



## Ten Things to Know About the New K-12 PARCC Assessments

1. Kindergarten teachers through college-level professors from across the country, including Illinois, helped develop the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments to see how well students are achieving under new, more rigorous and internationally benchmarked learning standards in English language arts (ELA) and math.
  - The PARCC assessment will be administered to all third- through eighth-graders and some high school students in Illinois public schools during the 2014-15 school year.
2. The PARCC assessments measure a broad range of knowledge and skills, such as problem-solving and critical thinking, that are essential for success. The PARCC assessments also measure writing at all grade levels, a valuable indicator of college and career readiness and a skill that was only assessed intermittently and for certain grade levels on previous state tests.
  - The PARCC assessments emphasize rigor, depth and application of knowledge – not just rote memorization. Performance-based exercises and technology-enhanced features yield more information than what was generated through previous state tests.
3. The PARCC assessments provide a clear marker to show if students are on track for college and career, contributing to statewide efforts to support students' education from cradle to career. PARCC tests represent the first K-12 coherent assessments and replace the Illinois Standard Achievement Test and the Prairie State Achievement Examination, which have been used for more than a decade but were not aligned to one another, resulting in a disconnect that showed a greater portion of elementary students than high school students meeting state standards.
  - Now Illinois students will face consistent and high expectations at each grade level, giving parents and educators more accurate and timely information to intervene and determine whether students need remediation or more advanced instruction.
4. Staying on track for college and career means saving money. The PARCC will support efforts to provide a more efficient path to a college degree and career skills. We know that when students can start their postsecondary education in college credit-bearing courses, they're more likely to graduate. A 2011 national report shows 56 percent of students nationwide earn a bachelor's degree within six years. That falls to 35 percent when we look at students who have taken remedial courses. To view the Complete College America report, endorsed by governors, see [http://www.completecollege.org/docs/Time\\_Is\\_the\\_Enemy\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.completecollege.org/docs/Time_Is_the_Enemy_Summary.pdf).
  - At least 20 percent of all college students must take costly remedial courses when they get to college and that percentage jumps to roughly 50 percent when you look at those enrolled in Illinois two-year community colleges after students did everything required to graduate from high school.

5. Students in 29 states, the US Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia are scheduled to take either the PARCC assessment or Smarter Balanced, an assessment system also aligned to the new learning standards in math and ELA.
  - For the first time, Illinois parents will be able to see how their students' elementary and secondary state test scores compare against the test scores of students in other states.
6. At the high school level, districts were given flexibility this year to choose one of three combinations of PARCC high school-level assessments in ELA and math. The majority of high schools – more than 60 percent – will administer exams linked to ELA/Literacy 3 and Algebra 2/Integrated Math 3.
  - The state will continue to fund the ACT to 11th-graders in all districts that opted to give the test on March 3. March 4 is reserved for the ACT's WorkKeys exams.
7. Nationally, the PARCC exam was field-tested by more than 1 million students in 16,000 schools in 14 states and the District of Columbia. Improvements were made based on the field tests and on feedback from students, teachers and others. The PARCC assessment continues to be reviewed for quality, rigor and fairness.
  - In Illinois, more than 110,000 students in 500 districts and 1,200 schools participated last spring in PARCC assessment field-testing.
8. More than half of all Illinois schools will administer the PARCC assessment online this spring. The ultimate goal is for the PARCC assessments to be administered online in all Illinois schools, which will likely take several more years to accomplish as schools expand and upgrade equipment and infrastructure.
  - The PARCC assessments will also be administered via paper and pencil in Illinois schools during the 2014-15 school year.
9. Schools will take the PARCC summative assessment in two parts to provide adequate test-taking time and measure different kinds of knowledge and skills. The first part is the Performance-Based Assessment (PBA), to be given when approximately 75 percent of instruction is completed and featuring more extended tasks and writing exercises. The second part is the End of Year assessment (EOY), given when approximately 90 percent of instruction is completed. The EOY is shorter than the PBA and asks students to demonstrate their acquired skills and knowledge by answering computer-based, machine-scorable questions. The results from the End of Year assessment will be combined with the Performance-Based Assessment to produce a student's summative assessment score. To learn more visit <http://parcconline.org/did-you-know-why-are-there-two-parts-test>.
  - PARCC assessment results will be available to families next fall. Going forward, the PARCC assessments will produce more timely results to help monitor student progress and target instruction and intervention as needed.
10. Students will spend approximately 6 ½ to 7 ½ hours on the PARCC tests, depending on grade level. They will not take the entire test in one sitting. The assessment is broken into two parts and each part includes several units. Most students will complete each unit in 40 to 60 minutes. The PARCC states recommend no more than two units of testing in a day.
  - PARCC testing time represents less than 1 percent of the school year in Illinois. Each school will schedule testing dates and times within a common window, which was shared with districts in July 2014. The dates are also posted on the State Board's website under assessments at <http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/2015/assessment-dates-14-15.pdf>.