Maryland Classroom
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Top 10 Things Every Maryland Teacher Should Know about the PARCC Assessments

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career, or PARCC, is a consortium of states working together to develop new assessments in mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA)/literacy for grades 3-11. Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, the PARCC mathematics and ELA/literacy assessments will replace the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) and High School Assessment (HSA) in those subject areas. With Maryland's help, PARCC is striving to create high quality assessments that will be improved over time based on results and feedback from all member states.

Here are 10 things every Maryland teacher should know about the PARCC assessments.

1 Marylanders helped build PARCC.



Maryland is a governing state in PARCC and Maryland educators from K-12 schools and institutions of higher education have participated in the design of the PARCC assessments and reviewed test items for content, and for bias and sensitivity. In spring 2014, a small number of students in nearly every Maryland school took the PARCC field test, "testing the test" to help the consortium make final decisions about test design, test items, and scoring.



Maryland educators are also playing an important role in providing information about PARCC to their peers and the public. Maryland has built a network of educators that have become experts on the State's new educational standards and PARCC assessments. Maryland's Educator Leader Cadre is made up of educators from K-12 and higher education as well as state, district, and school leaders, who work to raise awareness about the new standards and assessments, and build capacity among their fellow teachers. Learn more about the Educator Leader Cadres at: www.parcconline.org/educator-cadres.

2 The PARCC assessments will be fully implemented in school year 2014-15.

Starting in school year 2014-15, PARCC will replace the MSA in reading and mathematics for students in grades 3-8 and the HSA in algebra/data analysis and English 10 for students entering grade 9. The PARCC assessments will measure the content and skills contained in the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards (based on the Common Core State Standards). Over time, the computer-based PARCC assessments will yield results more quickly than traditional paper-and-pencil tests, delivering information on student learning that teachers can use to help inform instruction. The PARCC assessments will also be more engaging to students, asking them to solve problems, write essays, and answer questions that resemble the kind of high-quality coursework found in effective classrooms.

3 Maryland teachers have and will continue to receive training and support to prepare for the full implementation of the PARCC assessments.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and PARCC are providing a variety of training tools to prepare school personnel for the full administration of the PARCC assessments in school year 2014-15 and beyond. Local Accountability Coordinators (LACs) in every school system received training from MSDE in preparation for administering the spring 2014 field test and LACs are, in turn, providing training to School Test Coordinators. Teachers will receive instruction from their School Test Coordinator. Test Coordinators will also be able to provide access to PARCC training modules, tutorials, and other resources through PARCC's training management system, *PearsonAccess*. If you are not sure who the Test Coordinator is at your school, please ask your principal. More on PARCC's assessment administration guidance can be found at: http://parcconline.org/assessment-administration-guidance.

4 The PARCC assessments include two test components, a Performance-Based Assessment and an End of Year Assessment, administered in two separate testing windows during the year.

The Performance-Based Assessment component is given in March or April and the End of Year Assessment is given in May. Not all students will take the PARCC tests at the same time, as typically has been the case with the MSA and HSA paper-and-pencil assessments. Groups of students will cycle through different test parts during a window of several weeks and return to class and continue learning throughout that time. Students will only work on assessments for a few days within the testing window.

5 The PARCC assessments will be administered online for most students when it is fully implemented in 2014-15, although there will be a paper-and-pencil back up option at first.

PARCC is working to keep the assessments "device neutral," allowing students to take PARCC on a range of devices including: desktops, laptops, netbooks and tablets. In advance of the full implementation of the PARCC assessments in school year 2014-15, schools will have the opportunity to complete a tutorial and practice with sample test items. This will allow students to learn and practice with the tools and functionalities of the computer-based tests. The tutorial and sample items can be found at: http://parcconline.org/computer-based-samples. PARCC also will continue to release sample items to help teachers familiarize students with the format of the assessments and technology.

Formal practice tests, consisting of representative items for each grade level, are also available. The practice tests were developed so that all students could experience PARCC test items the way they will appear on the tests starting in spring 2014, and can be found at: http://www.parcconline.org/practice-tests.

6 The PARCC mathematics and ELA/literacy assessments will include many different types of questions.

There will be questions that ask students to do something – these are typically called constructed response questions. All constructed response questions will be part of the Performance-Based Assessment window to allow for hand scoring by the end of the year. There will also be multiple choice questions and interactive technology questions – questions that require students to drag and drop items, or type an answer where no choices are given, or select from many options – that can be scored automatically. The End of Year component will only include questions that are automatically scored.



7 There will be accommodations and accessibility features that allow all students to have the support they need to do well on PARCC.

PARCC is committed to providing all students – including but not limited to, students with disabilities, English learners, and underserved populations – with equitable access to high-quality, 21st-century PARCC assessments. PARCC test items will adhere to Universal Design principles, so they will be accessible to all students. Students with disabilities will be able to use accommodations specific to the PARCC assessment chosen by their Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams. The PARCC assessments also include accommodations that English learners may need in order to show what they know and are able to do. More information about accommodations can be found at: www.parcconline.org/parcc-releases-accessibility-features-and-accommodations-manual.





Experience PARCC's Computer-Based Tests for Yourself

PARCC has posted sample test questions for every grade on the platform students will use to take the online assessments, as well as full-length practice tests. Try out the assessment questions using computer-based tools, such as drag-and-drop, multiple select, text highlighting, and an equation builder.

Before getting started, take the online tutorials, which demonstrate how to navigate the test, how to use the computer-based tools, and the test's accessibility features.

Sample test items, practice tests, and tutorials can be found at: http://practice.parcc.testnav.com/#

8 In ELA/literacy, the PARCC assessments will look much deeper at student writing abilities and critical-thinking skills.

Sixty percent of the PARCC ELA/literacy assessments will involve writing. Unlike previous assessments that chiefly assessed ELA through multiple choice questions, writing will be a key element of PARCC. In all tested grade levels, students will be asked to analyze text and use that information to create a written response. You can learn about the three writing task types in more detail and see sample items at: www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes. All text passages in the ELA/literacy portions of the assessments will come from an authentic text. The PARCC passage selection guidelines state: "The texts students encounter on tests should be worthy of careful attention, be content rich and challenging, and exhibit professional published quality." Unlike previous assessment passages, written for the purpose of the test, PARCC will feature only previously published texts. Multiple-choice and selected-response questions on the ELA/literacy assessments will focus on reading and vocabulary. All multiple-choice questions will be based on a text and require students to provide evidence to support their answer. Additionally, vocabulary questions will focus on meaning as presented in the text. Students will not be expected to have prior knowledge of the content of the text.

9 In mathematics, students will have to solve complex problems, show their work, and demonstrate how they solved the problem.

Unlike pencil-and-paper bubble tests, the PARCC assessments will more closely resemble high-quality classroom work. More than 60 percent of the mathematics questions will focus on the mathematics standards that have been identified as the "major work of the grade" (as outlined in the PARCC Model Content Frameworks, available at: www.parcconline.org/parcc-model-content-frameworks). Students who do well with the major work of the grade in mathematics will do well on PARCC. Mathematics Reference Sheets for grades 5-8 and for high school will be available to students during the assessment. In addition, there will be calculator and non-calculator sections. Assessments in grades 6-7 will allow for a four-function plus square root calculator, assessments in grade 8 will allow for a scientific calculator, and assessments in high school will allow for a calculator similar in functionality to a TI-84 graphing calculator. PARCC's calculator policy and other PARCC assessment administration guidance is available at: http://parcconline.org/assessment-administration-guidance.

10 Additional information can be found at the following websites.

The PARCC website: www.parcconline.org

Practice Tests, Sample Questions, and Tutorials

- Take the PARCC **practice tests**, full length tests that allow you to try out the content, online platform, and tools - such as the highlighter and drag-and-drop functions: https://www.parcconline.org/computer-based-samples
- Try out PARCC **computer-based sample test questions**: www.parcconline.org/computer-based-samples
- View **tutorials** to gain familiarity with the computer based tools and features that will appear on the PARCC assessments: http://practice.parcc.testnav.com/#

General PARCC Information and Resources

- Maryland Public Television (MPT) **PSA videos** on the PARCC assessments: www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde/programs/parcc/video.html
- PARCC **Model Content Frameworks** for mathematics and ELA/literacy: www.parcconline.org/parcc-model-content-frameworks
- PARCC **FAQs**: www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCCFAQ_9-18-2013.pdf
- PARCC **Facts**: www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCCFactSheetandFAQsBackgrounder_FINAL.pdf
- **Maryland Online Testing** website: http://marylandonlinetesting.org

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