at least three mandatory components and two optional components. The PARCC will test students in two different ways:

a) Through what's called "Summative Assessments" that test students' acquisition of knowledge and development of skills. There will be two such summative components, a Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) and an End-of Year test (EOY).

b) Through what's called "Interim Assessments" that will help teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses and assist schools in shaping decisions about curriculum and instruction. There will be two interim assessments.

c) Additionally, Speaking and Listening assessments are required for English language arts but will not be used to determine a summative assessment score.

7. Q: How many PARCC assessments will students take during the school year?

A: The PARCC summative assessments will be administered in a total of nine sessions throughout the school year. At each grade level the Performance-Based Assessment component will require five sessions – three sessions for ELA/literacy and two sessions for mathematics. The End of Year assessment component at each grade level will require four sessions – two for ELA/literacy and two for math. In total, the PARCC will require slightly more testing time than the ISAT and PSAE but testing will be spread out through the school year. PARCC also includes new components to capture comprehensive information about college and career readiness. Currently, ISAT has three sessions for math and three sessions for reading. PSAE has two sessions for reading and two for math, which typically take between five and eight hours to complete. There is currently no writing assessed with either ISAT or PSAE, so that is part of the difference between the current assessments and the upcoming PARCC.

8. Q: Will PARCC be administered in all grades K-12? If not, what grades?

A: The PARCC Summative Assessment (PBA and EOY) will be administered in grades 3-8 in both math and English/Language Arts. PARCC assessments will be administered in English 9, 10 and 11 and in Algebra 1, Geometry and Algebra II as an end of course assessment. PARCC Formative Assessments may be used in grades K-1. PARCC Diagnostic Assessments may be administered in grades 2-8. PARCC Speaking and Listening assessments will be administered in grades 3-8 and high school courses related to English language arts.

9. Q: Have the testing dates been determined?

A: PARCC dates have not yet been determined. The administration of the Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) will occur when approximately 75 percent of instruction has been provided. The administration of the End of Year Assessment (EOY) will occur at approximately 90 percent of instruction.

10. Q: Will there be any paper and pencil tasks or will it all be administered electronically?

A: PARCC will be offered to states as a computer-based assessment. However, paper and pencil testing may be offered in 2014-15 as an option for schools that are not yet ready to offer an online test. After the first year of administration, paper test options will be available for students that are unable to test by computer due to a medical reason or disability.

11. Q: Is there an alternate assessment for students who are currently taking the IAA?

A: Illinois has joined the Dynamic Learning Maps consortium for the alternate assessment (<http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/>). This assessment will be computer-based and will provide information on student achievement throughout the year.

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