



# Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001  
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## **Fact Sheet: Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)**

August 2013

Division of Public Information, Illinois State Board of Education

State standardized tests in Illinois will soon change to give families, educators and policymakers better data on how well students are learning as Illinois aims to prepare every student for college and career.

### **Changes to Date**

About 20 percent of the questions on last year's **Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISATs)**, given to students in grades 3-8, were written to meet the more rigorous benchmarks of the Illinois State Learning Standards, incorporating the Common Core, in math and English language arts. In the 2013-14 school year, students in grades 3-8 will take ISATs that are 100 percent written to these new benchmarks.

The **next step** will be the debut **of new online assessments in 2014-15**. Currently, Illinois belongs to a group of 19 states, plus Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands, working together as the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, or PARCC ([www.PARCCOnline.org](http://www.PARCCOnline.org)), to develop a common set of K-12 assessments in English language arts/literacy and mathematics that are linked to the Common Core. Illinois serves as one of 18 governing states, taking a lead role in this consortium.

### **PARCC aims to:**

- Create high-quality 21st century, technology-based assessments. They will go beyond the traditional paper-pencil, fill-in-the-bubble tests, using new innovative technology-enhanced items and more extensive constructed response items. The tasks on the assessments will better resemble students' classroom work.
- Build a pathway to college and career readiness for all students. Implementation of the new assessment system will increase the number of graduating students ready to succeed in college and the work force.
- Support educators in the classroom by providing data during the academic year to inform instruction, interventions and professional development.
- Advance accountability at all levels. Students will know if they are on track to graduate ready for college and careers, and parents and guardians will be provided with clear and timely information about the progress of their children.

# The components of the PARCC assessment system

The assessments will cover English language arts (ELA)/literacy and math for grades 3–11 and will be comprised of four components, two summative assessment components and two interim assessment components. Interim assessments will help teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses and assist schools in shaping decisions about curriculum and instruction. Summative assessments will evaluate student learning near the end of the school year, showing development of skills.

## Diagnostic assessments in reading, writing and mathematics.

These optional tests, available throughout the year, will help teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses.

## Mid-year assessments in ELA/literacy and mathematics.

Designed to be given mid-way through the year, these optional tests will help schools shape decisions about curriculum, instruction and professional development.

## Performance-based assessments (PBA) in ELA/literacy and mathematics. All students will take this summative test toward the end of the school year to show what they know.

- In ELA/literacy, this will involve analyzing literature and a narrative writing task. Students will read texts and write several pieces to demonstrate they can read and understand sufficiently complex texts independently, write effectively when using and analyzing sources, and build and communicate knowledge by integrating, comparing and synthesizing ideas.
- In math, students will be asked to solve problems involving the key knowledge and skills for their grade level (as identified by the CCSS), express mathematical reasoning and construct a mathematical argument, and apply concepts to solve model real-world problems.

## End-of-year assessments (EOY) in ELA/literacy and math.

All students will take this at the end of the school year. The results will be combined with the performance-based assessment to produce a student's summative assessment score. For the end-of-year assessment, students will demonstrate their acquired skills and knowledge by answering computer-based, machine-scorable questions.

## Speaking and listening component (ELA/literacy only).

All students participating in the PARCC assessments will demonstrate speaking and listening proficiency using this tool, which can be administered anytime during the academic year. While this is a required component of the assessment, currently PARCC does not envision combining results from this with those of the performance-based assessment or end-of-year assessment to determine a student's summative assessment score.

## Field Testing

Illinois is among 14 states and the District of Columbia that will participate in limited field testing of the PARCC assessments in the 2013-14 school year to ensure a high-quality assessment system. About 10 percent of students in tested grades and subjects will participate across PARCC states; most of those students will only take a portion of the tests. The PARCC field tests will not generate student scores. The PARCC field tests will be administered March–May 2014.

## Technology requirements

The Illinois State Board of Education is working with Education Super Highway – a non-profit organization with the mission of ensuring that every K-12 school in America has reliable, high capacity internet access – to collect data in support of planning for instruction and the PARCC online assessments in 2014. The information gained by this voluntary testing, called the School Speed Test, is

being used by ISBE in its planning to improve statewide technology infrastructure and will also help district planning. The School Speed Test has been endorsed by the State Educational Technology Directors Association, the U.S. Department of Education and the Council of Chief State School Officers as an effective way to accurately determine the network infrastructure needs of districts and schools. Additionally, PARCC has materials to help districts determine their level of technology readiness.

### **Resources**

- **The New Illinois Learning Standards Incorporating the Common Core**, [http://www.isbe.net/common\\_core/default.htm](http://www.isbe.net/common_core/default.htm)
- **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers**, <http://www.PARCCOnline.org>
- **PARCC Tech Readiness**, <http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/2013/parcc/parcc-tech-readiness.pdf>
- **Timeline for PARCC Assessment Guidance**, <http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/2013/parcc/timeline-future-guidance.pdf>
- **PARCC FAQs**, <http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/2013/parcc/PARCC-FAQ-Spring13.pdf>

Along with adopting more rigorous learning standards and improved student assessments, ISBE is undertaking several initiatives to better inform families and educators about each school's performance and unique qualities. The state's new simplified and more consumer-friendly report card will debut this fall and help paint a more robust picture of each school with details on school extracurricular activities, awards and recognitions, advanced courses and community partnerships. Included in the report card will be summary information from the 5Essentials, the first statewide educator and student survey about each school's learning conditions and climate.

*Additional fact sheets provided by the ISBE Division of Public Information will be released throughout 2013.*

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## ***Frequently Asked Questions: PARCC***

*August 2013*

*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 I, 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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