



Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001
www.isbe.net

James T. Meeks
Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

FAQs

PARCC ASSESSMENT

January 2015, ISBE Division of Public Information

Q: What is the testing time for the PARCC assessment?

A: The PARCC assessment will require slightly more testing time than the ISAT and PSAE. However, testing will be divided into two separate administrations in early spring (March) and the end of the school year (May) and incorporate more technology-enhanced questions and a writing component at each grade level. Overall times fluctuate depending on grade level, but the PARCC assessment allots an average of 8-10 hours – extended over several days and two testing windows. Most students finished earlier than the allotted time during field testing last spring. Students are expected to spend approximately 6 ½ to 7 ½ hours on the PARCC exams, depending on grade level, and the PARCC assessment alone will account for less than 1 percent of the school year.

Q: What are the consequences of PARCC testing this year?

A: This is a baseline year so there are no consequences for schools or students. The numbers will be used as a baseline in order to measure growth by students, schools and districts in the future. The first year of data will also be used to establish cut scores that determine the performance levels at which students can be deemed “college and career ready.” The PARCC assessments are standardized and the performance results of students in Illinois can be compared directly with their peers across the nation.

Q: How will the PARCC assessment affect the administration of the ACT?

A: ISBE listened to local districts that wanted the state to continue to fund and provide the ACT, so districts now have the choice to administer the ACT Plus Writing and/or the WorkKeys® in addition to a PARCC high school level combination of ELA and math assessments tied to specific courses. All 11th-grade students within a given district will take the ACT Plus Writing on March 3, if the district chose to offer the test. March 4 has been set aside for the ACT WorkKeys® in participating districts. These tests are fully paid for by ISBE. Illinois is among a handful of states that has provided the ACT to all students, free of charge, for the past decade.

Q. Why can't Illinois delay implementation of the PARCC assessments?

A: In 2010, the Board adopted the new Illinois Learning Standards in ELA and math and 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.

In December 2014, the U.S. Department of Education recently confirmed our understanding of current laws regarding accountability and that there is no waiver to districts that may want to delay administering the PARCC. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, also known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) – requires states (including Illinois) receiving Title I funds to provide for administration of the state's academic assessment to all designated students. Additionally, the department confirmed that the same assessment must be used for all students, with some limited exceptions such as an

alternate assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The department spelled out expectations for both state and local education agencies in addition to outlining the possible penalties that could be imposed upon each in its letter posted at <http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/USED-ESEA-asmt-clarification-1214.pdf>.

Q. Why can't my child simply take the ACT instead of the PARCC assessment?

A: We understand the utility of other standardized tests such as the ACT. The ACT is developed to adhere to its own college readiness standards, which differ from the K-12 Common Core Learning Standards in use by the other PARCC and Smarter Balanced members. But PARCC is a different test. We believe PARCC is more comprehensive than our prior Illinois assessments, inviting students to think deeply and construct their own solutions to challenging tasks and situations. An assessment that requires students to analyze information – and explain their answers – better reflects classroom lessons and experiences.

Q: Can the PARCC assessment be used for college acceptance?

A: Institutions of higher education are working toward acceptance of PARCC assessment results as a way to show readiness for college-level work without remediation. PARCC assessments have always been framed as a placement exam and not an entrance exam, allowing colleges and universities to place those students testing at the “college and career ready” level in credit-bearing courses (as opposed to remedial courses).

Q: Can individual students opt out of the PARCC assessments? Can parents opt their children out of the PARCC assessments?

A: No. Districts can develop a policy for those students who refuse to take assessments on testing days, but federal and state law does not provide for any opt-out provisions. If fewer than 95 percent of students in a district do not take the assessment, the district will automatically fail to meet their accountability obligations and be at risk of losing federal funding, hurting our schools and ultimately all of our students.

Q: Will students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs) also take the PARCC assessment and if so, what types of accommodations will the test allow?

A: Students with disabilities will take either the PARCC or the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM-AA) assessment. The DLM-AA, which replaces the Illinois Alternate Assessment, is the test for the students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. IEP teams determine which test will be most appropriate for individual students. The PARCC assessment includes a number of features to assist students with disabilities. A manual listing potential accommodations has been made available [here](#) on the PARCC website. The manual addresses the specific needs of students with disabilities, English learners and English learners with disabilities.

ELs will take the PARCC and DLM-AA assessments using appropriate accommodations. Illinois will also continue to use ACCESS For ELLs®, a standards-based, criterion-referenced English language proficiency test designed to measure ELs' social and academic proficiency in English.

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Three things you need to know about

PARCC

August 2014, ISBE Division of Public Information

1 PARCC is designed to answer how well our students are prepared for the next grade level and, ultimately, for success after high school. PARCC will help us reverse the troubling fact that one out of every three public high school graduates in the United States, after doing everything required to graduate, are placed in remedial (non-credit-bearing) courses in their higher ed institution. This is costly and does not bode well for students' chances of earning a college degree or landing a job with family-sustaining wages.

2 PARCC will assess what matters in today's world. The assessment system not only measures mastery of English language arts and mathematics knowledge but also uses technology to include questions and tasks that mirror the type of work students will encounter both in their current classrooms and after high school.

3 PARCC is more authentic than our prior Illinois assessments, inviting students to think deeply and construct their own solutions to challenging tasks and situations. An assessment that requires students to analyze information – and explain their answers – better reflects classroom lessons and experiences.



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FACT SHEET PARCC ASSESSMENTS

January 2015, ISBE Division of Public Information

Illinois schools will administer new assessments created through the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) in spring 2015. These assessments are fully aligned to the K-12 Illinois Learning Standards in English language arts and mathematics and emphasize academic rigor, critical thinking, problem solving and college and career readiness for all students.

Third- through eighth-graders will take the PARCC in both English language arts and math. At the high school level, districts have been given the flexibility this year to choose one of the following three combinations:

- (1) ELA/Literacy 1 and Algebra 1/Integrated Math 1
- (2) ELA/Literacy 2 and Geometry/Integrated Math 2
- (3) ELA/Literacy 3 and Algebra 2/Integrated Math 3

The PARCC replaces the state's former tests, the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE). Districts may also administer the ACT+Writing and WorkKeys on a state test administration date at no cost to students or the district. See the related "**High School Transition to PARCC**" fact sheet for more details about state testing in grades 9-12.

This year, we will be using the PARCC summative assessments which are designed to measure overall curriculum and program effectiveness. These assessments are standardized to allow comparison across student groups. The PARCC summative assessments consist of two required components: a Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) and an End of Year assessment (EOY). The PBA component of the PARCC requires that students demonstrate their knowledge and skills through extended tasks and take the PBA when approximately 75 percent of instruction has been completed. Students take the second part, or EOY, at approximately the point when 90 percent of instruction has been completed. The EOY is composed of shorter, machine-scored questions. Note these are not two separate tests but two parts (PBA and EOY) of one summative assessment and are not intended to measure the growth or academic progress gained from one part to the next. Instead, growth can be measured when compared to prior years and when other PARCC assessments become available.

The PARCC system includes interim and formative assessments and those are still in development and expected to be available next year (2015-2016). Budget allocations will determine what we can provide to districts. Formative assessments are designed to provide feedback to teachers on a regular basis so they can adjust instruction and improve student learning. Interim assessments are designed to identify strengths and weaknesses in curriculum and instruction.

Third- through eighth-graders will take the summative grade level assessment in both English language arts and math. The high school summative assessments, called "End of Course (EOC)," will be given at the completion of courses that contain the corresponding standards rather than at the end of a specific grade year. That means students would take one of the math exams and the ELA course at any grade, dependent on when they're taking the course that aligns with the standards and the test. These two assessments might not necessarily be taken in the same year.

The Illinois PARCC Testing Windows for 2014-15 will be:

REGULAR ADMINISTRATION		
School/District START DATE	Spring Regular Administration of Computer-Based Testing	
	*Paper/Pencil administration should occur during the first two weeks of each designated testing window	
On or before Sept. 1	PBA	March 9, 2015 to April 3, 2015
After Sept. 1		March 16, 2015 to April 10, 2015
On or before Sept. 1	EOY	April 27, 2015 to May 22, 2015
After Sept. 1		May 4, 2015 to May 29, 2015

The PARCC differs from Illinois' former assessment system in a number of ways:

- The PARCC system aligns college and career readiness expectations from kindergarten through grade 12 for the first time in Illinois.
- The assessments measure whether or not students have the academic knowledge and skills necessary to succeed after high school.
- Using technology-enhanced items and various other innovations, students will get a chance to better showcase their skills and results will become available for use more quickly.
- Students must analyze information and explain their answers.
- The PARCC assessments take advantage of technology to include questions and other tasks that emulate the type of work that students will encounter in their classrooms on a regular basis and after high school. These assessments help to encourage schools to use technology as a day-to-day tool to enhance learning.

Educators from K-12 and higher education helped to develop the PARCC assessments, which are grounded in evidence to support college and career readiness. Representatives from higher education will continue to be involved in PARCC development and implementation.

The multistate test offers a common metric for both educators and policymakers to gauge student performance on a level playing field. The state and local districts will continue to monitor other metrics, such as student and school progress, attendance and graduation rates, school climate and learning conditions.

About 500 districts, 1,200 schools and 110,888 students in Illinois took part in PARCC field testing in spring 2014. The field test was a “practice run” to gather input from teachers and students and to identify and correct problems with this assessment system before its first official administration in spring 2015. As a result, students did not receive individual test scores.

Students and test administrators completed a survey about the field test experience with preliminary results showing:

- Two-thirds of students taking the ELA and Math assessments reported that they prefer taking the tests on the computer.
- 95 percent of students taking the ELA test and 88 percent of students taking the Math test finished within the allotted time or early.

More than half of all Illinois schools will administer the PARCC online in spring 2015. The ultimate goal is that all schools will eventually administer the PARCC online. Realistically, this goal will take a few more years. As schools continue to update their equipment and infrastructure, PARCC will be available as a paper-based test for schools that lack the capacity needed to test online. Implementation of computer-based testing may not occur all at one time across a district, or even within a building.

Additional information about the PARCC assessments, including resources for parents, students and teachers, can be found at the following websites:

- The PARCC website: <http://www.parcconline.org/>
- ISBE Student Assessments website:
<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/assessment/parcc.htm>
- PARCC Practice Tests and sample questions: <http://www.parcconline.org/practice-tests>

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