



Illinois State Board of Education

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Talking Points: PARCC

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The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, or PARCC, is a group of 19 states, Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands, working together to develop a common set of K-12 assessments in English language arts/literacy and mathematics that are linked to the new, more rigorous Common Core State Standards.

- Illinois is one of 18 governing states in the consortium. The Governing Board is providing leadership and oversight to the development of new assessments for use by states that have adopted the Common Core.

These new assessments are being developed as the districts and schools continue to implement Illinois Learning Standards, incorporating the Common Core.

- Illinois approved the new learning standards in 2010. The PARCC assessments are expected to be ready for use in the 2014-15 school year.
- The current Illinois Standard Achievement Tests (ISATs) have incorporated items written to the Common Core standards; approximately 20 percent of the test was written to Common Core in 2013.

PARCC's goals include creating high quality assessments; building a pathway to college and career readiness for all students; supporting educators in the classroom; developing 21st century, technology-based assessments; and advancing accountability at all levels.

- The PARCC assessments will include a set of performance-based tasks that address a long standing concern among educators about large

scale, pencil-and-paper assessments – they have been unable to capture some of the most important skills that we strive to develop in students. For example, students will read texts and write several pieces to demonstrate they can read and understand sufficiently complex texts independently, and in math, they will apply concepts to solve model real-world problems.

- The PARCC assessments will enable teachers, schools, students and parents to gain important insights. Computer-based assessments will show how well critical knowledge, skills and abilities essential for young people to thrive in college and careers are being mastered.
- Because of PARCC's ability to better measure student performance through technology enhanced test items, they will look very different to students. The tasks on the assessments will resemble the classroom work they do during the school year and less like a conventional fill-in-the-bubble or short-answer test.
- Computer delivery of PARCC will allow the test items to both measure those skills needed for life beyond high school and be interactive and engaging.
- Unlike current state assessments, the PARCC assessments will provide information on the full range of knowledge and skills needed to be career and college ready or on track toward that goal. These improvements from current tests will help teachers guide instruction and give more information to students and their parents.

The PARCC assessment system contains 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.

Technology resources vary greatly from district to district. ISBE is working to improve the statewide technology infrastructure and will also assist district planning.

- ISBE 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.
- ISBE is working to find additional state and federal dollars to help support costs related to online testing.
- ISBE will cover the cost of the summative assessments under PARCC.