A NEW VISION OF ASSESSMENT

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is an alliance of 22 states working together to develop shared, high-quality assessments in English language arts (ELA)/literacy and math.

These computer-based assessments will address longstanding concerns that educators, parents and employers have about end-of-year state tests. The tests generally have been unable to measure essential skills our students need to succeed in college, careers and life — skills such as critical thinking and problem solving.

Educators need to know whether individual students are learning, whether children are on track or need extra help, and whether instructional programs and practices are effective. Well-designed computer-based assessments offer tremendous advantages over pencil-and-paper tests. They yield results more quickly, better enable people with disabilities and English language learners to demonstrate what they know and can do, and are faster and more efficient to administer. It is time we made these available to all our students, as every school works to become a technology-rich environment.

These next-generation tests will be ready for use during the 2014–15 school year in grades 3–11. They are designed to replace current state end-of-year assessments.

Key Advances in PARCC

The new assessments will:

• **Be innovative and engaging.** PARCC assessments will be tests worth taking and will be made up of engaging texts and real-world problems. They will ask students to solve problems, write essays and answer questions that resemble the kind of high-quality coursework found in effective classrooms.

• **Signal whether students are on track for success in college or careers.** PARCC assessments will help educators determine when students are ready to tackle new content and when they need extra support. Toward the end of high school, PARCC will provide a college and career readiness determination, signaling to postsecondary institutions that students are prepared to do first-year college work without remediation. More than 750 institutions and systems of higher education are working with PARCC to use this determination. (Right now, an estimated one-third of college students are unprepared when they arrive on campus and need remedial coursework.)
• **Provide educators useful data on student achievement in a timely way to inform and improve instruction.** Teachers now get key student achievement data far too late, often even after the school year is over. The new computer-based tests will yield timely and actionable data.

• **Create efficiencies in test administration; be affordable and sustainable.** Once the tests are online, schools will not have to spend as much time and as many resources administering the computer-based assessments as they do with paper tests. By working through a consortium, PARCC states will spend less on test development and administration than they would if they were working on their own.

• **Connect to the Common Core State Standards.** Nearly every state is working to implement these internationally benchmarked K–12 standards in ELA/literacy and math to ensure that students graduate from high school ready to succeed in college and careers. The new assessments are aligned to the new standards.

• **Provide comparability among states and equity among students.** With the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, measuring a student’s success in 4th grade math should not vary from state to state.

**Getting Ready**

PARCC is providing information, guidance and planning tools to help schools transition to and prepare for the new assessments, for example:

• **Technology.** PARCC released guidance about the technology schools will need to conduct the new assessments. Schools will be able to use a range of devices from desktop computers to laptops and tablets. These are the same types of devices used regularly as part of instructional technology throughout the year.

• **Capacity.** PARCC released a spreadsheet-based tool that schools and districts can use to determine their capacity to administer the new exams and to help with budgeting.

• **Test Duration.** PARCC released estimated testing time and testing windows for the new assessments. Since these tests are replacing those states currently use, in some states testing time will not change. In other states, testing time may increase, or it may drop. PARCC assessments will test writing skills at every grade level, which are not included in some state tests now. The new tests also will test critical-thinking and problem-solving skills in an in-depth manner. In math, for example, students will be asked to explain mathematical reasoning, not just get the answer right. In ELA/literacy, they will be asked to read from complex passages and draw from the material to present a persuasive argument.

• **Coming Soon.** This summer PARCC plans to release estimates of how much the new assessments will cost.

**More on PARCC**

PARCC’s work is led by its member states and is funded through a four-year, $185 million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Partnering with the states in the development of these next-generation tests are more than 750 higher education institutions and systems representing hundreds of campuses across the country. PARCC’s ultimate goal is to make sure all students graduate from high school ready for college and careers. For more information, visit [www.PARCConline.org](http://www.PARCConline.org).